

# The 19<sup>th</sup> British Silent Film Festival



## The Flying Scotsman (1929 /1930)

Introduced by Steve Foxon

Sunday 17 September, 11.15am



UK 1929/1930

**Production company:** British International Pictures.

**Director:** Castleton Knight

**Scenario:** Garnett Weston, Victor Kendall

From the story by: Joe Grossman

**Photography:** Theodor Sparkuhl

**Editor:** A. C. Hammond

**Art director:** T. H. Gibbings

**Musical theme:** Idris Lewis, John Reynders

**Music arranged and conducted by:** John Reynders

**Sound system:** RCA Photophone

**Studio:** British International Pictures, Elstree

**Shooting:** February – April 1929 (silent version);  
September 1929

Made at British International Pictures, Elstree Studios

**Shooting:** 22 February – 16 April 1929 (silent version);  
September 1929 (talkie sequences)

**Running time:** 61 minutes

**BFI print:** 59 minutes

**Cast:** Moore Marriott (Bob White), Pauline Johnson (Joan White), Raymond Milland (Jim Edwards), Alec Hurley (Crow), Dino Galvani (head waiter), Bill Shine (barman).

***Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 November 1929 p. 34, P. L. Mannock;**

"The synchronising of railway sound effects in British International's *The Flying Scotsman* is one of the best performances yet achieved by their sound experts, I am informed. The blowing of

exhaust whistles, the release of steam, the roar of engines crossing points, passing through stations, and other sounds peculiar to the railways are faithfully and realistically recorded by the expert department that has been built up at Elstree."

***Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 February 1930, p. 49, Lionel Collier:**

"Simple railway melodrama, but convincingly acted and produced, with good atmosphere and acting . . . Moore Marriott is excellently in character as Bob, while Raymond Milland is quite one of the most attractive juveniles we have seen on the English screen; moreover he is a very good actor . . . The story may sound rather bold and over-melodramatic, but in the picture the melodrama is toned down because of good detail and convincing atmosphere. Castleton Knight has indeed made a great deal of quite thin material. His direction is very good throughout, and his characters alive and human . . . The dialogue in the talking sequences is not strong, but it is well introduced. It does not add actually to the entertainment . . ."

***The Sketch*, 28 May 1930, p. 444, Michael Orme:**

"A charming, unsophisticated picture with a story of the romantic novelette type, excellently acted and beautifully photographed – such is *The Flying Scotsman*, at the Alhambra. It deals with the last and most exciting run of old Bob White on his famous engine, an attempt to wreck it, and the sensational intervention of the driver's heroic daughter. Her exploit in climbing along the footboard while the express train is travelling at eighty miles an hour takes a lot of believing, and the absence of a relief fireman or driver is one of those improbabilities without which film fiction would find it difficult to achieve its thrills. Such incongruities can be easily overlooked when the entertainment is good. The first half of the picture is silent, except for synchronisation of station and train sounds, but when recording begins it is clear and effective. The journey from King's Cross to Edinburgh could not be more convincingly conveyed. Photographically, *The Flying Scotsman* is a triumph. The countryside and the track itself slip by the windows of the racing train with a splendid and exhilarating sweep; realism mingles refreshingly with the buoyant romance of the railroad. The appeal of the picture is enhanced by excellent acting. Moore Marriott is at his best in the role of the driver, and is supported by a couple of pleasant young lovers in the persons of Pauline Johnson and Raymond Milland."

***Ray Milland, Wide-Eyed in Babylon*, Ballantine Books, 1975, p. 102:**

"I played the roughneck fireman. Moore Marriott played the driver, who loathed me because he thought I was trying to seduce his daughter. A very profound story. Anyway, I went through eight weeks of embarrassment. I knew nothing about acting or theatrics of any kind, and I am inclined to hide my emotions, especially in front of strangers. But the director, Castleton Knight, was a very understanding man, and he pulled me through it. Besides, I was being paid a fat twenty-five pounds a week, which in those days was a lot of money."

*Programme note compiled by Geoff Brown*



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