


SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE BRIDE CAME C.O.D.

(Warner Bros.)

 OR, as some of the advertisements rather fatuously elaborated it, *The Bride Came Cash on Delivery*, is a film which I imagine made Miss Lejeune jump with joy, for it completely and delightfully ignores the march of international events between September, 1939, and the present day. And there is no reason why it should not also delight New Zealanders.


I felt (and I think you will, too) that in making this film Bette Davis was determined to pack *The Little Foxes* in their cardboard boxes and have a day off from drama. But though there is an under-current of irresponsibility throughout the picture, and though satire is one of the main ingredients, the show stands on its own feet and demonstrates (if any demonstration were needed) that whatever may be said about the general run of Hollywood stars, Bette Davis and James Cagney can act.

As a glamour-girl accustomed to having her slightest actions chronicled by press and radio, Miss Davis has a field-day tilting at those empty-headed lovelies on the social register (and the screen) who live by and for publicity. When the story opens, she is preparing (with the aid of press and radio) to elope with a band leader in Mr. Cagney's hire-purchase 'plane, but Mr. Cagney (whose 'plane is due to be seized by the finance company) arranges with her father to kidnap the wench and return her to him unmarried for 1,150 dollars—115lb. of freight at ten dollars a pound—being the amount still due on his machine. The glamour girl's disgust at being snatched for so paltry a sum (Cagney explains that he is a beginner at the game) sets the key for the whole comedy, which should keep you quietly chuckling. And Cagney is good. I will admit to a prejudice in favour of him. I like his du Maurier technique—his "I love you, damn you" methods.

There is a strong supporting cast. In fact, if Hollywood could always turn out a show as good in its way as this one, it would be sure of my cash on delivery, every time.

THE FLEET'S IN

(Paramount)


 AND, dear me, how those American sailors do enjoy themselves! Nor, I think, will you fail to do likewise, since it is apparently the Pacific Fleet, and it comes in at the Golden Gate, Cal., which is apparently second only to Los Angeles as a home of pulchritude (*Non angli, sed Angeles*, as Columbus put it.). And of course, there is Miss Lamour, sans sarong this time, but for part of the time at least positively popping out of an exotic evening gown, seductively slashed in several places. Lamour la merrier, as they say in the South Seas. Miss Lamour sings, but don't let that discourage you. By a little selective tuning, you can listen

instead to Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra, who provide the accompaniment and if you like that kind of thing you will, well, like it, I suppose. Me, I liked the wisecracks, and there is a cabaret show in the final sequence that could rate as a *Command Performance*, with some first-class eccentric dancing and comedy turns. In fact, if *The Fleet's In* is typical of Paramount's contribution to the 200 American war films we are threatened with, Miss Lejeune has been over-pessimistic in her apprehensions. But, on second thoughts, I doubt it. The show is probably pre-Pearl Harbour. Maybe that's why I enjoyed it.

(Memo: Must find out if the opposition to Roosevelt's Two-Ocean Navy came from the Pacific Fleet lower deck).

WOMEN OF THE YEAR

(M.G.M.)

 A TITLE like that is a temptation, a temptation to talk about the Story of the Year—the year 1903 and every year since. For the plot of this film is at least as old as the movies (c.f. *Taming of the Shrew* for an even earlier version). Worse than that (for it really can't help its age) it is almost completely threadbare: hardly a single new idea covers its tired old bones. It wheezes painfully along for about 10,000 feet, cuts a caper or two, and then, in apparent despair at ever finding a satisfactory resting-place, just folds up and dies. If it hadn't been for those occasional capers (the wedding night sequence particularly), and the fact that two interesting and capable stars were doing their best with the barren possibilities of the theme, I think that when the lights went up you might have found our little man folded up in his seat fast asleep—if he hadn't joined the exodus which began among the audience soon after the halfway mark. As it was he found enough interest in the acting and in the personality of Katharine Hepburn to keep him awake, and even upright in his seat; he even found occasion for a few good laughs, and some appreciative chuckles at the dialogue.

But that is regrettably little to be able to say in favour of a major production with stars like Miss Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. I may add that, after a dull run of pictures, I went to *Women of the Year* with my defences down, almost anxious to be entertained, but I came away more than ever convinced that Hollywood is at present in a bad spell of the doldrums. The story? Career versus Marriage. She is a highbrow columnist on international affairs, he is a lowbrow sports writer. They marry, and the fact that she is acclaimed as America's Most Outstanding Woman of the Year does not much impress her down-to-earth husband, who prefers a woman about the house. Unless they get better material than this I am afraid that Miss Hepburn may be the forgotten woman of next year, and Tracy the forgotten man.

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G.M.

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