


SPEAKING CANDIDLY

MARGIE

(20th Century-Fox)

 GOING back two decades for its story and settings, *Margie* depicts the manners and modes of co-educational college life in the U.S.A. circa 1928, with special attention to such eccentric manifestations as flagpole-sitting, goldfish-swallowing, raccoon coats, rolled stockings, and Rudy Vallee. It therefore offers some explanation of how modern Americans now in their middle thirties got the way they are. But though the interest in *Margie* is partly sociological, any feelings of superiority which it might be likely to engender in us are quickly swallowed up by the realisation that young people today are just as scatty as they were then, and that crazes and "crushes" are by no means confined to North America, even though they do appear to reach their most exotic flowering on that continent. In view of this, audiences may prefer to look on *Margie* not as sociology but simply as a nostalgically sentimental, mildly embarrassing comedy about sweet young love (young to the point of being precocious, and sweet to the point of

being sugary), with an agreeable starring performance by Jeanne Craine and some rather florid technicolour photography.


The 16-year-old heroine operates throughout the story under no small handicap: her father is a mortician (undertaker to you), the grandmother who looks after her was a militant suffragette and can't forget it, and she herself is continually being let down in a place where every young lady likes to feel secure. Without stretching the truth too far, it would be correct to say that the slight plot is held together by the elastic in Margie's bloomers: at almost every big moment in Margie's young life—such as a skating party on the ice, or a dance—this support gives way. By the third time it happens the audience is almost as embarrassed as the heroine and is beginning to wish not only that Margie would be a little more careful or invest in a few safety-pins, but also that the director would think up some new way of disguising the inadequacies of the plot. But by that time the story is over and Margie, who has gone through girlish agonies because she feels she is the serious-minded type, good at debating and therefore unacceptable to husky football-playing young

louts, has walked off in triumph with the handsome French teacher under the very noses of her more glamorous rivals.

The story is told in flash-back, by a 34-year-old Margie, to her bobby-soxed, teen-aged daughter who has been rummaging in the attic and has turned up an old photograph album and some out-of-date gramophone records. In evoking memories of those old and happy far-off things and bloomers long ago, the music of 1928 ("Avalon," "A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich and You," "Button Up Your Overcoat," "Ain't She Sweet?") is more potent than the photography and the acting.

THE DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID

(Benedict Bogeaus-United Artists)

 MY colleague on the BBC Listener has described this as the kind of film which might have resulted if Chekhov, Edgar Allan Poe, and Elinor Glyn had all worked on the script, each without being allowed to see what the others had written. The only way I can think of improving on that description would be by adding Freud to the list. A more amazing concoction of irreconcilable elements I never expect, or want, to see; and the pity of it is that the director responsible for this fantastic rigmarole was Jean

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