

SPEAKING CANDIDLY... REVIEWS of the NEW FILMS

Deanna Durbin At That Certain Age

["That Certain Age." Universal. Directed by Edward Ludwig. Starring Deanna Durbin, Melvyn Douglas, Jackie Cooper. First release: Wellington, November 17.]

IN my time I have had some pretty nasty things to say about the way Hollywood makes pictures, and I shall probably continue to find reasons to say them. But there is at present one special aspect of Hollywood production which earns my unqualified admiration. That is the way they are handling Deanna Durbin and other young players at the age that used to be known as "awkward."

Life on the screen once used to come to an almost full stop at the age of 12 (when child prodigies usually sank into oblivion), and then it began again about 20, with love in full bloom. It has taken

the movie industry a long time to realise that there is an age between, and that youngsters in their 'teens are extremely interesting and entertaining folk. Once having made this discovery, however, Hollywood has shown surprisingly good sense and good taste in exploiting it. From the comedy and drama of adolescence have come some of the most honestly attractive films of the past year or so, and some of the most refreshingly natural performances. The best to date is Deanna Durbin's new picture, "That Certain Age."

Tender Plant

FRANKLY, I don't know how they do it—make each Deanna Durbin picture better than the last. Allowing for all the loving care which Universal Studios naturally lavish on their most valuable asset, there must eventually come a point beyond which it is impossible to go. When I saw "100 Men and a Girl" and "Mad About Music," I thought the peak had been reached. Now I know that it wasn't.

Perhaps the explanation is that Universal are letting Deanna's pictures grow up with her. In "Mad About Music," we saw the first budding of innocent young love for the 15-year-old star. In "That Certain Age," the bud has opened further; but Producer Joe Pasternak, the chief gardener who tends the precious cinematic plant, has seen to it that there is no forcing.

He has forestalled any suggestion of precocity by treating Miss Durbin's romantic burgeoning as a subject for very wholesome laughter. Young Lochinvar is there, to be sure, ready, perhaps, in two or three pictures to carry Deanna off to the altar; but at the moment the main emphasis is on old Lochinvar.

The really serious object of Deanna's passionate yearnings—which the audience never takes seriously—is a man at least twice her age. She has what I believe is technically known as a "crush" on Melvyn Douglas.

Perfectly Written

WHAT shall I praise most—the acting, the direction, or the story? The story, I think, because it represents one of the finest examples of script-writing to have come out of Hollywood.

You will applaud Deanna's performance for its intelligence and light-hearted charm, you will be enthusiastic about Melvyn Douglas and the others, and about Director Edward Ludwig's expert handling of brilliantly-conceived situations—but without those situations in the first place you would not have much.

If you're interested—and you should be—the man responsible is Bruce Manning, who wrote the screenplay of "That Certain Age" from an original story by F. Hugh Herbert (that name sounds familiar!) Manning has taken a simple, featherweight plot about a young girl's infatuation for a man of the world, and with Ludwig's deft assistance has turned it into a comedy as lively as a cricket and as fresh as a spring breeze.

—And The Music?

BUT I refuse to give the outline of this story. What's the use when the treatment is of far more importance than the actual plot?

There can be few worse fates for any adult actor than having to appear with a child star, especially one of Deanna Durbin's calibre; but

Aunt Daisy As Guest Critic Impressions Of Durbin Picture

THIS week, Gordon Mirams has invited Aunt Daisy to be his "guest critic" and give her impressions of the new Deanna Durbin picture, "That Certain Age." Aunt Daisy met Deanna while she was in Hollywood, and this is what she has to say about her and the picture:—

"Charming, that's the word for the whole picture—just charming. I enjoyed it immensely. And it was Deanna to the life. She's exactly the same off the screen as on. Those little mannerisms—the way she runs upstairs, the decided way she talks—they're all exactly her own. She's just a very natural, very sweet high school girl, with no nonsense about her, and not in the least difficult to manage.

"There was a rumour when I was in Hollywood that she was going to be put in a 'love-dovey' story. I was glad to see in the picture that the rumour was quite unfounded. I thought they handled her schoolgirl romance most judiciously. Delightful.

"The scene I enjoyed most? Well, of course, I was very amused when Deanna and Melvyn Douglas were on the tandem singing my song 'Daisy Bell.' But it was all most enjoyable. I can't speak too highly of it."

Melvyn Douglas more than manages to hold his own, as the hero-worshipped foreign correspondent, Vincent Bullitt.

Jackie Cooper, though not getting any handsomer as he grows older, makes a natural, likable boy—the lad who had "replaced" Lord Byron in Alice's affections until that fellow Bullitt came

RKO for a trifling sum. Among those unwanted screen plays was "The Awful Truth." Among them also was "Holiday," which now comes to the screen again as a gem of entertainment for intelligent audiences.

Few plays can have had a more interesting history than Philip Barry's "Holiday." It was an artistic triumph and a box-office success on the New York stage in 1928. In 1930, it was made as a film, with Ann Harding, Mary Astor and the late Robert Ames in the leading roles, and will probably be remembered as an outstanding success of the early talkie era. Now it stars Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant and Doris Nolan; and third time looks like being just as lucky.

Rank Heresy

IN "Holiday," the playwright enunciates, with a pronounced but ingratiating radical accent, the thesis that riches do not ensure happiness—in fact, very possibly the opposite. His hero (Cary Grant) is a young man of a most independent turn of mind and no material wealth who falls in love with the purse-proud daughter (Doris Nolan) of an incredibly rich family, whom he has met during a vacation. From the moment Johnny Case enters the massive portals of the Seton mansion, his immortal soul is in danger. He finds he is expected to marry a tradition of money-grubbing as well as a bride—when all the time his social philosophy is that people should take a holiday from work and discover what life is all about while they are still young enough to enjoy it. To his fiancée this is sheer nonsense: to her Tory banking father (Henry Kolker) it is rank, dangerous heresy.

In this predicament, the hero finds sympathy and understanding from Linda, his fiancée's repressed but attractive sister (Katharine Hepburn). She, too, is a rebel at heart—and she loves Johnny from the moment she meets him, but is, of course, too loyal to do anything about it until the final scene. Then Johnny sets off on his holiday—and Linda goes with him.

Too Much Money

THIS triumph over Mammon would be rather more striking if the hero did not wait to take his holiday away from it all until he has managed to scrape together a tidy little fortune by shrewd dealing on the Stock Exchange.

It is also rather hard to expect us common wage-earners

to shed a tear over the plight of people so filthy rich that they live in a house the size of the National Art Gallery and just don't know how to spend their money.

Yet if the philosophy of "Holiday" is half-baked, the interpretation of it is brilliantly done. Recently branded as "box-office poison" by the New York Independent Theatre Owners' Association, Katharine Hepburn seems likely to hurl the insult back in their teeth with the most appealing, most sympathetic performance she has ever given.

Still Improving

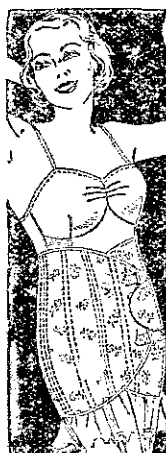
CARY GRANT's improvement as an actor continues to be impressive. It seems only a very short while ago that he was self-conscious and awkward in almost every part he touched; then came "The Awful Truth"; and now

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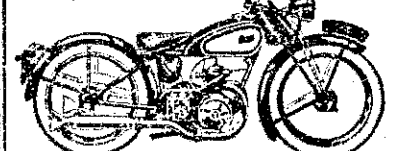
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Third Time Is Still Lucky For 'Holiday'

["Holiday." Columbia. Directed by George Cukor. Starring Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant. First release: Christchurch, November 13.]

A LUCKY horseshoe should be the trademark of Columbia Studios. Some time ago, the company acquired a batch of discarded scripts from