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Film Reviews, by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

GILDA

(Columbia)



AS you will notice if you are observant enough, the posters outside the theatre do not announce "Rita Hayworth in *Gilda*" but "Rita Hayworth as *Gilda*." The distinction, though a fine one, is of some importance. It means that this film is what is known as a vehicle for Miss Hayworth, and that it has been designed not so much with the purpose of telling a coherent story or even of giving her the opportunity to prove herself as an actress, but rather of exploiting her more obvious charms. So the good, exciting opening, the tension of those early scenes in the gambling salon, the general air of intrigue and mystery—all this is soon overlaid and comes to nothing: the plot grows more and more muddled and incomprehensible, while the camera concentrates on Miss Hayworth; on her roguishly bared shoulders above a filmy negligee, on the slinky dresses that begin below the armpits, the seductively flopping hair-do, the painted and perpetually-parted lips (the girl seems incapable of closing her mouth; it's almost as if she had adenoids). "There never was a woman like *Gilda*!" enthuse the advertisements, and with the literal truth of that statement I would not for one moment disagree. But this doesn't mean that she is not very much in evidence. She is.

This film is, in fact, a sort of celluloid strip-tease, its object being to keep the audience in a constant simmer of anticipation. Like all strip-teases it is unedifying, but unlike most it never really gets going. And incidentally it proves just how cynical and hypocritical were American objections to the low-cut Restoration costumes in *The Wicked Lady*: Miss Hayworth's dresses are just as revealing, and the camera lingers just as long and caressingly as in the British film. But at least the *Wicked Lady*, with all her faults, didn't wiggle her hips and croon "Put the Blame on Mame."

ALONG with the sex goes the sadism: you seldom get one without the other these days. *Gilda*, a North American beauty at large in Argentina, has two husbands and, apparently, any number of lovers; and most of them—especially the husbands—seem to be intent on being cruel to her. The first husband (George Macready), a megalomaniac, who runs a high-class gambling-den and dreams of becoming dictator of the world by cornering the tungsten output of the Argentine, confines himself to mental cruelty, an outcome of his passionately jealous nature. But her second husband (Glenn Ford) is more demonstrative; he invariably scowls and snarls at her and once or twice slaps her face, while keeping her under a kind of house arrest in Buenos Aires. This young man (he looks much too young for the tough job he undertakes) was once in love with *Gilda*, you see, but now he has developed a fiercely protective attachment for his boss, the tungsten tycoon, and this causes him to hate the boss's new wife like poison. When the boss