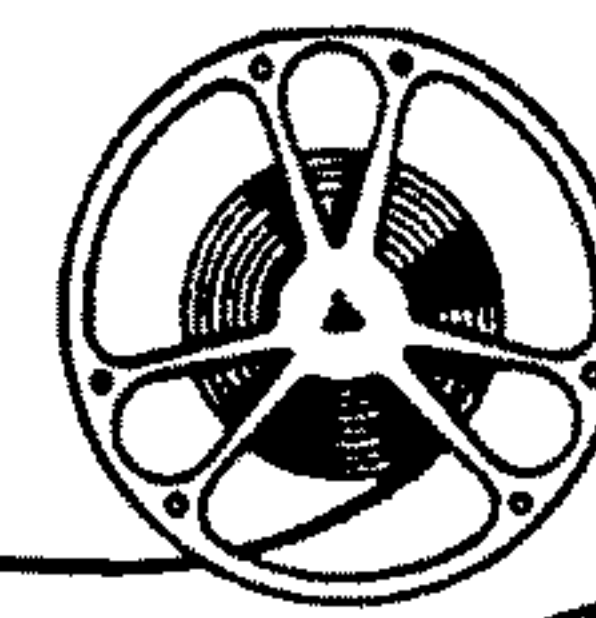
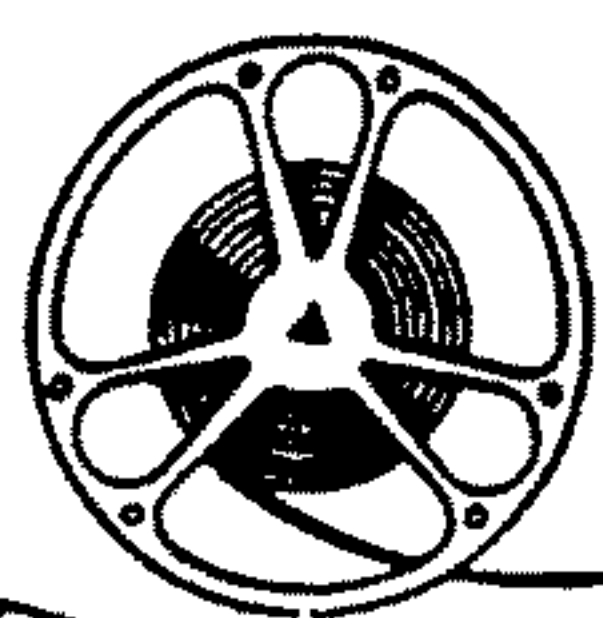


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FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (1940)

Johnny Jones)		Krug	Eduardo Ciannelli
Huntley Haverstock)	Joel McCrea	Tramp	Martin Kosleck
Carol Fisher	Laraine Day	Latvian Diplomat	Eddie Conrad
Stephen Fisher	Herbert Marshall	Toastmaster	Crauford Kent
Ffolliott	George Sanders	Mr. Benson	Gertrude Hoffman
Van Meer	Albert Basserman	Miss Benson	Jane Novak
Stebbins	Robert Benchley	Captain Lanson	Louis Borrell
Rowley	Edmund Gwen	English Cashier	Eily Malyron
Mr. Powers	Harry Davenport	Mr. Naismith	E. E. Clive

Original screenplay by Charles Bennett and Joan Harrison. Dialogue by James Hilton and Robert Benchley. Special effects by William Cameron Menzies. Photography by Rudolph Mate. Background locations by Osmond Borradaik. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Produced by Walter Wanger for United Artists.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT was Alfred Hitchcock's second American film (the first had been REBECCA), made on the very eve of the war on the subject of spies, murder and international espionage. In many ways it was an oddly prophetic film, and by the time it was released, some of the humor was less funny than intended. (A rather similar situation happened when the Berlin crisis corresponded with the release of Billy Wilder's ONE, TWO, THREE in 1961). There has always been a great deal of carping about this being a less than first rate Hitchcock creation, but on modern viewing it looks very good indeed.

Today, one can see Hitchcock's peculiar brand of black, nose-thumbing humor more clearly than could critics of his day, and some of the more wild antics of the reporter-hero could hardly be properly appreciated when received with such deadly seriousness as the contemporary reviews exhibit. The obnoxiously patriotic ending annoyed almost everyone at the time of the film's release, but looked at now, one gets a delightful feeling that this is really satire on just this kind of overblown flag-waving.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of things wrong with the story. It spreads itself too thin, and attempts to cover far too much ground in its already lengthy course. One wonders what newspaper would ever entrust such a reporter as Joel McCrea to such an assignment in the first place. And later, it must be sheer magic (perhaps Hitchcock magic) that he manages to get into the windmill without the spy seeing him. And at the end, why does the reporter have to fly back to America with his story instead of sending it in the normal fashion? While these are hardly serious criticisms, these implausibles do tend to annoy. However, the good qualities are many. Rudolph Mate's photography is splendid throughout, particularly the windmill sequences, with the eerie chase through the grinding machinery which is very reminiscent of the finale of Dreyer's VAMPYR (1932) which Mate also shot. The assassination of the diplomat in the sea of umbrellas later on is also enormously effective, and genuinely nasty at the same time. The pace never lets down for a moment, culminating in the most outrageous yet delightful catastrophe-finale that the screen has seen in many years.

The film was enormously difficult to make, largely because a good part of the location backgrounds were lost at sea when being shipped to England on the Rijnstroom, which was torpedoed by the Germans, and the effort of getting duplicate materials held up shooting for twenty-nine days. The cast was large, international and temperamental, but Hitchcock gets wonderful performances from most of his actors. If FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT is nonsense, it is delightful nonsense and should be appreciated as such.

David Stewart Hull

(Did you spot Hitchcock? His personal appearance is pretty well hidden in this film.)