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Film Reviews, by Jno.

# GUY'S AND DOLLS

## THE FEMININE TOUCH

(Rank-Ealing)

G Cert.

[F you're planning a book on hospital life—and, if you have the know-how, a more or less normal confinement or appendectomy is good for five hundred pages of chatty reminiscence any day—there are two generally accepted modes of approach. You can take the high road of dedication and vocation along with George Sava, Morton (*Not as a Stranger*) Thompson, et al., or you can barge cheerfully along the low road with the authors of *Doctor in the House*, *One Pair of Feet*, *Softly, Softly Tourniquet*, etc., etc. Either route, with any luck, leads to the film studios, or at the very least to the digests and another carboic soap opera.

*The Feminine Touch*—made with the co-operation of Guy's Hospital and based somewhat vaguely on *A Lamp is Heavy*, by Sheila MacKay Russell—seemed to me undecided whether to go all out for the *mystique* of nursing or the cheerier and more basic comedy of bunions and bedpans. If I suggest, therefore, that the director (Pat Jackson) has fallen between two stools you will (I trust) see what I mean. Of course I know that life is a mixture of high aspirations and low comedy, just as I know that all the clichés of situation, behaviour and response which turn up in this story repeat themselves endlessly in the lives of countless people. But clichés don't make good entertainment and to achieve a lifelike mixture of comedy and drama demands more skill in the blending, and better integration, than has been achieved here. I suspect, however, that the casting department didn't make Mr. Jackson's task any easier. There are one or two quite good characterisations among the minor players—and Delphi Lawrence effectively suggests the toughness that some nurses seem to acquire. But Miss Belinda Lee, the principal player, never manages to look more than a glamour girl. And Guy's and dolls of that sort just don't mix at all.

## IT'S GREAT TO BE YOUNG

(Associated British-Warners)

G Cert.

[DON'T know what educationists—especially co-educationists—would say about this picture (if indeed they could be persuaded that it was worth a pronouncement), but if I were viewing it *in loco magistri*, I'd be inclined to regard it as subversive. A film which shows secondary schoolboys and schoolgirls flouting or circumventing school rules (and even staging a successful sit-down strike) could be regarded as prejudicial to good order and scholastic discipline, however respectable the intentions of the offenders—and as every schoolmaster knows, good order is hard enough to maintain anyway. *It's Great to be Young* is, however, a comedy and teenagers will probably find it more a safety valve for their enthusiasms than an incentive to direct action. All the same, I was a little disappointed that a good initial idea had not received better treatment.

The trouble at Angel Hill Grammar School begins when a new headmaster (Cecil Parker) decides that too much school time is being wasted in orchestral

## BAROMETER

MAINLY FAIR: "The Feminine Touch."  
MAINLY FAIR: "It's Great to be Young."  
MAINLY FAIR: "The Animal World."

practices and orders them cut down to a point which threatens the school's chances in the inter-school orchestral festival. This provokes near-rebellion and when, as a result of further arguments about new instruments, the popular Mr. Dingle (John Mills) resigns, the children stage a near-riot and strike to force his reinstatement.

With a little more restraint in its treatment *It's Great to be Young* might have been quite a good film. The value of music in school life, and as a mode of self-expression, is worth making a film about, but this one has been spoiled by quite needless exaggerations of behaviour (and for that matter of musical accomplishment). But it has some pleasant passages and I enjoyed seeing John Mills out of naval uniform—though in the end it was Cecil Parker who won all of my sympathy.



John Mills

## THE ANIMAL WORLD

(Windsor Productions)

G Cert.

ANY film which has been "two billion years in the making" (the plug for *The Animal World*) deserves attention, for what after all is an hour and a half in two billion years—even if they are American-style billions? But, of course, there's the rub! No amount of credit-squeezing could leave room enough for more than a hasty glance at one or two of the great evolutionary epochs, and in this film one is made rather conscious of the gaps.

The writer-producer-director is Irwin Allen, whose screen version of Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us* won an Academy Award a year or two ago, and the present movie starts off in much the same fashion as its predecessor—with the primeval sea and the primitive organisms first engendered in it. Or at least, something like these first organisms. The micro-photographic sequences in the film are first-class and give one a pretty fair notion of how vigorous—and ruthless—the life-force is, but the producer is less happy in his representation of the age of reptiles, though I have no doubt at all that the battles of the tyrannosaurus and the triceratops will satisfy the most lurid imaginings of the younger generation. Rather too much time has been given to this section of the film, and while the manipulation of the models (all walkie-talkies too) is ingenious they remain models. Once the dinosaurs have disappeared the pace of pre-history becomes a little dizzy. The age of mammals has no sooner dawned than the great ice age cuts the most fascinating of them off and we find ourselves among the familiar fauna of our time. And, with Disney and others already vigorously tilling this corner of the vineyard they are familiar. Mr. Shaw does avoid Disney's sentimental attitudes (and, in general, his orchestration) but he can't help following a well-beaten trail. When he does step aside (to show us the massacre of a zebra by lionesses, for example) he can give us an authentic chill, but that doesn't happen often enough.



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