

Tomorrow the World

US : 1944 : dir. Leslie Fenton : United Artists : 86 min
 prod: Lester Cowan : scr: Ring Lardner Jr & Leopold Atlas : dir.ph.:
[Skippy Homeier](#) [d]; [Joan Carroll](#); [Rudy Wissler](#)
 Fredric March; Betty Field; Agnes Moorehead; Boots Brown; Edith Angold; Rudy Wissler;
 Marvin Davis; Patsy Ann Thompson; Mary Newton; Tom Fadden

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	∞	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
3442b	7	6	8	1,630	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen



*In today's educational gibberish – a child with “special needs” (or perhaps he's just an art-critic?)
 All stills unless indicated – source: The Fredric March Story*



"Remind me again – how does one say 'Bend over' in German..?"

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"Thoughtful drama based on the Broadway play of an American couple adopting a German boy, trying to undo the rigid Nazi influence in him. ***½"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review - identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A college professor adopts his orphaned German nephew, who turns out to be an ardent 12-year old Nazi. Adequate, predictable screen version of a once-topical play by James Gow & Armand D'Usseau. *"

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"An American family adopts a German boy, discovers the Nazi influence has warped the child's mind. Excellent drama, thoughtful, gripping. ***½"

The Films of Fredric March account:

"**"TOMORROW THE WORLD"** was based on a hit Broadway play that starred Ralph Bellamy and Shirley Booth. Lester Cowan produced and Leslie Fenton directed the 1944 film version with Fredric March, Betty Field and the amazing child actor Skippy Homeier (when he grew up, he shortened it to Skip), who repeated his viciously trenchant stage portrayal of the Nazi-indoctrinated



"What d'you mean, 'the boy has annexed Poland'?"



March and Betty Field on set with Theron Bamberger, producer of the stage version

twelve-year old, Emil, and in the process stole the picture. The consensus of reviewer opinion was that while March and Field were dignified, sincere, and earnest in their portrayals, the picture constituted in effect a one-boy tour-de-force.

March plays a professor in a small college town; he brings to America his nephew, Homeier, who has been orphaned in Germany. His parents have died in a concentration camp because of his father's ardent anti-Nazi intellectualism. Emil is the typical brainwashed young Nazi; he hates his dead father for what he considers his craven defection from the Nazi cause. Once installed in March's household, he makes constant trouble; he fosters unrest among the children at school; he develops a hostility toward his widower-uncle's schoolteacher fiancée, Miss Field, because she is of Jewish blood, he makes friends with a Chinese boy he mistakenly believes to be a "Jap", and he is intent on learning the plans his uncle is working on in secret for the War Department.

When his hatred of his surroundings finally gets really out of hand, he almost kills his young girl cousin, for whom by degrees, and in spite of himself, he has been developing a fondness. This brings on a manhunt of sorts,

with the neighbourhood out looking for him. Belatedly (and to many viewers, inexplicably) he realises the error of his ways and is chastened. There was some criticism of his insufficiently motivated change of heart, a questioning of the psychological validity of this dyed-in-the-wool young Nazi's switch-about. Let's face it, when Emil was bad he was very very bad (and exciting), but when he turned good he was something of a washout, what they would call today a cop-out.

Of course in 1944, when the film was made, we were fighting a vicious war with the Nazis and it was fashionable to give psychological realities the go-by if chauvinistic purposes could be served. And in 1944 what audiences wanted to see an unredeemed Nazi child? Though Homeier was duly "redeemed", there was added criticism of his performance's stagey over-emphases before the far more intimate camera eye¹. There was some weakening of the message, such as it was, in the transition from stage to screen; moreover the professor was not the showiest role March had ever had, with the nominal star and Miss Field, the nominal co-star, playing distinct second fiddle to Homeier². Screenplay: Ring Lardner Jr and Leopold Atlas, adapted from the play by James Gow and Armand D'Usseau."



¹ surely the director's fault?
² and rightly so.



Fredric March suffers a momentary relapse into his "Dr JEKYLL AND Mr HYDE" role

"...Fredric March gives an intelligently restrained performance"

- Frank Leyendecker, **Film Bulletin**

"Fredric March and Betty Field are starring in the roles played originally on Broadway by Ralph Bellamy and Shirley Booth and both give dignity to the parts of the professor and his bride-to-be. But the main accolade must go to Skippy Homeier, the young Nazi." – **Variety**

" [The stage] explosion... has been considerably muffled in the film version... Skippy Homeier, the talented youth who acted Emil on Broadway and plays it on the screen... hasn't been able to reduce the volume of his performance to the magnifying glass of the screen close-up and so his portrayal of Emil often seems badly exaggerated. Fredric March, as the professor who adopts Emil and Betty Field as the professor's schoolteacher bride-to-be, walk through the piece as a pair of foils for Emil's malice. But even this acid has been diluted for the screen presentation; there is very little left of "TOMORROW THE

WORLD" except the curious oil-and-water mixture of a Nazi among Americans."

- **The New York Herald Tribune**

"A sincere if not completely satisfying attempt... in film form no more conclusive than it was as a play. It mirrors in terms often more theatrical than realistic, the problem that will confront the Allies in purging Nazi-poisoned minds after the battle is won. The picture does not convincingly put across its theory that patience, kindness and education in the principles of Democracy will do the trick. Skippy Homeier's portrayal of the deceitful youth... is frighteningly vicious... the film is generally well acted and directed. Fredric March is always believable, if too easy-going, as the small mid-western town college professor and widower who is completely baffled by his obnoxious nephew. Betty Field is a bulwark of tolerance and sympathetic understanding as the fiancée-schoolteacher... Leslie Fenton's direction is generally excellent."

- **The New York Times**



*The Free World strides boldly onward to a better (more Americanised) future...
Left to Right: Fredric March, Skippy Homeier, producer Lester Cowan, Joan Carroll and Betty Field.*

The United Artists Story review:

"The main fascination of Lester Cowan's production of **"TOMORROW THE WORLD"** lay in the performance of 14-year old Skip Homeier in his screen debut as the odious Hitler Youth foisted on middle America, the role he played in James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau's Broadway play. This little monster is the orphaned child of an anti-Nazi German father who died in a concentration camp, and an American mother. The boy is sent to stay with his university professor uncle (Fredric March) in the USA.

Having been indoctrinated back home in Germany, he considers his father a traitor to the Reich, turns against his uncle's Jewish fiancée (Betty Field), fights with his young cousin (Joan Carroll), and alienates his schoolmates. Only when he is threatened with prison, nearly strangled by March, and beaten up, does he begin to see the benefits of

democracy³. The sincerity of Ring Lardner Jr and Leopold Atlas' screenplay, and Leslie Fenton's direction, was undermined by the naivete of the message and story, symbolising the current anti-Nazification of Germany by the Allies. Other parts were taken by Agnes Moorehead, Edith Angold, Rudy Wissler, Boots Brown, Marvin Davis, Patsy Ann Thompson and Tom Fadden."

Film Review 1945-46 review:

"Skippy Homeier gives a terrific performance as the Nazi hell-child brought to America. From the James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau stage play about a topical problem, the future of German youth."

³ *Unintentional irony? Weren't those the persuasion tactics of preference for the Nazis?*

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]



Source: *Film Review 1946-46*

The film is never shown today, more's the pity, though it would doubtless look even more stilted now. Homeier was actually 15 in 1944, and those few years do make a difference, but this was a fairly straightforward stage-to-screen transfer, so he had earned the right to play it. It was in the nature of a one-off for him, alas. Nothing he did later - "**BOYS' RANCH**" (with Jackie "Butch" Jenkins and Darryl Hickman), "**MICKEY**", "**THE GUNFIGHTER**" - could compare with his "one boy tour-de-force" debut. Rudy Wissler's other films were "**GOOD LUCK MR YATES**" (43), "**COVER GIRL**" (44) and "**SAN DIEGO, I LOVE YOU**" (44). Joan Carroll was 12, seen elsewhere in "**PRIMROSE PALS**" (40), "**LADDIE**" (41), "**PETTICOAT LARCENY**" (43), "**MEET ME IN ST LOUIS**" (44) and "**THE BELLS OF St MARY'S**" (46).

The vanquished in world wars, perhaps inevitably, find their native culture and politics marked down for extensive surgery by the victor. Japan, far more even than Germany, succumbed to a wholesale Americanisation programme under Shogun MacArthur, hence no equivalent tales of the salvation of wayward Japanese boys back in the US of A. They received their re-education at home. Indeed, various Japanese films have looked back on that difficult transitional period in their nation's history, but I'm hard pressed to name a single American film about it.

For another contemporary American view of Nazi indoctrination, see "**HITLER'S CHILDREN**", and subject index under **BRATS / SPOILED CHILDREN, THE CHILD AS EVIL IN OUR MIDST, THE CHILD AS POLITICAL SYMBOL, DISCRIMINATION / PREJUDICE, ORPHANS / ADOPTION** and **WAR**.