

ROLLING HOME . . .

THE LONG, LONG TRAILER
(M.G.M.)

THE credit-list tells me that this film was "based on a novel by Clinton Twiss," and though Mr. Twiss has not yet entered the orbit of my circulating library I wouldn't question our indebtedness to him. But I would suggest (in the interests of historical accuracy) that *The Long, Long Trailer* really started rolling back in 1951 when a bouncing strawberry blonde made her first appearance on the TV screens of the U.S. The blonde was Lucille Ball and the show (in which her husband Desi Arnaz appeared with her) was called *I Love Lucy*. Like so many other domestic comedy series, the show (as one commentator put it) held a somewhat grotesque mirror up to middle-class life and found its humour in exaggerating the commonplace incidents of marriage, business and the home.

But there was more to it than that. Lucille Ball and her husband are both "hams" (they admit the fragrant impeachment), and their comedy relationship is much the same as that of Burns and Allen, but Mrs. Arnaz is a particularly glamorous clown, and Mr. A., if

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "The Long, Long Trailer."
FAIR: "Always a Bride."

not tall, is at least dark and handsome. Within six months they had a weekly audience of 30,000,000, and had become the No. 1 TV show. Since then they have stayed at the top of the poll (unless *Dragnet* has displaced them in recent weeks), and because Hollywood knows that 30,000,000 Americans can't be wrong, *The Long, Long Trailer*—or something like it—was bound to turn up.

It's an easy film to enjoy, particularly if you are prepared to let your inhibitions down and take the slapstick as it comes. Occasionally I could manage only a feeble grin when the rest of the theatre was in a roar, but I imagine that was because I blew a fuse or two back in the Mack Sennett days and didn't bother to replace them. To see a comely comic dunked in liquid mud or doused in flour doesn't seem as funny as once it did—I keep thinking of the mess that has to be cleaned up.

Over and above the slapstick, however, there is a solid helping of good clean fun, and a fair measure of wit, too. Like

its TV prototype, the film exaggerates the frustrations and mishaps of everyday existence. It takes a wry look at high pressure salesmanship, and Higher Purchase, at women drivers (from and back seat), trailer-camp life (which seems to be run on holiday-camp lines) and—of course—the immemorial idiosyncracies of husbands and wives. It is like looking at our own minor misfortunes through a rose-coloured telescope. Dilemmas are magnified to classic proportions, but the consequential troubles of the prosaic daily round are tactfully faded out. And who will say that it isn't better fun that way?

The Long, Long Trailer is pleasantly photographed in full colour, which makes the most of Lucille Ball's strawberry locks, and played with gusto by the entire cast. It will probably remind you of *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, and I'm sure you'll enjoy it just as much.



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