



Father of the Bride

1950, USA, B&W, Comedy, Running time: 116 mins.

Directed by Vincent Minnelli, Screenplay Francis

Goodrich/Albert Hackett. Taken from a novel of the same name, written by Edward Streeter in 1949

Starring Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett & Elizabeth Taylor

Nominated for Oscars in 4 categories: Best Actor, Best Picture, Best Writing and Best Screenplay

Second film in our Spencer Tracy Season

Tuesday 5th
September at
7.15 pm

Film essay by
Dominic
Thierry
(August 2017)
for Infifa. Film
notes compiled
by Mark
MacLennan
(Infifa)

Spencer Tracey plays a suburban lawyer whose daughter tells him of her plans to marry, and the film follows the planning of the event and the travails that attend those involved. Plot-wise one might say, 'That's all Folks!!'

The original poster featured the tag-line 'The Bride gets the Thrills, Father gets the Bills! This could also be regarded as a summary for the plot of the film.

So why are we featuring this simple premise in this Infifa season? Well, at one level it features Spencer Tracey as our nominated actor. Some have suggested that this brings his comedic playing to the fore, demonstrating some of his finest moments on the screen.

This is something that as an audience we invite you to consider, especially if you are familiar with his acting elsewhere.

And as some members of the audience might have already discovered for themselves the wedding is very often an important demonstration of a family's values, social standing, exemplars of the social virtues and graces. It can also, as depicted here act as a 'rite of passage' from family member to independence of a kind. The movie depicts the changing relationship between father and daughter, sexual undertones and all.



As the cost of the average wedding is now moving ever higher in this country and elsewhere the contemporary resonances are perhaps ever more present; are the parallels precise however, and if not, in what way do they differ? How did you pick your guest-list for example?

In this, the hey-day of the wedding planner does Tracey's heart-felt statement 'An experienced caterer can make you ashamed of your house in fifteen minutes' resonate?

It is I suggest, always of interest to compare such matters, film acting as a document of the times in which it is made. For example what of the aspirations of the characters in relation to generational attitudes, gender, the place of alcohol, finance and social status in the film as compared to today? What of the role of the black cook, who seems to do most of the actual work involved?



Then there is Minnelli's approach to the telling of the tale to be considered. He opens with Tracey surveying the disruption of his home immediately after the event, the confetti strewn floor creating patterned whorls on the floor, and then his voice-over taking the audience back to how this has come to be. Along with the flash-back structure such devices were more usual in film noir. The dream sequence is again a device more usual in subject matter of a more serious vein.



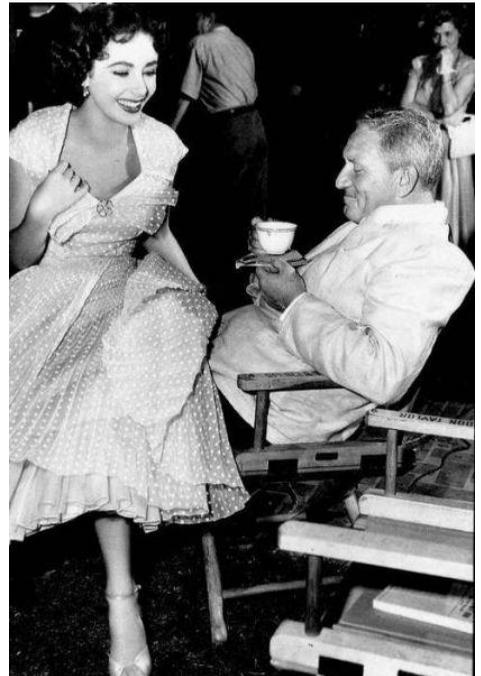
What of the other performances than Spencer Tracey's? He had originally wanted Katherine Hepburn to play his wife, as she did in the later 'Guess who's Coming to Dinner?', but they were considered as too romantically involved in their off-screen lives. This was Bennett's first starring role and a relatively early appearance for Elizabeth Taylor.



The film was very popular on its release, both critically and in terms of audience approval, spawning a sequel 'Father's Little Dividend' and a television series that also proved popular in the 1950's. Some of you will be familiar with the 1991 re-make with Steve Martin cast as the financially compromised father of the title, although this is generally regarded as a rather inferior work by many.

We hope that you the audience will enjoy this film on several levels; as an example of the directorial skills and the performances of the actors, but also in terms of its social commentary, and also in terms of what it has to say about our own attitudes to money, social standing and 'the most important day in a girl's life'.

Notes notes by Dominic Thierry (August 2017) for Infifa.



Tracy and Taylor on set of Father of the Bride.

Our next screening.....Desk Set

The last film in our.....Spencer Tracy Season



Eden Court Cinema

19th September 2017 at 7.15 pm

Desk Set represents the eighth screen teaming of Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. Hepburn plays the head of a TV network research department; Tracy plays an efficiency expert, hired to modernize Hepburn's operation. When Tracy has a huge computer installed, Hepburn and her co-workers fear that they're going to lose their jobs. Their suspicions appear to be confirmed when the computer merrily begins issuing pink termination slips!! Timeless romantic comedy.



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www.invernessfilmfans.org