



Chiasso, Cinema Excelsior

18.15

Friday, 23 February 2018

THEIR FINEST

2017

110 minutes

Directed by **LONE SCHERFIG**

Starring: Gemma Arterton, Bill Nighy, Sam Claflin and Jack Huston

The film is set in London in 1940. Catrin Cole is summoned to an interview at the Ministry of Information, where she is taken on to write scripts for short information films. Her husband Ellis Cole is a war artist, unable to get an exhibition and exempted from the call-up due to a Spanish Civil War leg wound. Initially he accepts the fact that she works, but when she becomes the only wage-earner he begins to feel threatened, and plans to send her back home to Wales on the pretence of keeping her safe from the London Blitz.

After a clash with the actor Ambrose Hilliard when he asks for a change to one of her scripts, Catrin's superiors send her to research a news story about twin sisters Lily and Rose sailing their father's boat to take part in the Dunkirk evacuation. However, on meeting them she discovers that they in fact had engine trouble just off Southend-on-Sea shortly after setting off and were towed back into port by a tug which had taken part in the evacuation, so were mistakenly reported as reaching Dunkirk themselves. At risk of losing her Ministry job and being sent back to Wales, Catrin lies to her superiors and they agree to make the film as "The Nancy Starling", with Catrin, Tom Buckley and Raymond Parfitt as the scriptwriters. They begin to write a scenario and – even when their superiors discover the deception – convince them to continue with its production as a fictional film rather than a factual one.

Hilliard is offered the part of a drunken uncle named "Uncle Frank" by his agent Sammy. He initially refuses it out of pride but, after Sammy's death in an air-raid, is reluctantly won over by Sammy's sister, Sophie, who has taken over his agency work. Initial location photography begins but rapid rewrites prove necessary when an American character is added on the orders of the Secretary of War to give the film appeal in the USA. The Secretary also orders that the character be played by Carl Lundbeck, a handsome Norwegian-American pilot from one of the Eagle Squadrons, who had proved photogenic in silent film but unable to act in 'talkies'. The film is saved, however, by judicious editing and by Catrin convincing Hilliard to give Lundbeck acting lessons in return for improvements to Hilliard's part.

Catrin and Buckley develop a combative friendship and affection during the location filming, but the filming delays cause her to miss the opening of her husband's war-art exhibition. Just before leaving to see the exhibition's final day, Catrin reveals to another member of the crew that she is in fact Ellis's long-term lover and not his wife, having only taken his name for the sake of propriety. She had run away with him; the ring she wears on her left hand is one purchased by her. On returning to their home in London, she finds

Critics' comments:

- *Their Finest* is a charming and thoughtful movie about people making a charming and thoughtful movie. (from *San Francisco Chronicle*)
- Could've been *War, Actually* - but this witty, sophisticated and unexpectedly sober romantic comedy never falls into the obvious traps. (from *Time Out*)
- It is desperate, and I mean desperate, to present a niche angle on an event that, by definition, doesn't remotely need niche angles or sexing up. (from *Sunday Times*)
- The scenes elegantly combine twin themes in this refreshing Second World War romance from Lone Scherfig. They capture the savage uncertainty of life during wartime; and, in a nod to the film's movie industry backdrop, they skilfully peel back layers of reality and artifice. (from *The Observer*)