

FILMS 1930s

SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS

David Moore, 1990

Winifred Shotton.

Ralph Lynn,
+ funny man with
big teeth + eyeglass

1930 ✓ Rookery Nook Aldwych farces. Tom Walls, Robertson Hare
Catch phrases: 'Indubitably' (R.H.) 'Do you wish to see my quarters?' (Mary Brough)
the cook
Impersonations of course. Lots of laughs.

1931. All Quiet on the Western Front. When the wife gets into her soldier
(by Erich Maria Remarque) husband's bed in hospital - quite shocking.
(at the time)
George Arliss - Disraeli - always the same etc. - easy to mimic.
(from stage) Voltaire - etc.

1931. Trader Horn - I remember this. Jessie Matthews - Evergreen.
About this time I saw Jeannette MacDonald,
who I thought was gorgeous!

1932. The Frightened Lady Emlyn Williams - I remember.

1932 Marie Dressler in Emma - she was famous as a music-hall artiste?

1932 Hell Divers - the US Navy was developing dive-bombers, which
enabled them later to defeat the Jap Navy at Midway & alter the
balance of the war in the Pacific (1942).

1932 Grand Hotel - this is the film in which Greta Garbo said
'I want to be a lawn' - recently shown on TV.

1933. ✓ Cavalcade - Noel Coward suddenly became patriotic, having
seemed to be such a cynic.

1933. ✓ The Good Companions - J B Priestley - was very memorable
John Gielgud was in it.

* Private Life of Henry VIII - 1st British film to get big
international acclaim - Charles Laughton - + his wife Elsa
Lanchester in a classic scene as Anne of Cleves, on their marriage night.

✓ 1934. Norma Shearer in the Barnetts of Wimpole St being obliged to
drink a pint of 'porter' for her health.

1934 The Thin Man - Myrna Loy & William Powell - a series of films
that cut new ground with sophisticated witty dialogue.

1935 probs. I was 18 & remember most of these films, the greatest
being the Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers Gay Divorce. (also Top Hat)

(Gracie Fields met our ship's company in Australia in 1945 but
she wouldn't sing for us)

'Smoke gets in your eyes' - a great film song - lots of smoking in films
of 1930s

* We all know about Charles Laughton's preferences now,
but NOT at that time.

1936 Charles Laughton in Mutiny on the Bounty was another ripe field for mimicry - (my captain in the destroyer ACHERON 1939-40, Lt Cdr Northcott, was exactly like him)

1937 I liked Deanna Durbin in 3 Smart Girls ✓

1938 I was in the destroyer EXMOUTH at Dover to escort the King & Queen to Calais en route to state visit to Paris, part of efforts to cement Anglo-French alliance. All the wardroom went ashore to see SNOW WHITE & loved it, quite amazing breakthrough in cartoons.

1938 I saw UN CARNET DE BAL (French) in London & was very impressed by it. Saw several foreign films in London around this time - not shown elsewhere. THE POTEMKIN STEPS? etc.

STUDIO 1 theatre, & CURZON. The Russian film about mutiny on a battleship? Later the scene with the rotten meat was repeated when our doctor in

1939 - don't think I had much time to see films! had to condemn

38 or 39 - 'The Donkey Serenade' film was great, with Jack Jones's dad, Alan.

Some reindeer meat supplied by USSR. (So there was no mutiny!)

Janet Gaynor - a pin-up, pretty little thing.

Boris Karloff - another great source for impersonations - the Butler showing the guest into the haunted bedroom 'I have made arrangements, Sir, for you to be called in the morning ... but I do not think it will be necessary.' Also 'The Mummy'. I met BK in New York in 1943, actually a most courteous & charming English gentleman.

The Marx Brothers - Groucho & his walk. Never saw them until after WW2, & then I got hooked.

The ritual of the Sunday-night flick on the quarterdeck of warships, to which ladies were invited. (The exotic scents of the gorgeous ladies ferried in my motor boat across Alexandria harbour to the cruiser DEVONSHIRE (1936)). Mountbatten's RN Film Corporation perhaps worth a mention. The US Navy set great store for morale with films in its warships.

British comedy films - George Formby & Will Hay etc - were very popular, probably unknown in USA.

Lots of funny shorts. One with a gang of children. Laurel & Hardy.

The general view that films in the 1930s were 'escapist' - comedies, or spectacular, or gangsters etc. Few with any 'message' - perhaps I missed them.