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Film Reviews by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

YOU WERE NEVER LOVELIER

(Columbia)



[F the title refers to Rita Hay-
worth I would have to dis-
agree. She was lovelier in the
technicolour hues of *Blood and
Sand* than she is in this film.
But she is still lovely enough to cause
a traffic jam if she ever walked down a
Wellington street while the Marines
were about.

The title can't refer to Fred Astaire
either, because whatever you might call
Mr. Astaire, you would never call him
lovely. Nice-ugly would be more like it.
They may, of course, be talking about
his dancing, in which case I suppose it
should be *You Were Never Livelier*.
Even then, I think, he has been a good
deal livelier in several of his other pic-
tures, though he still uses his two feet
to better advantage than any other
dancer on the screen.

On the whole, I think it's just a film
title: one of those labels they put on a
movie when they can't think of anything
better—like the kind of plot they put
in musical shows in general, and rather
like the plot they have put in this
musical show in particular. For some
unknown reason five authors laboured
over it, which seems to me to be some-
thing that Mr. Roosevelt's Manpower
Office might investigate. It shouldn't take
five authors to turn out a story about
an Argentine hotel magnate (Adolphe
Menjou), who insists that his three
daughters must get married in order of
seniority. Unfortunately for the two
younger love-sick girls, their elder sister
(Rita Hayworth), is reputed to be a
trifle frigid because she fell in love with
the poetic conception of Young Lochin-
var at the age of 16, and nobody since
has measured up to him. Fond father
lays a trap for her affections; both he
and Fred Astaire fall into it; and there
is a good deal of romantic and not par-
ticularly amusing milling around before
the curtain falls on the accustomed
finale.

Still, it is, after all, a musical show,
which means that the story is primarily
something for Astaire and Miss Hay-
worth to dance and occasionally sing
through, and this they do to the accom-
paniment of Xavier Cugat's rhumba
band and the evident satisfaction of
most of their fans (among whom, with
some critical reservations, I am pleased
to be numbered).

FOREVER AND A DAY

(RKO Radio)



[H]ERE again there has been
a most lavish expenditure
of manpower, but this time it
was for a worthy and pat-
riotic purpose, so any com-
plaints on that score would be out of
order. In the production of *Forever and
a Day*, seven directors and producers,
21 writers and 78 stars gave their ser-
vices free. They were mostly British
members of the Hollywood colony, and
they did it in gratitude for American
contributions to war relief in Great
Britain. When the film is shown in New
Zealand, the profits will be devoted to
charity.

Naturally perhaps, with so much
talent at work, you do get a slight feel-

ing from the film of *embarras des rich-
esses*. So many stars keep popping out
and twinkling briefly that it becomes a
kind of game trying to identify them—
a game which I hereby entitle cinem-
astronomy. But if there is rather too
much of a good thing, it is still a pretty
good thing, this story in the *Cavalcade*
style about an old house in London and
the people who occupy it from the day it
is built in 1804 by a fire-eating old admiral
(C. Aubrey Smith), until it is wrecked
by a Nazi bomb while the modern
American hero and the modern English
heroine and a crowd of Londoners are
safely sheltering in its cellars. There
is the admiral's son (Ray Milland), who
is killed at Trafalgar; the girl (Anna
Neagle), who marries him after running
away from her wicked guardian (Claude
Rains); Ian Hunter and — I think—
Jessie Matthews as the Victorian couple
who make a fortune from iron bath-tubs
after Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Buster
Keaton (two plumbers), have noisily
demonstrated the possibilities; Edward
Everett Horton as a crusty Edwardian;
the coal-heaving Brian Aherne and the
housemaidly Ida Lupino, who emi-
grate to America; Robert Cummings as
an American twig of the family in the
Great War I. sequence after the house
has been turned into a private hotel
accommodating Roland Young, Nigel
Bruce, Gladys Cooper (yes, I think
that's who it was), and Merle Oberon.
Then there's Charles Laughton as a
bibulous butler, Elsa Lanchester as a
giggling maid, Herbert Marshall as a
parson, and dozens of lesser luminaries
whom ardent cinemastronomers will
probably recognise and remember more
successfully than I could.

NIGHTMARE

(Universal)



[I]f you don't find a theatre
seat a comfortable place
for an evening's snooze, take
along a couple of cushions
when you go to see *Night-
mare*, for it won't keep you awake long,
even if you go interested, as I was, to
see how Diana Barrymore makes out in
her new film. The corpse is there, the
dagger is there (in the corpse), the dark
night and the shadows are there all
right — but no nightmare that I could
detect. Plenty of Brian Donlevy (too
much, in fact, if he's going to make a
habit of being romantic in his shirt-
sleeves), plenty of Diana Barrymore
acting with full dramatic school honours
and much too much make-up on her
upper lip, which is probably quite a
pretty shape if left to its own inclina-
tions, and plenty of action and change
of scene from London to bonny Scot-
land. But devil a nightmare and devil a
thrill.

And I'm sadly disappointed in the
young Barrymore. I found *Between Us
Girls* so refreshing and so well done I
can hardly believe that this is Miss
Barrymore's third attempt — it strikes
me rather as a first attempt which
looked so much like a sure-fire money-
loser that Universal decided to keep
Nightmare in cold storage until *Between
Us Girls* had rosied up the spectacles
of the exhibitors. But I may be wrong.

I don't know why it's called *Night-
mare*. *Forty Winks* would have been
more apt.

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