



Synopsis

Bob, a train driver with the Great Western Railway, arrives back in London in a particularly irascible mood and is curt with Charlie, his stoker. His wife Emily welcomes him with open arms, but he is much more interested in the letter from his employers that awaits his return. He is devastated when he reads that they have decided to dismiss the appeal to postpone his retirement after forty years of service. She does her best to console him and he apologises for his brusque behaviour. She manages to calm him down and he admits that he thinks his head has been playing tricks on him. Emily goes to the kitchen to write a letter to Charlie.

Pip and Daisy, two confidence tricksters, are on the run from the police. When a constable comes to their flat, they create a diversion and then decide to catch a train and leave town. At the train station they come across Goddard, who appears quite drunk. He buys Daisy a drink in the bar and she distracts him while Pip tries unsuccessfully to pick his pocket.

Tom goes to see his fiancée, Diana, to apologise for an argument they had over Gerald, an admirer of hers. He finds a note telling him that she and Gerald are getting married and then catching a train to go on their honeymoon. Tom drives off to the station in an attempt to stop them.

Bob overhears Emily confiding in Charlie and making him promise not to reveal that he has come to see her. After he leaves, Bob bids her farewell and goes to the station, convinced that she and Charlie are having an affair behind his back. Tom arrives just as the train departs. He gets back in his car, determined to catch up with them at the first train stop.

Diana reveals to Gerald that she is a bit apprehensive about their marriage since they have only known each other for a month, but he reassures her. Goddard continues to drink with Daisy's encouragement. Pip runs into Gerald and recognises him as a fellow con man. Charlie tells Bob that the train is going too fast, but is ignored. When he presses the point, Bob accuses him of having an affair with his wife and of having come to see her that day. Charlie denies it, which infuriates Bob, who pulls a gun on him. He tells Charlie that he intends to crash the train and take everybody with him.

Gerald realises that Pip has stolen his wallet and goes to find him. Goddard, who is actually an undercover policeman, discovers the three confidence tricksters. He is about to arrest them when the speeding train lurches forwards, allowing Gerald to knock him out. Gerald plans to kill Goddard and throw him from the train, but the other two refuse. The train hurtles forwards much too fast and fails to make its first stop. Charlie escapes from the engine but is shot in the shoulder by Bob.

Sir Wilfred Rhodes, a doctor, is called to attend the wounded man and Charlie tells him that he must stop the train before it crashes. He manages to reach the engine and eventually is able to calm down Bob and show him the letter Emily had written to Charlie, expressing only her love and concern for her husband. Bob stops the train just before it crashes into the buffers. Goddard lets Pip and Daisy get away in return for saving his life. Gerald tries to escape, but Tom has chartered a small plane and arrives in time to see that he is arrested for bigamy. Bob recovers from his mental breakdown and settles down to enjoy a long retirement with his forbearing wife.

Cast

Gerald Winter	WILLIAMS, Hugh
Sir Wilfred Rhodes	TEARLE, Godfrey
Diana Gregory	GUNN, Judy
Bob Holt	MITCHELL, Julien
the Frenchman	KEYS, Nelson
Charlie	HOGAN, Michael
Goddard	PETTINGELL, Frank
Emily Holt	LINDO, Olga
Daisy	GRAY, Eve
Pip	MAKEHAM, Eliot
Mrs. Grebe	FAIRBROTHER, Sidney
Tom	BRANTFORD, Mickey
the stutterer	WILKINSON, Sam
Miss Smith	COMPTON, Viola

Credits

Director	VORHAUS, Bernard
Production Company	Twickenham Film Studios Productions
Producer	HAGEN, Julius
Production Supervisor	BRAHM, Hans
Assistant Director	DAVIDSON, James
Screenplay	MEAR, H. Fowler

Screenplay	SOUTAR, John
An Original Story by	FARJEON, J. Jefferson
Photography	STRONG, Percy
Photography	LUFF, William
Supervising Editor	HARRIS, Jack
Editor	LAURANCE, Lister
Art Director	CARTER, James A.
Coiffure	CHARLES
Music Director	TRYTEL, W.L.
Sound Recording	HONRI, Baynham
Sound Recording	WILKINS, Leo
Studio	Twickenham Film Studios

The above is taken from <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/516287/index.html>

THE LAST JOURNEY is a classic quota quickie — maybe the best ever — directed by Bernard “Mad” Vorhaus, about an engine driver on the brink of retirement who cracks up and attempts to crash his own train. It’s a precursor of the ’70s disaster movie, or more accurately, group jeopardy movie (since in this particular version of the genre, actual disaster must be averted) — stick a bunch of amusing stereotypes together in a perilous situation and watch them sweat. Or “perspire,” if they’re first class ticket holders.



The story is by J. Jefferson Farjeon, a man who is suddenly all over my mind like a pox. He’s not only the author of Michael Powell’s lighthouse mystery [THE PHANTOM LIGHT](#), which I wrote about already, but of [THE GHOST CAMERA](#), written up for The Forgotten over at The Auteurs’ Notebook.

This seems to be a style of title Farjeon favoured: I wonder if he had trunks full of unsold screenplays with titles like *The Haunted Tripod*, *The Zombie Microphone*, *The Spook Boom* or *The Spectral Dolly*.

He's also responsible for the play which Hitchcock's NUMBER 17. is based on, the subject of this Wednesday's entry in Hitchcock Year, and a little number called TWO CROWDED HOURS, which in the manner of quota quickies, crammed both hours into a 45 minute running time. This was Michael Powell's first directorial outing, and is apparently a lost film. Do check you're not sitting on it, please.



At last, a good hypnotist! Tearle's suave doctor begins the film with a hokey demonstration of his mesmeric arts, and wishes that he could use the technique to save lives. Will he, before the film is finished? He will!

THE LAST JOURNEY is one of the most exciting films I've ever seen! Not for cinematic brilliance, although there's a certain amount of that: Vorhaus does silly things like putting the camera inside the locomotive's burner, and uses crazy canted angles to film the freight railway employees trying to prevent a collision. What generates the real energy is the furious pace of the storytelling and cutting, and what makes it fun is the shameless comedy relief and boldly overplayed melodrama ~



The lunatic engine driver keeps yelling "We're overdue! We're overdue! The crash! The crash!" with increasing fervour, like he thinks he's in a Tod Slaughter movie.

~ while the comic relief characters are highly reminiscent of the one-note caricatures populating the later Hitchcock THE LADY VANISHES, or a Hollywood comedy like TWENTIETH CENTURY.



"The Frenchman" spends the entire flick trying and failing to go to the lavatory — OK, so it's not a great character arc — while Goddard is a boozy Yorkshireman, and not the director of A BOULE DE SOUFFLE.



The stutterer is another one-note running gag, trying to order something in the dining car but being abandoned by waiters before he can ram a syllable from between his palsied lips. Ah, the truly '30s were a golden age of mocking the afflicted! Miss Smith is a hypochondriac bore whom Tearle, our hero, disposes of by letting her read his medical textbook, which convinces her she has motor ataxia. He prescribes dry toast, and she leaves for the dining car.



Most amusing are the wildly dishonest pickpockets, fleeing the law and swiping everything that's not nailed down as they go. They're like cockney versions of characters from a pre-code Warners movie.



The hero type on the left spends the whole movie chasing the train, desperate to rescue the girl he loves from the clutches of the oleaginous Hugh. Sidney Fairbrother is the temperance campaigner, butt of the film's best and meanest joke. After making a pest of herself campaigning against strong drink throughout the action, she faints at the climax and has to be revived with a bottle of brandy. Waking up, she sees what she's been drinking, and faints again.

From <http://dcairns.wordpress.com/2009/04/07/full-steam-ahead/>



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LAST JOURNEY, THE (1935)

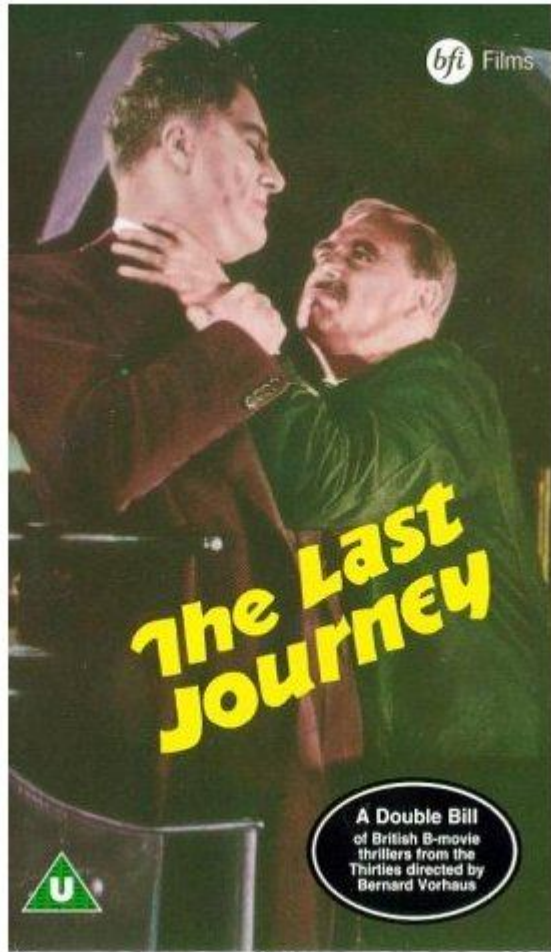
Railway melodrama; a sensational and exciting if improbable story of an engine driver's last journey. As a result of brooding over his impending retirement and doubting his wife's faithfulness to him he goes mad and drives his train at terrific speed, disregarding all signals, and disaster is only averted at the last moment.

The action takes place mainly in the train and thanks to the co-operation of the Great Western Railway has satisfactory accuracy of staging. We are first shown nervous people who are about to make a journey by this particular train - a young criminal who has just married (bigamously) a rich girl; two crooks making a get-away; a disguised detective; a brain specialist called to perform an operation in the country. The development is necessarily episodic, but a connecting link between the different groups is found in their common emotion of fear when they realise that the train is running away. Brief sketches of these people allow displays of very varying characteristics including those of the scientist, the criminal, the crank, and the vulgarian. Suspense is well-maintained and the climax is thrilling. The acting generally is on a high level though opportunities in this type of plot are obviously limited. The direction is skilful and imaginative and the camera work is good.

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* was published by the British Film Institute between 1934 and 1991. Initially aimed at distributors and exhibitors as well as filmgoers, it carried reviews and details of all UK film releases. In 1991, the *Bulletin* was absorbed by *Sight and Sound* magazine

The film was shown on BBC 4 in June 2008 as part of a B-movie season.

The film was released on video in 1998 by the BFI with 'The Ghost Camera', another film by Bernard Vorhaus (video cover below).



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The Last Journey

A Double Bill
of British B-movie
thrillers from the
Thirties directed by
Bernard Vorhaus

