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KING VIDOR

September 1 - November 13, 1972

Thursday, November 2 (8:00)

LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE. 1951. Warner Brothers-First National. Produced by Henry Blanke. Directed by King Vidor. Screenplay by Lenore Coffee, from a novel by Margaret Echard. Photographed by Sid Hickox. Art direction by Douglas Bacon. Edited by Thomas Reilly. Sets by William Wallace. Music by Max Steiner. Courtesy Warner Brothers. 91 minutes.

Cast: Ruth Roman (Shelley), Richard Todd (Trevelyan), Mercedes McCambridge (Liza), Zachary Scott (Harvey), Frank Conroy (Nolan), Kathryn Givney (Myra), Rhys Williams (Father Paul), Darryl Hickman (String), Nacho Galindo (Pedro).

If Vidor crossed John Ford's path with NORTHWEST PASSAGE and Jean Renoir's with RUBY GENTRY, LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE marks his encounter with Hitchcock. Although both Richard Todd (STAGE FRIGHT) and Ruth Roman (STRANGERS ON A TRAIN) had just recently appeared in somewhat similar roles for Hitchcock, their performances are insufficiently interesting to make LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE really work. The parts really call for the likes of Laurence Olivier (REBECCA) or Cary Grant (SUSPICION) on the one hand and Joan Fontaine on the other. Instead, we have one-dimensional actors trying to remain afloat in a veritable barrelful of red herrings. In addition, Hitchcock never had to endure Max Steiner.

Vidor is at his best in suggesting unstated and understated perversities, especially through the performances of Miss McCambridge and Miss Givney. The film is Vidor's least frantic and most subtle in several years, a clear improvement over BEYOND THE FOREST which Miss Coffee also wrote. Within its considerable limitations, LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE is a mature statement of Vidor's romantic credo. (Roman says to Todd: "If it's romantic to believe in people, then I guess I'm romantic.") It harks back to the silent period when the director could be comfortable making little pictures like WILD ORANGES to which this bears a resemblance. It is a product more of the craftsman side of his personality than of the striving artist who was never to be really satisfied with little pictures after THE BIG PARADE.

-- Charles Silver