



**Third film in
our Spencer
Tracy Season**

Eden Court Cinema
19th September 2017
at 7.15pm

Film Notes sourced
sourced by Sandra
Bardwell (InfFiFa),
film notes compiled
by Mark MacLennan
(InFiFa).

Desk Set

1957, United States, Colour, Comedy-romance, Running time: 104 mins.

Directed by Walter Lang

Cast: Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Gig Young

Desk Set (released in the UK as His Other Woman) has been described as ‘... a strange movie that feels both dated and ahead of its time’ with ‘... all the signs of 1950s comedy’. However, it is neither a ‘six comedy’ nor a romantic comedy, rather ‘an Ephron romcom’ referring to the scriptwriters, Phoebe Ephron and Henry Ephron. In 2017 its central theme, the threat of computers to traditional employment is still relevant.

This film was the eighth collaboration between Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy and is set in Manhattan. At the Federal Broadcasting Network, Bunny Watson (Hepburn) is in charge of the reference library, responsible for research on all manner of topics.

Watson (based a real-life librarian, Agnes Law who retired about a year before the film was released), has long been involved with rising Network executive Mike Cutler (Gig Young).



The Network is secretly negotiating a merger and to help cope with the resulting extra work, has order two computers. Methods Engineer and efficiency expert Richard Sumner (Tracy) the inventor of EMERAC (Electromagnetic Memory and Research Arithmetical Calculator) is brought in to see how the library functions. (This was actually developed in the 1940s as ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer) and was the first electronic general-purpose computer. He's extremely bright and as he gets to know Watson, he's surprised to discover that he's met his match.

When they find out the computers are coming, the staff think they're being replaced. Their fears seem to be confirmed when everyone receives a pink slip printed out by the new payroll computer. However, it turns out to be a mistake – the machine fired everyone in the company, including the president.

Sumner discloses his romantic interest in Watson but she believes EMERAC would always come first. When Sumner denies this she sets the machine to self-destruct ...

Among the late 1950s reviewers Bosley Crowther, film critic of The New York Times, felt the film was "out of dramatic kilter", inasmuch as Hepburn was simply too "formidable" to convincingly play someone "scared by a machine", resulting in "not much tension in this thoroughly light-hearted film".



Today the film is seen far more favourably, with the sharpness of the script praised in particular; it has even achieved a rare 100% rating on *Rotten Tomatoes* (albeit based on only a large handful of reviews. Dennis Schwartz of Osuz' World Movie Reviews called it an 'inconsequential sex comedy', but contended 'the star performers are better than the material they are given to work with' and that "the comedy was so cheerful and the banter between the two was so refreshingly smart that it was easy to forgive this bauble for not being as rich as many of the legendary duo's other films together.'



Our next screening..... The Offence

The first film in our..... Sidney Lumet Season



Eden Court Cinema

Tuesday 3rd
Octoberth 2017 at
7.15 pm

The third collaboration between Sean Connery and the acclaimed director Sidney Lumet is an unsettling glimpse into the toxic and damaged mind of a policeman, polluted by the horrors witnessed over the course of his 20 year plus career. A powerful, complex and perhaps career best performance from Connery as the Policeman with an equally compelling performance from the much missed late, great Scottish actor Ian Bannen as a suspected child abuser.



www.facebook.com/infifa

Inverness Film Fans (InFiFa) meet fortnightly at Eden Court Cinema for screenings and post film discussions. To join us for free and for more info go to:

www.invernessfilmtians.org