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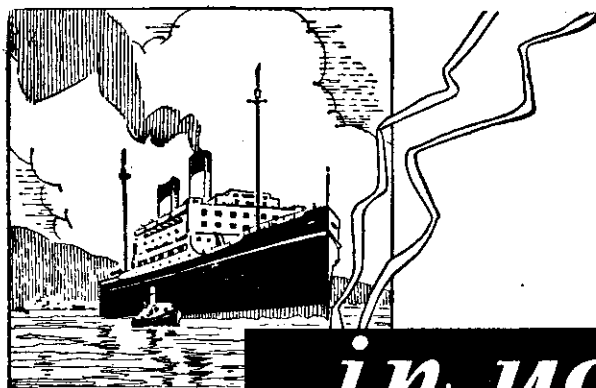
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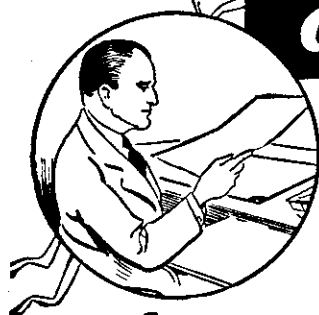
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11/14.

Film Reviews By G. M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

PENNY SERENADE

(Columbia)



THE sense of smell and the sense of taste are supposed to be the best mediums for arousing nostalgia. (The taste of caper sauce always sends me back a good many years to a certain riotous Sam. Weller Swarry which I attended as a fledgling reporter, but I'd best not go into that.) Next in potency as a memory-reviver are probably old tunes ("Moonlight and Roses" always does something to me). In *Penny Serenade*, Columbia have used the device of the replayed melody to tell in retrospect the romance and chequered domesticity of Roger Adams (Cary Grant) and his wife Julie (Irene Dunne). While Julie packs up to leave her husband in the opening scene, she plays over her collection of favourite recordings, and as each disc revolves it recalls old associations, sentimental, tragic, or happy as the case may be, and explains the reason for the impending break-up in the Adams household.

Or rather, it tries to explain, for the reason given hardly bears close examination. After a whirlwind courtship, Roger and Julie Adams settle in Tokio, where he is a foreign correspondent, but an earthquake which is terrifying enough to make one glad it is only faked shatters their home and their hopes of happy parenthood, condemning Julie to

a childless future. Back in America, their marriage becomes increasingly aimless until they adopt an orphan baby and suffer some of the pangs of parenthood by proxy, providing in one or two sequences some of the most delicious comedy seen in any picture for a long time. But this felicity doesn't last for them or the audience; their adopted daughter dies suddenly, and the husband allows his grief to turn him into a selfish, sulking boor, who sends himself and his wife to coventry, and finally drives her to call a cab to go home to mother. Only the fortunate discovery that there are other babies to be adopted saves the situation and should enable the feminine portion of the audience to put away their last handkerchiefs unsodden.

The husband's cruelly self-centred behaviour is the unsatisfactory part of the story. I hope I shall not seem to libel Cary Grant too much if I say that, while I always half expect him to act boorishly in every picture, in this particular one such behaviour is scarcely in character. But for the most part the direction and acting is good enough to save what is frankly a "tear-jerker" from becoming objectionably maudlin. The device of telling the story by memory-reviving gramophone discs is ingenious and doesn't run flat, though occasionally the needle scratches and sticks in a groove; and in recording the death of the adopted daughter the director has withstood the temptation to pile on the agony. Radically departing from the style of crazy farce which they established as co-stars in *The Awful Truth* and *My Favourite Wife*, Irene Dunne and Cary Grant (apart from the flaw in character I've mentioned) put a great deal of human nature and natural comedy into roles that might easily have been ruined by over-emphasis.

If you see *Penny Serenade*, watch for that window which slams down of its own accord every time a door is opened. An obvious director's trick, it interested me because of its apparently sinister purpose (will the small daughter be guillotined? I kept wondering), and also because the director so plainly forgot to do anything about it.

THIRD FINGER, LEFT HAND (M.G.M.)



THIS is the standard M.G.M. bread-and-butter picture, with Myrna Loy as the strawberry jam. It is light, amusing, decorative, unimportant stuff. Alexander Korda says that there are only seven film-story plots. This one is an old friend—the triangle adjusted to form a comedy of situation in which Melvyn Douglas woos Myrna Loy by posing as a husband whom she claims exists, but does not. She is the editor of a woman's magazine for the first two reels and the hypothetical husband is her protection against ill-feeling from the suspicious wife of her employer. When Melvyn Douglas at last turns up at the family mansion and is admitted as the long lost husband, the story begins to gather way towards a conclusion which readers may or may not be able to guess.

The formula is obvious. It is used over and over again—because it is successful. This is good box office material and it is well done, according to the formula.

Who blames the dairy farmer for keeping up his deliveries to the factory? Who, then, will blame M.G.M. for keeping up their deliveries? They do it often, but they do it well. The production technique is sound, the stars popular, there's a joke ever so often, several excellent scenes, and Myrna Loy's perennially attractive retroussé nose.

COME LIVE WITH ME

(M.G.M.)



AFTER seeing Hedy Lamarr in *Boom Town* and now in *Come Live With Me*, I am being driven to the conclusion that the furore she created in *Extase*, in her pre-Hollywood days, was due less to acting ability than to other considerations. Maybe I do her an injustice. Her will-to-act may have succumbed to the inexorable pressure of Hollywood "grooming," but whatever may be the cause, Director Clarence Brown does not seem to have been able to make her act in this latest sentimental comedy. She is very, very decorative, I grant you, but I am getting to the age when I want more than that. And I have the feeling that in *Come Live With Me*, James Stewart suffers from the same sentiment.

(Continued on next page)



LESSON IN PARENTHOOD: Edgar Buchanan demonstrates the one-pin triangular method to Irene Dunne and Cary Grant. A scene from "Penny Serenade"