

It All Came True

by Emily Soares | October 20, 2009



Combine film noir with comedy and throw in some musical numbers and you get **It All Came True** (1940), a film that some viewers felt couldn't quite make up its mind. The movie features Humphrey Bogart in a comic/tough guy role, Ann Sheridan in a comic/musical role and some of Hollywood's best character actors on parade as boarding house residents who find their tranquil home transformed into a gangster's bustling night club.

Boarding house co-owner Nora Taylor (Jessie Busley) is a long-suffering mother who makes up stories as an alternate reality to a life that is short on money and happy endings. She hasn't seen her son, fledgling composer Tommy (Jeffrey Lynn), in five years when he returns with gangster Chips Maguire (Bogart) in tow, a nightclub-running hustler, who has promised to promote Tommy's songs if the youngster does what he's told. Tommy gets in a bind when Chips kills a man with Tommy's gun, and he agrees to hide him in the boarding house.

Tommy and Chips (now under the name Grasselli) arrive just behind Sal Ryan (Ann Sheridan), Tommy's childhood companion and sparring partner, whose mother (Una O'Connor) is the resident cook. Sal is a singing showgirl who once worked for Chips, and when she discovers that he is the mysterious new boarder, she convinces Tommy that they should audition for him as a duo. She gets Chips to help the two old women, who have adopted him as a needy son, to save the house from foreclosure. Chips gets up to his old tricks by opening a nightclub downstairs to make the place pay for itself and along the way gets a chance to redeem himself. Notable appearances also include Zasu Pitts as intrigue-hungry Miss Flint and Felix Bressart as The Great Boldini, the comic star of Maguire's new floor show.

Bogart made 17 films for Warner Bros. between 1938 and 1940, waiting for the role that would shoot him to the top of his profession. **It All Came True** helped him get there in a role declined by George Raft and John Garfield.

Though some reviewers expressed amazement that such a hackneyed concept as a boarding house full of retired entertainers should find footing at Warner Bros. and with a good cast to boot, **It All Came True**, based on the novel *Better Than Life* by Louis Bromfield, did well at the box office.

But *Variety*, for one, had mixed things to say about the film:

"... [T]he story has as many angles as a Hollywood agent. The idea of the boarding house guests doing a weekly variety show for their own amazement is in itself more than fictional license; turning the place into a swank nitery, with an elaborate show in a parlor larger than the main hall of 'Rebecca's' Manderley, is outright presumption that all people who attend motion pictures also smoke opium."

The same reviewer went on to say:

"Ann Sheridan as a femme loaded with s.a. [sex appeal] and Ann Sheridan as a dramatic actress are two things distinctly apart. She fits the first, but the second is beyond her present capabilities...Lynn is quite wooden opposite her, looking bad in comparison to his work in some previous pics....Acting standout is Bogart, who shows a fine flair for deadpan comedy."

Other reviewers were more enthusiastic about the film as a whole, including *Monthly Film Bulletin*, who found Bogart to be "in his element" and said, "[T]his rather naïve and sentimental story contrives to be, on the whole, surprisingly good entertainment. It has a little of everything."

Author Louis Bromfield was a good friend of Bogart and even let the actor use his Ohio farm for his wedding to Lauren Bacall. Bromfield wrote a letter to the film's famed executive producer, Hal B. Wallis (who did 31 films with Bogart), just prior to the release of **It All Came True**, singing the actor's praises and adding, "I doubt that his talents as a comedian, which are very great, have been enough appreciated."

With the weight of Bogart's positive reviews for **It All Came True**, his career did soon move on to more complex roles, notably *High Sierra* (1941), on which he was reunited with Wallis and producer Mark Hellinger.

Producer: Mark Hellinger

Director: Lewis Seiler

Screenplay: Michael Fessier, Lawrence Kimble; Louis Bromfield (story "Better Than Life"); Delmer Daves (treatment, uncredited)

Cinematography: Ernie Haller

Art Direction: Max Parker

Music: Edward B. Claypoole, Abe Holzmann, Howard Jackson, Max Steiner (all uncredited)

Film Editing: Thomas Richards

Cast: Ann Sheridan (Sarah Jane Ryan aka Sal), Jeffrey Lynn (Tommy Taylor), Humphrey Bogart (Grasselli aka Chips Maguire), Zasu Pitts (Miss Flint), Una O'Connor (Maggie Ryan), Jessie Busley (Mrs. Nora Taylor), John Litel (Mr. 'Doc' Roberts), Grant Mitchell (Mr. Rene Salmon), Felix Bressart (The Great Boldini), Charles Judels (Henri Pepi de Bordeaux).

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