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TCM Classic Film Festival Capsule â??Rafter Romanceâ?? (Seiter, 1933): USA

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Leonard Maltin, one of the worldâ??s most respected film critics and historians, introduced the screening of *Rafter Romance,* during the 2017 TCM Classic Film Festival at the historic Hollywood [illegible]n 1922. The film stars Norman Foster and a young Ginger Rogers (just before [illegible]Astaire, *Flying Down to Rio*).

Rafter Romance is a pre-code romantic comedy about two roommates sharing an apartment in a multi-level tenement on a shift basis but have actually never met. As each begins to resent the otherâ??s bad habits, they exchange barbed notes and engage in several hilarious pranks orchestrated against each other. Meanwhile, the two meet outside the apartment and fall in love. Both are juggling careers viding several additional, highly comedic scenes.

Rogers displays a remarkable sweetness and delicious lightness as she moves through the set designs. Dutch-born David Abel provides an eye-pleasing cinematography with a plethora of medium shots coupled with luminous tracking shots. Costumer Bernard Newman, provides several, stylish wardrobe accoutrements with full-length skirts, business suits and accompanying hats for both male and female characters.

The filmâ??s art department of John Hughes and Van Nest Polglase created the sets while Kenneth Holmes supplied props. In addition to the apartment sets, a countryside scene with a lake and accompanying rowboat stands out. Seemingly, most of the production design was deftly constructed to showcase the closeness and intimacy of the filmâ??s lead characters, Mary (Rogers) and Jack (Foster).

Austrian composer, Max Steiner, who would go on to win three Oscars for Best Music and achieve legendary Hollywood status, composed and directed the musical score. Interestingly, the supporting cast of characters portrayed by George Sidney, Laura Hope Crews, Robert Benchley and Sidney Miller added an ethnic complexity that sublimely enhanced the filmâ??s setting and the filmâ??s narrative structure and that all but disappears in post-code films.

While *Rafter Romance* does have some risque pieces it wasnâ??t considered to have code issues, despite the suggestive title, and was remade in 1937 under stricter code enforcement as Living on Love.

Unfortunately, the film has rarely been screened in theaters since itâ??s initial circulation in 1933. *Rafter Romance* was one of six films handed over to former RKO studio head, Merian Cooper, to settle a lawsuit and he promptly removed them from circulation until their licensing for television in 1955-56. According to the TCM Classical Film Festival website, TCM acquired the films in 2006 and created restored prints with the help of Brigham Young University and the Library of Congress.

The print used for the screening was made possible courtesy of the TCM Collection at the UCLA Film and Television Archive. *Rafter Romance,* directed by William A. Seiter, had a run time of seventy-three minutes and its rather abrupt ending left the audience wanting more. Seeing Rogersâ?? acting chops coupled with complex characters made this a most unexpected and quite an exceptional viewing treat. I highly recommend *Rafter Romanc* and, for full effect, I recommend viewing the film on the big screen â?? the way it was made to be seen!

Category

1. #TCMFF

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