

Document Citation

Title	Ambush
Author(s)	William K. Everson
Source	<i>New School for Social Research (New York, N.Y.)</i>
Date	1983 Oct 07
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Perelman, S. J. (1904-1979), Brooklyn, New York, United States Neumann, Kurt (1906-1958), Nuremberg, Germany Swarthout, Gladys (1904-1969), Deepwater, Missouri, United States
Film Subjects	Ambush, Neumann, Kurt, 1939

AMBUSH (Paramount, 1939) Directed by Kurt Neumann; Screenplay by Laura and S.J.

Perelman, from a story by Robert Ray; Camera, William Meller; 62 mins.

With: Gladys Swarthout, Lloyd Nolan, Ernest Truex, Broderick Crawford, Hartley Tufts, William Henry, William Frawley, Rufe Davis, Antonio Moreno, Raymond Hatton, Harry Fleischmann, Clem Bevans, Polly Moran, Wade Boteler, Richard Denning, Billy Lee, Archie Twitchell, Virginia Vale, Bryant Washburn, Robert Homans, Guy Usher, Olin Howland, Al Hill, Clarence Wilson, Lew Kelly.

Apart from a title that seems to bear no resemblance to anything happening in the plot (one might stretch a point there and accept its referring to the scene where Lloyd Nolan is lured into the hideout), "Ambush" is another extremely enjoyable example of the crisp and taut little crime "B" movies that Paramount did so well in the late 30's. Almost none of them were duds; if they were below standard, it was either because they were too ambitious in cramming in too much plot, or because accidentally a hack director like Nick Grinde happened to be assigned. But even then they were slick and glossy. At their best, as in those made by Robert Florey (see "Daughter of Shanghai" later in this series) they were superior products. "Ambush" is not top-grade, but of far more than average interest. Its director, Kurt Neumann, was a reliable journeyman director whose films from the early 30's to the very late 50's, followed the same pattern as last week's Ben Stoleff - slick, enjoyable, covering every genre, and turning out best in the area of the small, tight little thriller. The film is also notable for being the last film of Gladys Swarthout. After a quartet of operatic musical comedies, pictures that didn't duplicate the success of Columbia's Grace Moore series, Paramount wound up her contract with this entirely non-singing role. Far from feeling that she was slumming (or not shewing it if she did) Miss Swarthout gives a surprisingly good straight performance. For the rest, casting sometimes goes surprisingly against type - Ernest Truex as a cold-blooded crook is an especial treat - and moves extremely briskly. Scripter Perelman has little opportunity for his customary wit, but he does work in some good comedy, and even contrives to plaster his name across a dimly-lit billboard!

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---