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Dartmouth Film Society

THE FILMS OF ARTHUR HORNBLOW, JR. '15: PROGRAM X

HOLD BACK THE DAWN (1941)

Georges Iscovescu	Charles Boyer	Flores	Nestor Paiva
Emmy Brown	Olivia de Havilland	Lupita	Eva Puig
Anita Dixon	Paulette Goddard	Joseph Kurz	Eric Feldary
Professor Van Den Luecken	Victor Francen	Berta Kurz	Rosemary De Camp
Christine Van Den Luecken	Micheleine Cheirel	Mechanic	Mikhail Rasumny
Annie Van Den Luecken	Madeleine Le Beau	Mr. Saxon	Mitchell Leisen
Hammock	Walter Abel	Actor	Brian Donlevy
Anatole Bonbois	Curt Bois	Actor	Richard Webb
Tony	Billy Lee	Actress	Veronica Lake

Original story by Ketti Frings. Screenplay by Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett. Art direction by Hans Dreier and Robert Usher. Photographed by Leo Tover. Edited by Doane Harrison. Produced by Arthur Hornblow, Jr., for Paramount Pictures. Premiered October 1, 1941.

Directed by MITCHELL LEISEN

The first part of our two-term retrospective of the works of Arthur Hornblow, Jr. '15 concludes with a screening of one of his last Paramount pictures, HOLD BACK THE DAWN. In common with MIDNIGHT and ARISE MY LOVE, the film has a script by Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett and direction by Mitchell Leisen.

The original story for the film was written by Ketti Frings, now better known as Kett Frings, the author of the Broadway play Look Homeward Angel and business manager for Elizabeth Taylor. However, the final film had a rather tenuous connection with the story. Apparently the production was started as a serious drama, but in the midst of production, it was decided to introduce comedy elements. But at the end of the shooting, most of these were discarded and the drama came back to the forefront.

The basic situation of the film is a good one. A Roumanian refugee has arrived in Mexico and plans to marry an American woman in order to get citizenship in the United States. He decides on an American school teacher, marries her in a rather cynical fashion, only to discover that he really loves her. This theme, in 1941 at any rate, had a considerably punch. The problem of emigration to America was a serious one, for thousands of Europeans were stranded in Mexico waiting for visas and their plight was serious.

The uneasy problem of dubious taste on the part of Wilder and Brackett in kidding this problem is amply demonstrated in the first part of the film. This section is undoubtedly the best, and as soon as the film gets serious, things tend to break down and only Leisen's superbly tasteful direction holds the film on its steady course.

During production, the Mexican government caused a great deal of trouble. A set which accurately recreated a border town square was considered too sordid, and it had to be rebuilt to look sparkling clean. To cool tempers, no less than Diego Rivera was called in to supervise the by-now dubious authenticity. A low comedy Mexican maid role had to be re-written and played by the wife of a high official in the Mexican government. On the technical side, the film was famous at the time for using an extremely complicated multi-track sound system for the fiesta sequence, in which hundreds of sounds were blended into the final track to give a realistic approximation of the noise of a festival.

Olivia de Havilland played the part of the spinster school teacher so well that she was nominated for an Academy Award, only to be beaten at the last

minute by her sister, Joan Fontaine, who had starred in Hitchcock's SUSPICION. Paulette Goddard gives another fine performance as the hero's cynical collaborator, and Charles Boyer is dependable as usual. In smaller roles, three French actors played the members of the Van Den Luecken family, with Victor Francen of the Comedie Française as the father.

Going down the list of actors, the director, Mitchell Leisen, plays a small part à la Alfred Hitchcock, and no less than Brian Donlevy and Veronica Lake appear in bit roles.

David Stewart Hull

The films for the winter 1965 Film Society season have been selected and are listed below. Memberships will be available after January 3, 1965 and the subscription price \$2.00, the same as for the fall term.

SAPS AT SEA (Laurel and Hardy, dir. Gordon Douglas); MONKEY BUSINESS (Marx Brothers, dir. Norman McLeod); THE PIRATE (Gene Kelly, Judy Garland, dir. Vincente Minnelli); a program of Charlie Chaplin films; LOLA (French comedy, dir. Jacques Demy); HELLZAPOPPIN! (Olson and Johnson, dir. H. C. Potter); THE WHITE SHEIK (dir. Federico Fellini); THE MAJOR AND THE MINOR (dir. Billy Wilder); GASLIGHT (Ingrid Bergman, dir. George Cukor); THE HUCKSTERS (Ava Gardner, dir. Jack Conway); WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION (dir. Billy Wilder); OKLAHOMA! (dir. Fred Zinnemann); AN AMERICAN IN PARIS (dir. Vincente Minnelli); PUBLIC ENEMY (James Cagney, dir. William Wellman); SHADOW OF A DOUBT (dir. Alfred Hitchcock); THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (dir. Orson Welles); A FULL LIFE (Japanese drama, dir. Sesumo Hani).