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A Matter of Life and Death

Michael Powell, U.K., 1946; 104m

A dashing young WWII airman (David Niven) chats up, then bares his soul to a beautiful radio operator (Kim Hunter) even as his plane dives to earth. It's not quite clear where precisely Niven comes down, because Michael Powell's movie takes a turn from Technicolor wartime melodrama into a meditation on the worth of a life and the righteousness of a death, as they're weighed in a chilly, monochrome Heaven and in an operating room where surgeons work to save Niven's damaged brain. No comfy allegory here; Powell's gem is made of harder — and more valuable — stuff. With Raymond Massey, Roger Livesey, Robert Coote, Marius Goring, and Richard Attenborough.

Originally screened at the WRT in February of 1993.

Wed Jan 2: 1:30 & 6:20