

Critic's Choice

US : 1963 : dir. Don Weis : Warner Bros : 100 min
 prod: Frank P Rosenberg : scr: Jack Sher : dir.ph.: Charles Lang
[Ricky Kelman](#); [Donald Losby](#).....
 Bob Hope; Lucille Ball; Marilyn Maxwell; Rip Torn; Jessie Royce Landis; Marie Windsor;
 John Dehner; Jim Backus; Jerome Cowan

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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"An in-joke Broadway play diluted for movie audience consumption. Lucy as a novice playwright outshines Hope who plays her drama critic hubby. Film emerges as a tired, predictable comedy, with best moments contributed by supporting players. Based on a play by Ira Levin. Shot in Panavision **½ "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above



Source: *The Warner Bros Story*

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A ruthless Broadway critic is forced by his scruples to write a bad review of his wife's play. Unsuitable vehicle for stars who have shorn a good comedy of wit and strive

vainly for sentiment, wisecracks and pratfalls. "
 "For instant stultification" - Judith Crist

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"When Jean Kerr wrote a play the question arose as to whether her husband Walter, the theatre critic, should review it Ira Levin used the situation for a play of his own but in this film version matters are only too predictable. The couple are played by Lucille Ball and Bob Hope, and and they are supported by Rip Torn, Jessie Royce Landis and Jim Backus. "

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

"Hope plays a hard-nosed drama critic, whose wife, played by Ball, writes a play. Their marriage suffers after he gives the play an unflattering review. This screen adaptation of Ira Levin's Broadway play can't be saved by such talented performers, so the film comes off as an uneven vehicle. Some of the supporting players have better moments than the leads. Also with Rip Torn, Jim Backus and Marie Windsor. ** "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Presenting the flimsiest ethical problem of 1963: should Bob Hope review wife Lucille Ball's play? Don Weis contrives to make it as appealing as possible, which isn't very. 7 "

The Warner Bros Story comment:

"The dilemma faced by Bob Hope, as an acid-penned theatre critic in **"CRITIC'S CHOICE"**, was whether or not he should review his wife's first play. He finally decides he will, and gives it an unfavourable notice - but not before the strain of the dilemma has driven him to booze, the analyst's couch, and even the welcoming bosom of his first wife (Marilyn Maxwell).

Part sophisticated comedy, part farce - the former (in a witty screenplay by Jack Sher from the Broadway play by Ira Levin) fared better than the latter and brought out the best in Hope and his irrepressible co-star, Lucille Ball. Also cast were Rip Torn, Jessie Royce Landis, Rickey Kelman, Jim Backus, Marie Windsor and Jerome Cowan. It was produced, in, P'anavision and Technicolor, by Frank P. Rosenberg and directed by Don Weis."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

"This started life as a Broadway in-joke as to whether theatre critic Walter Kerr should review his wife Jean's play, but became diluted en route to the movies and fetched up as a vehicle for veteran funsters Bob Hope and Lucille Ball, reuniting after their hits with **"FANCY PANTS"** and **"THE FACTS OF LIFE"**. Trouble is, it's not very funny, though director Don Weis - who was responsible for **"I LOVE MELVIN"** and some of the better episodes of television's **"M.A.S.H."** - paints a sharp picture of the waspish New York theatre milieu. There are nice turns, too, from Marilyn Maxwell and Rip Torn. ***"

"Comedy, based on the play by Ira Levin, starring Bob Hope and Lucille Ball. A theatre critic finds himself in the unenviable position of having to review his wife's new play. ***"

Of very slender interest to the archive. Ricky Kelman plays Hope's son (+/- 13) from a former marriage, and is much in evidence in the domestic scenes, though he has no dramatic function to perform. The whole film plays as a tedious sitcom draped around the flimsiest of premises, with neither Hope nor Ball showing the least propensity for humour, except for an awkward slapstick sequence when Hope staggers drunk to his wife's opening night. Both give strangely understated performances - as though reluctant to compete head to head - which goes some way to account for the film's failure. The few scenes of Ball's play in early production have a flat and phoney air, Hope displays no suggestion of a rapier-like wit, and there is a total absence of marital chemistry between the leads. It would be interesting to know what month this film debuted. In November of '63 a country so stunned by the Kennedy assassination would have been in no mood for *frou-frou* such as this.

Ricky Kelman was 12. He'd made **"A MAN CALLED PETER"** in 1955, **"KATHY O"** and **"LAST TRAIN FROM GUN HILL"** in '58, and **"STEP DOWN TO TERROR"** in '59, not to mention the TV sitcom **"The Dennis O'Keefe Show"** (59). His brother David appeared with him in **"KATHY O"**, starring the feisty Patty McCormack. Nothing else is known of Losby, who has a bit part here as a schoolfriend.

Hope is on better form in one or two other archive titles, such as **"THE GREAT LOVER"** ('49) and **"THE SEVEN LITTLE FOYS"** ('54) while Ball filled a more Doris Day-like slot in **"YOURS, MINE AND OURS"** ('68). See subject index under **COMEDY** for other deserts of humour.