

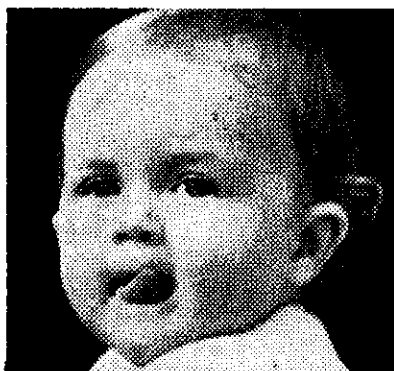


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Film Reviews by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE GLASS KEY

(Paramount)

[T is eight years since Paramount first made *The Glass Key* as a vehicle for George Raft, but this Dashiell Hammett story should still be acceptable fare for picturegoers who retain a palate for strong-flavoured racketeering melodrama. Now the star is Alan Ladd, who made such a favourable impression in *This Gun for Hire*. Brian Donlevy plays second fiddle as the ambitious but unpolished political boss who gets mixed up in murder and high society, and Veronica Lake is also in the orchestra.

Alan Ladd must, I think, have gone to the same acting school as Alan Baxter: they have the same air of innocent villainy and deadly calm. (If you have forgotten what Alan Baxter looks like, I suggest you see him in Hitchcock's *Saboteur*, which I hope to review next week). Not that Alan Ladd is, strictly speaking, a villain in *The Glass Key*: though he is mixed up in murder and mayhem, he takes it much more than he dishes it out, being battered about most brutally in the role of Donlevy's loyal lieutenant. As a reward, he gets the girl.

ALWAYS IN MY HEART

(Warner Bros.)

MAYBE Universal have found a gold-mine in their new young star, Diana Barrymore; so let's suggest that Warner Bros. have found something just as good, perhaps better — a rubber plantation. Or did Warner Bros. not "find" Gloria Warren? Did she, as the advertisements for *Always in My Heart* seemed to suggest, "find" Warner Bros.? Or is the finding mutual? I expect we'll be able to decide, round about her film after the next. In the meantime we're happy to sit down and listen to a very sweet voice, to watch a charming and joyous face, as Gloria Warren fifteen, brunette, oval-faced, and lively introduces herself.

It seems that Kay Francis has had to resign herself to being a mother to young screen stars in their teens; the other week it was Diana Barrymore, this week it's Gloria Warren—who will it be next week? Well, never mind, I much prefer to see her that way (if I have to see her at all).

Always in My Heart is the name of a song written in prison by Walter Huston; he's a musician; years ago he went to prison for a crime he didn't commit; and to save the children from the disgrace there was a divorce and Kay Francis bravely brought up her son and daughter believing that their father was long-dead — quite a useful belief when it came to the time that a wealthy suitor for their mother appeared with presents of speed-boats, cars, new pianos, small white fluffy dogs, and what will you. We, the audience, walk in to their lives just as Kay Francis decides to marry the man and goes to the gaol to tell the father. But we know something that she doesn't know; we know that the father has just received his pardon. So we also know

what a noble thing he does when he tells her to go ahead, marry the man, for the sake of the children.

Well, the father is pardoned. And, of course, he can't resist going home just to stand quietly on the street corner to have a look at the children. After that, of course, he'll go quietly away and they'll never know. But... his daughter has a Voice; he is a Musician... and besides, he would like to work among the musical people of fish-town, in the poor district far away from his children's home on the other side of the town. Besides, the daughter brings her Voice there sometimes and sings with the fisher-folk (Borah Minnevitich with his amusing mouth-organ and all his dancing, prancing raggedy boys with their tin-whistles and their mouth-organs). So you see how it works out. Which is all very satisfactory for everyone—except the wealthy suitor; but then, of course, he still has Lots of Money.

Well, next time Gloria Warren is billed I'll be an interested member of the audience.

A YANK AT ETON

(M.G.M.)

A GOOD many people may have suspected that the English public school system and particularly its most famous manifestation, Eton, are a bit of a joke, but it takes Mickey Rooney to put the matter beyond doubt. Whatever may be the virtues of the system—and even its fiercest opponents will give it credit for some—they fail to appear in *A Yank at Eton*. What does appear is a conglomeration of burlesque, sentimentality, and rough-house comedy that may amuse but will hardly edify.

When the most glaringly American young man on the screen goes to the most painfully English of institutions, he is at first full of healthy revolt against the snobbery, bullying and hide-bound conventions that he encounters, but the historic traditions of the place finally "get him," whereupon he works hard at his cricket and his Latin verbs and becomes a member of the "Library" in Edmund Gwenn's House, a position entitling him to wear tails with his topper, carry an umbrella, walk arm-in-arm with the other prefects while singing the Eton Boating Song, and to do unto the fags as was done unto him.

Master Rooney's transformation into an English public school boy (not entirely complete because he announces that he is going back to the States to play real football at Harvard), is assisted by Master Freddie Bartholomew, who is very much at home, Ian Hunter, Edmund Gwenn, Virginia Wiedler, and an infinitesimal earl named Inky, and it is temporarily hampered by Juanita Quigley and one or two Cads. It reaches its climax on those famous Playing Fields when Master Rooney, holding on to his topper with one hand and holding up his striped underpants with the other, wins the Steeplechase.

I admit that I got plenty of laughs, but some of them were probably in the wrong places, and I am more than ever at a loss to understand how on earth we managed to win the Battle of Waterloo.



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