

Recommended for Adults

THE TENDER TRAP

(M.G.M.-CinemaScope)

A Cert.

LOVE is the Tender Trap and I suppose, in the vulgar phrase, it is essentially a trap for young players. But that's not quite how I feel about this movie. Definitely unsuitable for children, of course, and its bouquet largely wasted on the twenty-year-olds, this is a film for the amusement of the middle-aged. No, on second thoughts, let's not be too brutal with ourselves—say, rather, those about to contemplate middle-age. Filmgoers in the higher age-brackets will *mutatis mutandis*, enjoy it too.

After that, you will no doubt be expecting me to describe *The Tender Trap* (director, Charles Walters) as sophisticated comedy, and this I do rather reluctantly. It is sophisticated, to be sure, in the sense that it is worldly-wise, but there's more to it than a glittering superficiality; there is a modicum of wisdom as well as wit, and there's a warmth that is as delightful as it is unexpected.

The principal player (certainly the highest-paid one) is Frank Sinatra, whose singing invariably appals me, but whose ability as an actor (particularly when he plays Sinatra) I find just as invariably entertaining. Here, as an unspecified type of New York theatrical agent, he is right in the groove, and is himself to the manner born. But if you happen to be one of those who don't care particularly for Sinatra, don't be put off. There are others present. In spite of his undoubted ability, Sinatra has the show stolen from under his nose by two supporting players—David Wayne and Celeste Holm. Without these two the piece could still have been gay and witty and smart—it's a screen play from a stage play, and the lines have sparkle and polish—but they give it warmth and an authentic tenderness. Miss Holm I found particularly delightful—she may not be as slim as she once was, but in skill and charm she has a head start on the younger lovelies in the picture. Chief of these is Debbie Reynolds, teamed opposite Sinatra. Beside Miss Holm she is almost too much the ingenue, and there is, besides, a derivative flavour about her part which she can't quite conceal. Maggie McNamara would have done more with it, and indeed did more once in a blue moon.

As a movie in the literal sense, *The Tender Trap* does not move much. Dialogue and acting are all. CinemaScope,



DAVID WAYNE, CELESTE HOLM
An authentic tenderness

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 7, 1956.

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "The Tender Trap."
OVERCAST: "Cockleshell Heroes."
OVERCAST: "Artists and Models."

it is true, once more proves itself to be the right shape for recording life in the plushier New York apartments, but don't look for other than routine competence in the sets and photography—they do little more than give you a seat on the legitimate stage. But with acting of legitimate quality, you may well be content.

COCKLESHELL HEROES

(Columbia)

G Cert.

GAD (I thought) snuffing the ozone in the foyer ("This theatre is disinfected daily, etc."), how perfectly splendid—after all those *Halls of Montezuma* and things—to feel that the Royal (or real) Marines are going to get a build-up for a change. A couple of hours later I was back on the side-walk in a wave of cash-customers, making the now familiar agonising reappraisal. Was that "one of the most amazing true stories in the history of human courage"? Was it a reasonable portrayal of that *corps d'élite* beside whom even the Guards are amateurs? That, I felt, was something I would not dare tell to the Marines, however much it deserved to be told.

Tell it to the Marines indeed! If I were José Ferrer (who produced and directed this mélange of fact, farce and fiction) I wouldn't dare enter Pompey, not even disguised as Toulouse-Lautrec.

Cockleshell Heroes purports to tell the story of a group of Marine commandos who, using kayak-type canoes and carrying limpet mines, travelled 70 miles up the Gironde to Bordeaux and blew up most of the enemy merchant ships in harbour there. It's a fair story. What the film lacks is any sustained conviction in the telling. Indeed, the one convincing element in the show is the expression of disciplined disgust which Trevor Howard is called upon to wear most of the time. It could not have been much trouble to assume.

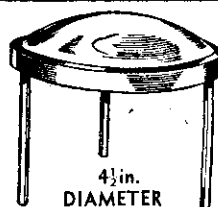
Howard has the part of a regular R.M. captain who has to act as administrative officer to Ferrer, a temporary Marine officer with unorthodox ideas. There is some interest in the clash of these two (though it is difficult to imagine the circumstance arising quite as the film shows it), but this fruitful source of drama is almost completely overlaid by farcically comic treatment of the initial training of the commandos, and once the conflict is resolved by a quite unconvincing portrayal of the canoe journey. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, and radio abhors silence, so apparently the screen abhors total darkness. That's understandable. But it's no excuse for showing the kayak crews paddling up-river and finally setting the Gironde off fire in conditions of visibility which suggest high noon rather than the small hours. In many ways the Nazis may have been shortsighted, but not that way.

ARTISTS AND MODELS

(Paramount-Vista-Vision)

G Cert.

THIS, while it will no doubt satisfy those who like Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, didn't satisfy me, since I'm still at the stage of trying to like them. I feel that if Mr. Lewis didn't try so hard, I wouldn't need to try hard either. I don't believe, however, that a piece of funny business is necessarily three times as funny if done three times, and that is apparently an article of faith with him. *Artists and Models*, which tilts at comic books, comic-book addicts and TV panels on delinquency, has the makings of good comedy (and I found Shirley MacLaine diverting), but the total effect was tedious.



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