

The 19th British Silent Film Festival



Raise the Roof

UK 1929/1930

Thursday 14 September, 11am

Introduced by Laraine Porter



UK, Production company: British International Pictures

Director: Walter Summers

Producer: Walter Summers

Screenplay: Walter Summers, Philip MacDonald

Photography: René Guissart

Art director: John Mead

Music and lyrics: William Helmore

Additional numbers: Idris Lewis, Henry Carlton, Jay

Whidden

Music arranged and conducted by John Reynders; **Played by** the British International Symphony Orchestra; **Sound recording:** Dennis Scanlan; **Sound system:** RCA Photophone; **Studio:** British International Pictures; **Shooting:** 4 November – 12 December 1929. **Running time:** 77 minutes

Cast: Betty Balfour (Maisie Grey), Maurice Evans (Rodney Langford), Jack Raine (Atherley Armitage), Sam Livesey (Mr Langford), Ellis Jeffreys (Mrs Langford), Arthur Hardy (Croxley Bellairs), Dorothy Minto (Juanita), Charles Garry (Deighton Duff), Mike Johnson (Fred Frisco), Louie Emery (Mrs Warburton), Plaza Tiller Girls

Kinematograph Weekly, 6 March 1930, p. 49:

"...Rodney Langford, a wealthy youth with ambitions to become an actor, buys and becomes managing owner of an impoverished touring company. Atherley Armitage, the

new leading man, at the suggestion of Rodney's irate father, attempts to wreck the show by sending the props to another town. Maisie Grey, the resourceful leading lady, however, appeals to the rest of the cast to get together and stage an improvised show, which scores an instantaneous success. Rodney's father forgives him, and Maisie becomes his leading lady for life . . .

Walter Summers is responsible for clever directorial touches, and has succeeded in creating a really good atmosphere, but fails to bring conviction to the story. The idea of a touring company being entirely remodeled in an afternoon and turned into a success is pushing dramatic license to its limits. Betty Balfour, too, is called upon to shoulder too much, and is not sufficiently entertaining in herself to outweigh the improbabilities. The by-play, however, is at times most amusing, and there is a love theme which is delicately handled and never over-stressed . . . Theatrical boarding-house scenes and backstage scenes are very unpretentious when mentally contrasted with American productions of this character."

***Film Weekly*, 8 March 1930, p. 25, Leonard Wallace:**

" . . . It is a well-directed picture, made, it is interesting to note, by Walter Summers, who has hitherto produced only war films and *The Lost Patrol*. Besides stamping Summers as one of our really capable directors, it shows that by clever use of an idea a pleasant revue can be put over without any sort of spectacle and lavishness. It is an intelligently made picture, and I do not hesitate to say that its final stage scenes have more of the unity of true revue than any I have seen in an American talkie of this type. Betty Balfour emerges creditably from her test. She speaks well, if her accent is a little variable, and is really entertaining in her comedy songs and dances. The acting of the entire cast is on a high plane, and the speech is excellent in tone and clarity. Jack Raine and Maurice Evans, of *Journey's End* fame, give good performances in an original and bright film."

***Film Weekly*, 15 Nov 1930, p. 6:**

"The Censor has again raised his vigilant head, this time in Singapore, where he has banned, utterly and finally, without hope of appeal, four British talkies – to wit, *The Informer*, *The Compulsory Husband*, *Raise the Roof*, and *Harmony Heaven*. The reason or reasons for suppressing the first two are not given us, but in the case of the latter two the objection is simply legs, female, undraped."

***Picture Show*, 12 April 1930, p.8:**

Raise the Roof is a talkie with musical effects; in this picture you will see Betty Balfour in many guises. It is an amusing story, and there is plenty of pep in it, an ingredient that is necessary to make a singing and talking production go with a swing. The art of Betty Balfour is difficult to define; her own personality comes through like a golden thread. She is able to cheat the picture-goer into tears as well as smiles. She has a great knowledge of human nature and a vast sympathy which seems to radiate around her like a halo.

Betty Balfour not only possesses a cultured speaking voice but she sings and dances with great charm. These are strenuous days for film stars. Not only must they be able to act in

the usual way, but singing and dancing are frequently called into being, to add interest to the production.

Maurice Evans and Jack Raine are two of the clever artistes in *Raise the Roof*. Betty Balfour will be seen in naval uniform, and she makes an extremely dashing young sailor.

Programme note compiled by Geoff Brown and Jenny Stewart



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