

TIME-TESTED RECIPE

THIS MAN IS MINE

(Columbia)

AMONG the more private memoranda of every successful film producer there is (I like to imagine) one well-thumbed entry which reads something like this: "A Cheap Easy Dish for a Large Public—To the script of one successful stage show, add two or three outdoor sequences, a small handful of stars (preferable with stage experience), and several camera angles. Photograph with one eye on the original stage directions and cut carefully before serving."

Within reasonable limits this recipe is fairly foolproof. If the producer chooses his play sensibly and if the stars know their job the result is at least tolerable entertainment. If the several ingredients are all first-class, the picture can hardly fail to reach the same classification. But there is a danger that the lapse of time between the first appearance of the play (which must run a while before it can prove itself) and the release of the film may leave the latter a trifle passé before it arrives, if you see what I mean. *Dear Ruth*, for example, which reached the New Zealand screen last year after several seasons as a Broadway show, arrived with some of the bloom rubbed off—though it was still passably good entertainment.

This Man is Mine, based on Reginald Beckwith's play *A Soldier for Christmas*, is in many ways very like *Dear Ruth*. This time the setting is an English home, the time is 1942, and the unexpected guests are a Canadian soldier (Hugh McDermott) and a pert little NAAFI (Glynis Johns). Life in the home is already complicated for Father (Tom Walls), Mother (Jeanne de Casalis) and Daughter (Nova Pilbeam) by the presence of another daughter who has run away from her husband, a back-room boy who has been billeted on them (and with whom Miss Pilbeam has fallen in love) and a cook who'd much rather write detective stories. Inevitably, both Miss Pilbeam and Miss Johns set their caps at the Canadian and the story follows the normal routine of comic misunderstanding, mild adventure and final pairing off. The Canadian, being merely a private soldier, knows his place and pairs off with the NAAFI, leaving the daughter of the house to the billetee, who is a Pretty Sound Type (even if he isn't in uniform) and socially quite acceptable. One would need to have lived in wartime England to understand and appreciate all the jokes, but there is no specialised knowledge required to laugh at Jeanne de Casalis' Mrs. Feather routines, and Tom Walls, who has mellowed appreciably with the years, was a good foil for her. I didn't feel so happy about Nova Pilbeam, who hasn't the face for comedy, and doesn't seem to have the inclination either, but apart from her the casting was competently done. McDermott played the part of the soldier with just the right amount of self-assurance—was, in fact,

BAROMETER

FAIR: "This Man is Mine."
OVERCAST: "Her Husband's Affairs."
DULL: "Daisy Kenyon."

a much more credible character than he needed to be in a comedy of this kind.

But it wasn't Miss Pilbeam's face, or Mrs. Feather's faux pas, or the habitual tendency of Tom Walls to indulge in what the Freudians call Tendency Wit that left me brooding. It was the invitation, however unintentional, to look back at those good old days of 1942, when (even if there was a war on) there was plenty of fun and excitement, and when austerity signified only an unfortunate state of mind.

HER HUSBAND'S AFFAIRS

(Columbia)

I SAW two Columbia comedies during the past week—one British and the other American. Of the two I found the British Columbia production (noticed above) much the more amusing. *Her Husband's Affairs*, a crazy comedy at the expense of advertising agents and Big Business, is a good deal more crazy—and correspondingly less comic—than most of Hollywood's earlier attempts in this genre. But in addition to carrying a creaking overload of farce, *Her Husband's Affairs* is apparently also intended to be satirical. One is invited to believe that politicians, business men and publicity agents are amiable but congenital lunatics—a Dangerous Thought surely, considering what politics, business and publicity have already done to the American way of life. In a show of this type, the question of acting ability does not arise, but Lucille Ball emerges reasonably undamaged from the melée—which is more than I can say for Franchot Tone.

DAISY KENYON

(20th Century-Fox)

DAISY KENYON is a tiresomely loquacious account of wild life in the penthouse sector, in which Joan Crawford spends most of her time trying to choose between the wistful charms of Staff-Sergeant Henry Fonda (who has no money, but a poet's soul) and the more highly developed animal magnetism of Dana Andrews (who has a sizeable bankroll and apparently no soul at all). The fact that Mr. Andrews also has a wife and two small daughters who suffer a good deal because of his neglect does not seem to disturb anyone except the wife—though it may cause some concern to those filmgoers whose conception of morality is a little more old-fashioned. The dialogue of *Daisy Kenyon* is as meretricious as the story and the soundtrack is cluttered up with pretentious humbug.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

SIR BEN LOCKSFEISER, one of the world's leading aeronautical scientists, who is in New Zealand on a short visit, granted a film interview to the National Film Unit for presentation in the *Weekly Review*. This talk is featured in Review No. 343 screening at principal theatres through the Dominion during the week beginning April 2. Also in the reel are "Inter-Services Sports" from Wellington and a cricket item "Fiji versus Otago."

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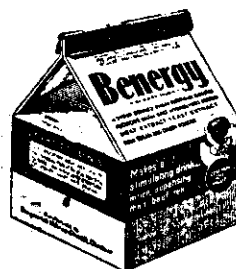
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