

Please Don't Eat the Daisies

US : 1960 : dir. Charles Walters : M-G-M / Euterpe : 111 min
 prod: Joe Pasternak : scr: Isobel Lennart : dir.ph.: Robert Bronner
Charles Herbert; Stanley Livingston; Flip Mark; Baby Gellert
 Doris Day; David Niven; Janis Paige; Spring Byington; Richard Haydn; Patsy Kelly;
 Jack Weston; John Harding; Margaret Lindsay; Carmen Phillips; Mary Patton

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	□	€	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Doris Day and David Niven – not the world's most plausible married couple
 Source: Radio Times

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"Bright film based on Jean Kerr's stories about a drama critic and his family. Doris sings title song; her kids are very amusing, as are Byington (the mother-in-law), Kelly (housekeeper), and especially Paige as a temperamental star. Later a TV series. Shot in CinemaScope. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"The family of a drama critic move to the country. Thin, obvious comedy, all dressed up but with nowhere to go."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"Jean Kerr's reflections on the life of a wife of a drama critic made a bestseller but since it was totally unsuitable for filming MGM commissioned a screenplay from Isobel Lennart, which is about a critic (David Niven) and his wife (Doris Day) quarrelling after moving into a derelict home, plus the pursuit of him by a Broadway star (Janis Paige). This is film packaged as soap, wasting also Patsy Kelly, Spring Byington and Jack Weston."

The M-G-M Story review:

"The funny side of family life was displayed to large audiences by **"PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DAISIES"** with David Niven, Spring Byington, Doris Day, Patsy Kelly, children and dog; also cast were Janis Paige, Richard Haydn, Margaret Lindsay, Jack Weston, Carmen Phillips and Mary Patton. The Joe

Pasternak production was delightfully handled by director Charles Walters and scripter Isobel Lennart. Jean Kerr's book provided the screen with a rare theatre critic hero, and M-G-M with a hit second only to "**BUTTERFIELD 8**" among new 1960 releases (1959's "**BEN HUR**" still dominated the scene)."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"Friendly comedy about a drama critic, his wife and four children – the critic has problems with his work, the wife has problems with renovating an old house in the country, and things become quite hectic in general. ***"

Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"David Niven is professor who becomes Clive Barnesish butcher-critic of Broadway. He pans a pal's production and gets his face slapped by Janis Paige. Meanwhile, at home, Doris Day is still singing "Que Sera, Sera" from a film of hers made five years before 1960, when this disappointment, directed by usually reliable old Charles Walters, appeared. 7"

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

"**"PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DAISIES"** is a light and frothy comedy, and boff family fare. Pic is episodic – as was the book by Jean Kerr – a series of highly amusing incidents strung together by a rather loose story thread, but this circumstance doesn't militate against interest. Charles Walters' direction maintains terrific pace.

Plotline is based on the adventures of Doris Day and David Niven after he turns to newspaper drama criticking [*sic*] during which they are forced out of their Gotham apartment and buy a monstrosity in the country – 70 miles from Broadway – where Day takes on community life while trying to modernise and make their new home livable [*sic*]. Janis Paige enters scene as a Broadway actress who Niven pans in his very first review, which also incurs the enmity of his best friend, producer Richard Haydn.

Day delivers lustily and Niven makes hay with his critic's portrayal, for whom Paige goes on

the make in a big way. Jack Weston also is good as a play-writing cabby."



The usual moving-home knockabout scenes...

Source: The M-G-M Story

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Witty David Niven meets his match when he crosses Doris Day's path and questions her ambitions. A clever comedy about a drama critic who copes with his wife's remodeling plans and a conniving actress friend at the same time. Based on Jean Kerr's bestseller and the basis for a TV series during the 1960s. ***"

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times reviews:

"A brash, colourful and fast-moving MGM comedy based on Jean Kerr's episodic reminiscences about life with hubby, Broadway's ace drama critic Walter Kerr. The couple are delightfully incarnated here by Doris Day, whose company produced this movie for Metro, and the ever-urbane David Niven, who is hilarious in the scenes where he's pursued by panned Broadway actress Janis Paige. Director Charles Walters maintains a fast pace, and the stylish use of CinemaScope is exemplary, providing a clever cinematic contrast as Day and Niven decamp from Manhattan to a country abode. ****"

"Comedy starring Doris Day, David Niven. Kate Mackay faces the trial of moving her mischievous children, shaggy dog and distracted husband out of New York. ****"

“Comedy starring Doris Day and David Niven. When her husband Larry decides to become a theatre critic, Kate Mackay, left minding the children in their new country house, begins to doubt his fidelity. **** ”

“Comedy following the escapades of a drama critic’s family. *** ”

“A comedy about a New York drama critic and his family who opt out.”

Sunday Times note:

“Comedy following the escapades of a drama critic, his wife and their four children after they leave New York and take up residence in a musty old mansion in the country.”



Niven at the mercy of Janis Paige, whose performance he savaged in a review, enhancing his reputation as a critic and, seemingly, sex appeal to her.
Source: *A Pictorial History of the Talkies*

My previous review of this was curt and dismissive, but having recently watched Day’s later **“WITH SIX YOU GET EGGROLL”** (68), it certainly looks agreeable enough afternoon fare by contrast. Also by contrast with the Bob Hope/Lucille Ball leadweight “comedy” in the same vein – **“CRITIC’S CHOICE”** (63). And one should also measure it against other family-restoring-ramshackle-old-house comedies of the period, such as **“MR BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE”** (48, with Cary Grant and Myrna Loy) or **“MR HOBBS TAKES A VACATION”** (62, with James Stewart and Maureen O’Hara). Doris Day’s breezy apple pie persona, which had served her so well in the fifties, would begin to look increasingly square and plastic as the new decade brought very different attitudes to sexuality and womanhood. David Niven, improbably cast as her husband, skates through the film in his affably flustered way, but does not really convince as a drama critic intoxicated by his own savage wit.

The plot, such as it is – Niven and Day share their rented New York apartment with four small boys and one large English sheepdog, but their plans to buy a house in the country are thrown askew when an uncharacteristically savage review of Niven’s brings him unexpected publicity and admiration. He has his face publicly slapped by indignant femme fatale Janis Paige, and responds by sharpening his pen still more. A publisher friend (Richard Haydn) cautions Day that her husband will become so enamoured of his caustic style that it will override any fair appraisal of the play he’s seeing. Niven of course is also working on a book, and the turmoil of licking a sprawling new house into shape and commuting back and forth to Broadway provokes domestic squabbles. At Day’s insistence he moves into a New York hotel to finish his book while she finishes the house. There he becomes fair game for bored actress Paige, and Day is persuaded to put on a play for a local fundraising group. Short of material, she’s given a talentless unperformed play by Haydn, not knowing it was an early writing effort of her husband’s. Haydn invites all his New York literati friends to the sole performance, but Niven heads off their triumph by writing in advance a scathing review of his own piece.

But what of the boys, David, George, Gabriel and the toddler (who seems to spend most of his time locked in a cage)? They scamper noisily about, getting up to the kind of low-level mischief small boys are allowed in such family comedies – dropping water bombs on passers-by from their apartment window, getting wedged head-first into a chair at school or (hence the title) eating things nature didn’t intend. In films of this kind the children don’t seem to exist as individual entities, they are (in this case) a single six-legged, three-headed organism

marauding in the background to the pained smiles of their parents. And naturally there is the family dog (scared of cats, frogs and squirrels) and the sassy "characterful" housekeeper. These so-familiar sitcom credentials did not prevent the film doing well for M-G-M at the box office, and one has to suppose it was the public's affection for Doris Day which made it a hit.

Charles Herbert (11) is the best known among the boys, playing David (9). He starred the same year in the ineffably dull "**THE BOY AND THE PIRATES**", and in William Castle's "**13 GHOSTS**" (patrons were given special 3D glasses to see the spooks), but he'd debuted at 4 on TV's "**Half-Pint Panel**", was in "**THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK**", "**THE FLY**" and as Cary Grant's harmonica virtuoso son who first seduces Sophia Loren in "**HOUSEBOAT**" (all in 58). He won an Emmy for his performance on stage in "The Miracle Hour". Stanley Livingstone was 9. He grew up on the TV sitcom "**My Three Sons**" (60-72), but also had parts in "**RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS!**" (58) and "**X-15**" (61). Platinum blond Flip Mark was 11, also seen in "**THE JOURNEY**" (59), "**SAFE AT HOME!**" (62) and "**MARRIAGE ON THE ROCKS**" (65). Nothing else is known of Baby Gellert, whose gurgled first words are so conspicuously dubbed on him by some gurgling actress. There's one scene where he's being held in Day's arms at the front door while Niven rails at her angrily, and the expression of unease working its way towards alarm on the child's face is the most genuine emotion in the whole film.

See the TV sitcom spinoff of the same name, and subject index under **COMEDY** and **MOVING HOME**.