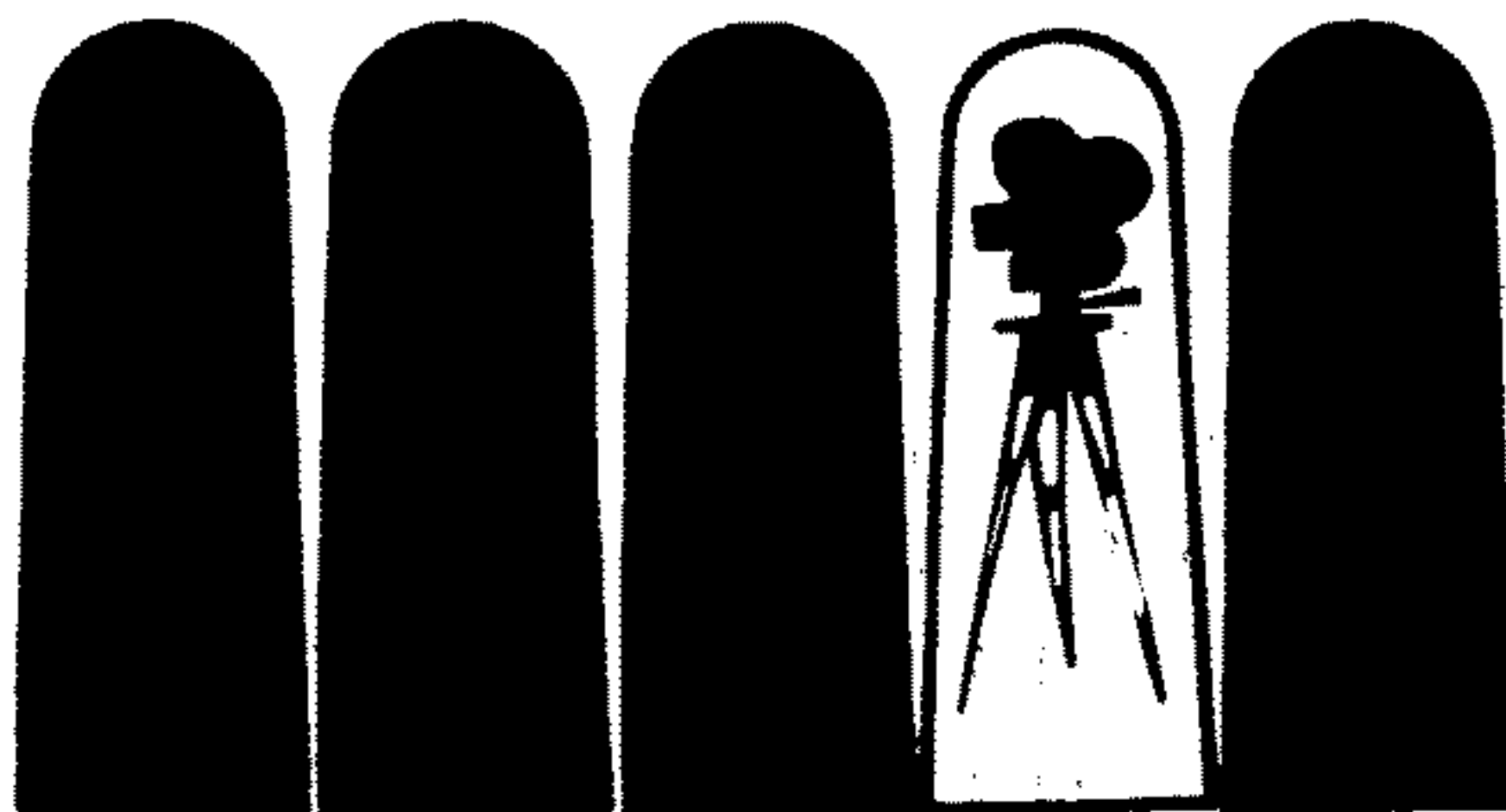


Document Citation

Title	Young Mr. Lincoln
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Dartmouth Film Society</i>
Date	1962
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Young Mr. Lincoln, Ford, John, 1939

THE DARTMOUTH



DAILY FILM PROGRAM

1962-1963

YOUNG MR. LINCOLN (1939)

Abraham Lincoln	Henry Fonda	Stephen Douglas	Milburn Stone
Abigail Clay	Alice Brady	Sheriff Billings	Cliff Clark
Mary Todd	Marjorie Weaver	Juror	Robert Lowery
Hannah Clay	Arleen Whelen	Ninian Edwards	Charles Tannen
Efe	Eddie Collins	Frank Ford	Francis Ford
Ann Rutledge	Pauline Moore	"Scrub" White	Fred Kohler Jr.
Matt Clay	Richard Cromwell	Mrs. Edwards	Fay Linaker
John Felder	Donald Meek	Woolridge	Russell Simpson
Carrie Sue	Dorris Bowden	John T. Stuart	Edwin Maxwell
Adam Clay	Eddie Quillan	Hawthorne	Charles Halton
Judge Herbert Bell	Spencer Charters	Barber	Harry Tyler
Palmer Cass	Ward Bond		

Screenplay by Lamar Trotti. Music by Alfred Newman. Produced for Twentieth Century-Fox by Cosmopolitan Pictures by Darryl F. Zanuck. Directed by JOHN FORD.

If D. W. Griffith showed Lincoln as the great heroic figure, John Cromwell Lincoln the real man, John Ford elected to show him as a folk hero, much as he romanticized the brutal building of the American West in many of his other films.

The prelude to this remarkable film is undoubtedly THE PRISONER OF SHARK ISLAND, which is the next film in this series, for it shows the beginning of Ford's fascination with the character (although Lincoln appears briefly at the beginning of Ford's 1924 film THE IRON HORSE). By nature, Ford is a romanticist's romanticist, playing fast and loose with fact, eliminating the ugliness of his subjects, and coating the material with a heavy veneer of old fashioned sentiment and affection. Fortunately, he gets away with his mannerisms most of the time; certainly few of his films are as completely successful as YOUNG MR. LINCOLN.

Lamar Trotti's screenplay has long been recognized as a masterpiece of blending a long series of slightly connected anecdotes into a coherent and really quiet brilliant whole. His subject might be called "Lincoln, the Happy Years," to paraphrase Carl Sandburg slightly. Historically, most of it verges on the apocryphal. The trial of Matt and Adam Clay is based on the "Duff" Armstrong affair which actually took place years after the date in the film. Yet out of this passage, Ford drew one of his finest inspirations. As Douglas McVay so well analyzed the passage:

We whip round and round the courtroom, from Lincoln to the prosecutor, from defendants to judge, from witness to family, from audience to jury and back to Lincoln. The shifts of focus are continual, as are the shifts of mood from humor and wit to pathos and drama. The camera

shoots from behind Lincoln's shoulder as he holds the villain of the piece with his gaze, so that we are left to imagine the expression in his eyes. When he leaves the court victorious, he moves tall and black against a 'colorless' setting of corridors: he faces a crowd whom we do not see, but whose cheers engulf us. He bids farewell to the folk he has helped (and Ford imbues their departing wagon with the spirit of the pioneers). Then, though a windstorm is blowing up, he decides to 'go on a piece' to the top of a nearby hill. He stands there while about him the lightning and thunder crackle and flash, and we think of the Civil War. The picture closes with a shot of the Lincoln Memorial Statue: of a graven, aqueline visage which reminds one of the Lincoln whose last days Ford had already treated.

For such is the greatness of Ford's film. Yet without Henry Fonda, it would have been a much weaker work. His excellence in the part was credited by one cynical critic to "a crossroads meeting of nature, art and a smart casting director," but there is more to it than that. Of the three actors playing major Lincoln roles in this series, Fonda fits most easily into our idea of what Lincoln must have looked like and how he probably walked and talked. And Marjorie Weaver bears an uncanny resemblance to photographs of the original Mary Todd "plump as a pigeon and smooth as a persimmon" in her husband's words.

To the credit of the producers, the film was premiered in Springfield on Memorial Day, beginning with a program of four songs by Marian Anderson. Unlike the Washington premiere of ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS, colored persons were made welcome.

DASH