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N. McARTHUR
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17/4/41.

Film Reviews by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

KITTY FOYLE

(RKO Radio)

MANY actresses have been called versatile. Few have deserved the description better than Ginger Rogers. She excelled in song-and-dance shows with Fred Astaire; she achieved a big reputation in slick comedies of the *Bachelor Husband* type; and she has not been backward in drama. In almost all her work one quality has been manifest; she is (or she seems to be) the perfect embodiment of the modern American working-girl—self-assured, sophisticated, independent, courageous, and honest with herself.

Neither her versatility nor her honest-to-goodness charm has ever been more apparent than in *Kitty Foyle*. When RKO bought the screen rights of Christopher Morley's novel there were no reports of nation-wide quests for a star, for this story of a typical American working-girl might have been written especially for the typical Miss Rogers. For this reason, perhaps, her winning of the Academy Award for the best performance of 1940 may not appear on the surface to be a very sensational victory. But it was no walk-over, for although *Kitty Foyle* may be typical, she is also complex, and in portraying the character, Ginger Rogers has to use all sides of her talent except one. She must be humorous, sentimental, hard-boiled, starkly tragic. Only her great skill as a dancer is left untested.

Kitty Foyle is a film of character rather than of plot. Its basis is a familiar three-sided affair of two men and a girl, and her difficulty in choosing between them. One man is the reliable, faithful Dr. Mark Eisen (James Craig) whose proposal of marriage *Kitty* accepts as the story opens. No sooner has she thus made up her mind than the other man, the wealthy, blue-blooded Wyn Strafford, VI., turns up again to cast her back on the horns of a dilemma which has existed for nearly 10 years. According to the film (but not the book) Mr. Strafford is *Kitty's* ex-husband, who wants her back—but with unofficial status because he has an existing wife. In order to present the full facts of the dilemma to the audience, *Kitty's* conscience appears as her image in a mirror and argues the point with her about following her head (by marrying the doctor) or her heart (by going away with the socialite, whom she still loves and always will). And so, by a series of flashbacks, the sad but not inglorious tale of *Kitty Foyle* is told, from the time when she is 15 years old, living with her Irish father on the wrong side of the railway tracks in Philadelphia. On the other side, among the blue bloods



GINGER ROGERS

The Academy has voted her "*Kitty Foyle*" best for 1940

of one of America's most snobbish cities, lives Wyn Strafford VI. The difference in their social status is the tragedy of their young lives—but *Kitty's* ultimate solution of her problem will be a relief to most members of the audience.

Though I found several aspects of *Kitty Foyle* to be mildly critical about, (such as the fact that dresses and hairstyles were not always true to period and that neither *Kitty* nor her father was sufficiently Irish) only one thing about the picture aroused my annoyance. That was the too obvious attempt to make both the story and the characters more respectable than their author created them. Would it have been so bad for our morals if *Kitty's* child had been born out of wedlock—or even if it had been suggested that it wasn't born at all? And the favourite cuss-word of the Foyles certainly wasn't such a puerile expression as "Judas priest." I also thought the square-cut profile of Dennis Morgan as Wyn was just a trifle over-worked.

However, an occasional twinge of annoyance didn't spoil my enjoyment of the whole show, nor detract from my admiration of the star's performance. Though it didn't even dampen my eyelids, I shouldn't be surprised if this is rated as a three-handkerchief picture for women.

ARISE MY LOVE

(Paramount)

"ARISE my love, my fair one, and come away." Solomon to his beautiful favourite was not more triumphant when he said this than was Ray Milland when he repeated it—no, not to Claudette Colbert, but to his aeroplane.

You see, Ray Milland had just escaped from a rather nasty jam in a rather nice way. He was a free-lance airman, condemned to death after the Spanish Civil War for being on the wrong side. Imagine his surprise when he was set free because his only wife—and he a bachelor—had collapsed in tears and had blown the nose of the prison commandant! Incidentally, she had another intriguing habit—biting people's noses.

In light comedy of this type, and in burlesque, the picture excels. The dialogue is bright, amusing. Ray Milland philosophises on love in his usual off-hand manner, Claudette Colbert describes the ideal nightout to an expectant escort, and resolutely gets on with her job of being a "career woman." The wrong villain is knocked on the head with the best crockery, the hero declares himself a woman-hater and immediately goes on the spree, the heroine sets out for Berlin and ends up in the Forest of Compiègne, the journalists in the case are just as harassed as those in any other picture.

The plot is supposed to be good; it gained the Academy Award for the most original screen story. I don't often disagree with the results of these awards, because they are usually so true; but I feel I must say this: If *Arise, My Love* is original, the ideas are so good that they've been anticipated in nearly every other recent American picture with a European or journalistic setting.

There's a good deal of moralising, too, and oceans of sentimentality for good measure. In this film, at any rate, Paramount seems to have made the mistake of trying to cater for all tastes simultaneously. If you like a good laugh, see the first half of the picture and then creep quietly home. If you enjoy a good cleansing weep, or being beaten into a jelly of jingoistic emotions, sneak in the back entrance about ten o'clock. Any time after that you should find scope for an emotion of some sort.

On the whole, however, *Arise My Love* is quite passable entertainment.

NO TIME FOR COMEDY

(Warner Bros.)

IN spite of the fact that I am an admirer both of Jimmy Stewart and Rosalind Russell, I went along to see this film rather despondently, for I had the idea that I was in for still another crazy comedy. And I am feeling just a little tired of crazy comedies and of seeing Rosalind Russell—a pleasant, charming soul—forced to caper around in nightmarish creations, looking like something surrealist or psychopathic or whatnot. So it was a great relief to find her once more in her right mind and respectably clothed in almost the kind of garments your wife or mine might wear. And although the plot was as old as them that hills it was certainly not crazy comedy.

(Continued on next page)

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