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LADY ON A TRAIN

Deanna Durbin (Nikki Collins), **David Bruce** (Wayne Morgan), **George Coulouris** (Saunders), **Ralph Bellamy** (Jonathan Waring), **Edward Everett Horton** (Haskell), **Dan Duryea** (Arnold Waring), **Allen Jenkins** (Danny), **Patricia Morison** (Joyce Williams), **Maria Palmer** (Margo Martin), **Jacqueline de Wit** (Miss Fletcher), **Elizabeth Patterson** (Aunt Charlotte), **Samuel S. Hinds** (Wiggam), **William Frawley** (Desk Sergeant Brennan), **Thurston Hall** (Josiah Waring), **Ben Carter** (Maxwell), **George Lloyd** (rail workman), **Chester Clute** (train conductor), **Joseph Crehan** (impatient train passenger), **Sam "Deacon" McDaniel** (train porter), **George Chandler** (man in the mirror), **Addison Richards** (arresting detective), **Tom Dugan** (turnkey), **Bert Roach** (fat man in cinema), **Matt McHugh** (diner who bursts balloon), **Nicholas Joy** (man with white carnation), **Eddie Dunn** (bail sergeant), **Nora Cecil** (woman with umbrella), **Mary Forbes** (woman with Christmas packages in cinema), **Clyde Fillmore** (cinema patron Nikki sits on).

Director: **CHARLES DAVID**. Screenplay: **Edmund Beloin** and **Robert O'Brien**. Original screen story: **Leslie Charteris**. Photography: **Elwood Bredell**. Film editor: **Ted J. Kent**. Art directors: **John B. Goodman** and **Robert Clatworthy**. Set decorator: **Russell A. Gausman**. Costumes: **Howard Greer**. Special photographic effects: **John P. Fulton**. Assistant director: **William Holland**. Sound supervisor: **Bernard B. Brown**. Sound technician: **Joe Lapis**. Western Electric Sound System. Associate producer: **Howard Christie**. Producer: **Felix Jackson**.

Music composed and directed by **Miklos Rosza**. Songs: (all Durbin): *Pop Goes the Weasel*, traditional; *Silent Night*, lyrics by **Joseph Mohr**, music by **Franz Gruber**; *Give Me a Little Kiss Will Ya, Huh?*, words and music by **Roy Turk**, **Jack Smith** and **Maceo Pinkard**; *Night and Day*, words and music by **Cole Porter**. Music director for Miss Durbin: **Edgar Fairchild**.

Copyright 27 August 1945 by Universal Pictures Co., Inc. New York release at Loew's Criterion, 14 September 1945. U.S. release: 17 August 1945. U.K. release: 22 October 1945. Sydney release at the State, 21 December 1945. Australian release: 24 January 1946. 10 reels. 8,577 feet. 95 minutes.

SYNOPSIS: Girl sees murder from train window, but police will not believe her so she decides to track down the killer herself.

NOTES: Brown was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Sound. The winner was Stephen Dunn for *The Bells of St. Mary's*.

Some of the comic elements sit a little uneasily on the fabric of this suspenseful mystery-thriller (though we would exclude Mr Edward Everett Horton's scenes from this criticism. He is such an accomplished farceur that he invigorates every line he utters). That reservation aside, *Lady on a Train* is a most entertaining film, at times very imaginatively directed and always very creatively photographed.

It is obvious that Deanna Durbin and producer-husband Felix Jackson* have not stinted on spending Universal's money—and they have thrown it around with considerable taste and enormous style. Who knows how much Leslie Charteris was paid to pen an original screen story? (He was then at the height of his fame. He quickly turned the story into a novel which was published to coincide with the release of the film). Deanna wanted a change of pace and she was getting it. Her favorite cameraman, Woody Bredell, who specialised in gothic atmosphere, was hired and given an absolutely free hand in lighting. Rarely have

* She divorced Jackson in 1948 and then married (in 1950) Charles David—*Lady on a Train's* director!

Hollywood sets been so meticulously, so painstakingly illumined so that the whole film has a high contrast, low-key gloss and sheen of unparalleled attractiveness. Durbin herself was lovingly photographed, shortcomings in her face and figure miraculously disguised so that she emerged as a charmer of captivating grace and beauty. And then her costumes, stunningly designed by Howard Greer, added immeasurably to an already overpowering allure.

The sets, enormous in their complexity, vast in the range and diversity of their props and appointments, are not allowed to swamp the story but invest it with atmosphere and visual appeal. The climax in the deserted warehouse, the confrontation in the millionaire's *Citizen Kane* mansion, the gleaming interior of the nightclub with its trick mirrors and the backstage corridors with dungeon-like cellars and spiral staircases are all triumphs of the art director's art. Why the film was not even nominated for an Academy Award for its sets and photography is a mystery itself. (There were no awards for Costume Design until 1948). Instead the film was nominated for—would you believe?—Best Sound! Admittedly, Deanna is in great voice and sings three rather varied numbers:—a hymn (softly on the telephone—beautifully lensed with a variety of most attractive close-ups and imaginative camerawork including a final sweep through a closed window), a typical nightclub siren bit of provocation, and then she really belts out the Cole Porter standard "Night and Day". Aside from a whispered snatch of "Pop Goes the Weasel", we have to wait some time before she sings—but who's watching the clock?

To complete *Lady on a Train's* first-class production values, an outstanding support cast has been assembled—from the largest roles (in which Ralph Bellamy and Dan Duryea stand out) to the smallest (George Chandler and Tom Dugan). It seems churlish not to mention Patricia Morison, Jacqueline de Wit, Elizabeth Patterson, Maria Palmer, George Coulouris . . .

P.S. The mysterious Charles David (a Frenchman, despite his name) directed only one other Hollywood film, *River Gang* (1945), starring Gloria Jean in a screenplay by Leslie Charteris! David once claimed to have worked as an assistant to both René Clair and Jean Renoir, although I could find no record of his name of any of their credits. Be this as it may, *Lady on a Train* shows a remarkable directorial knowledge and ability. It's a great pity no print of *River Gang* is available in Australia.

Although *Lady on a Train* was her only 1945 release, Deanna's salary for the year (including royalties) was \$326,491.00—making her the highest paid woman in the world for 1945!