

Ahoy Shipmates,

The Lux Radio Theatre opened its 1939 season on January 2 with "The Perfect Specimen" starring Errol with Joan Blondell and May Robson. The film version made in 1938 was a very enjoyable screwball comedy and one of Errol's best modern dress films. In the film version Errol had proved to the cinema going public that he was one of Hollywood's great under-rated comedians. The great Michael Curtiz had directed the film version. The Hungarian genius really put some great touches to the film and with a slightly stronger script the film could have achieved a parallel with such great screwball comedies as Bringing up Baby, The Philadelphia Story, It's a Wonderful World and even the classic Arsenic and Old Lace. Flynn had shown in glimpses, that he was capable of matching the immaculate Cary Grant. I was a little wary on hearing the show for the first time on how the radio version would stand up compared to the film version.

Cecil B DeMille opens up the show by introducing to the audience an adventurer in the person of Errol Flynn and lists some of Errol's past vocations: police constable, plantation owner, newspaper columnist, master of a trading boat, gold prospector and a member of the 1928 Australian Boxing Team. Also mentioned is Errol's desire to compete in the annual yacht race from California to Hawaii.

The Perfect Specimen opens at Wickstead, the home of Mrs Leona Wicks. Also at Wickstead are Mrs Wicks' grandson Gerald (Flynn) and his fiancée Alicia. Gerald is being groomed by his grandmother to be The Perfect Specimen. A man learned in all aspects of knowledge and trained to a physical perfection. Mona Carter (Blondell) is a young reporter desperate to meet Gerald the Perfect Specimen. She achieves this feat by running her car through the Wickstead fence. She meets Gerald and fills his head with dreams of escaping his regimentalised life at Wickstead, where his every move is monitored by his domineering Grand-mother. Later that day, buoyed by Mona's words, Gerald escapes from Wickstead.

Errol opens up quite well in Act One. His voice transferring beautifully to Radio. Blondell is dynamic and there is a real spark between Errol and Joan.

Act Two opens.....

Gerald has escaped from Wickstead and is out to find Mona. Gerald arrives at Mona's house and repays a favour to Mona by now running his car into Mona's fence. Mona's father seeing the damaged fence apologises to Gerald for his fence being in the way, adding that the fence is a menace to public safety, thus highlighting the eccentricity of Mona's father. Mona and Gerald head off to the train station to pick up some items for Mona's father. On the way to the station Gerald gets involved in a fist fight with Pinky Callaghan. Pinky who is on his way to the annual truckdrivers picnic to try and win the prizefighting money so he can marry his girl Clarabelle. Gerald having given Pinky a black eye agrees to step in and fight for Pinky. Gerald wins the fight but finds out that his grandmother has alerted the police as to his disappearance. Gerald and Mona head off. They pick up a hitch-hiker on the way. Mr Killigrew Shaw. Shaw invites Mona and Gerald to spend the night at his house. Mona to avoid embarrassment tells Shaw that she and Gerald are married. After a brief argument about their being married Mona

tells Gerald that being married to him would be a joke and that he is pretty far from being the Perfect Specimen. Throughout Act Two, Errol seems very muted by the inadequate material. Blondell meanwhile is in her element, with all the best dialogue seemingly reserved for the female lead, Errol doesn't really have much inclination to perform at his best. It shows.

Act Three

With the show so far proving to be a little un-comfortable for Errol, i was hoping things may improve for Errol. Clearly up to now Blondell was proving why she was considered as one of Hollywoodsbest light comediannes.

Gerald and Mona leave Killigrew Shaws residence. Mona is still a little upset to Gerald's reaction to their being married. With a storm now in full flow and both being soaked they decide to book a hotel room to dry off in. Gerald book a room for the two of them and announces to the receptionist that they are man and wife which upsets Mona. Once they get to their room Gerald after giving the matter some thought, confesses his love for Mona. He is interrupted by a radio announcement that says that Gerald's fiancée Alicia is eagerly awaiting his return. A distraught Mona leaves Gerald at the hotel. Gerald goes to Mona's house to find her but Mona has gone to Wickstead to tell give Mrs Wicks a piece of her mind and to tell her that her grandson is pretty far from the Perfect Specimen. Gerald arrives and demands that Mona marries him. Mrs Wicks after being given a stern telling off by Mona realises that this is the woman for Gerald. Finally Mona and Gerald declare their love for each other in a pretty little scene to end the show. The show receives a huge round of applause from the live audience.

On the whole, a pretty disappointing show. Errol's performance is completely overshadowed by Blondell's. Errol does his best but the superior dialogue goes to Blondell and i think Errol loses a little interest. In my opinion this is his weakest performance of his radio shows that i have heard. Through no fault of his own Errol is left to play second fiddle to Blondell.

In the after show interviews Errol comes to life. I love the respect he always shows to DeMille calling him Sir and Mr DeMille. Blondell forgets her lines during the interview and makes quite a hash of things which i think shows that Errol was more of a natural than Blondell. Mr DeMille congratulates Errol for his performance in The Dawn Patrol. Errol replies that " it was a grand show to make and i think everyone in it enjoyed it". Errol then goes on to say that in the early spring he will be off to the Bahamas for a spot of Tuna Fishing. I always love Errol in the after show interviews. He was such a natural and had all the charm in the world.

59619. The Lux Radio Theatre. January 2, 1939. CBS net. "The Perfect Specimen". Sponsored by: Lux Soap. A multi-millionaire bred to be "a perfect specimen," takes off to be his own man and avoid his dominating grandmother. Dr. Floyd L. Ruch, an associate professor of psychology is interviewed. Joan Blondell has trouble reading her script during the post-story interview. Errol Flynn, Joan Blondell, May Robson, Cecil B. DeMille, Lou Merrill (performer, commercial spokesman), Frank Nelson (performer, program opening announcer), Byron K. Foulger, Lindsay MacHarrie, Alma Lloyd, Clem Bevins, Eddie Waller (doubles), Ross Forrester, Gay Seabrook, Billy Bletcher, Bob Burleson (doubles), Earle Ross

(doubles), Lou Fulton, Edward Marr (doubles), Louis Silvers (music director), Samuel Hopkins Adams (author), Melville Ruick (announcer), Norman Reilly Raine (screenwriter), Lawrence Riley (screenwriter), Brewster Morse (screenwriter), Fritz Falkenstein (screenwriter), Caroline Frasher, Raoul DeLeon, Gil Patric, David Kerman, Margaret Brayton, Floyd L. Ruch (intermission guest), Frank Woodruff (director), George Wells (adaptor), Charlie Forsyth (sound effects). 59:37.

Bri..(an Twist)

I enjoyed the skipper's review on the LUX Radio Theater presentation of 'The Perfect Specimen's with Errol Flynn and Joan Blondell. Joan told her friends and family that in 1937 she had a wonderful time making the film version with Errol, whom she just adored. Blondell was at the very peak of her long film career, but her starring days were about to abruptly end. Joan Blondell was married to crooner/actor Dick Powell at the time, who hated working at Warner Bros. and J.L. Warner in particular. However, Joan was an affable person and had no problems with Jack Warner whatsoever, but Powell insisted that they both leave the studio together. They did and Dick Powell finally stopped being the smiling, singing crooner and became a serious actor at RKO, Columbia and MGM. He later dumped Joan Blondell and eventually married June Allyson. Joan Blondell's career never recovered from her leaving Warner Bros. and her only starring roles were in 'B' pictures at Republic or lesser studios. When she did make an 'A' film like 'Adventure' for MGM in 1946, Greer Garson would take Clark Gable and Joan was relegated to the secondary female role!

Ralph Schiller