



IN SEARCH OF THE CASTAWAYS is part of a double bill of Disney features comprising one of the LVCA July, 2014 dvd donations to the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Following is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.

United Kingdom 1962 color 98 minutes live action feature adventure musical  
Walt Disney Productions Producers: Walt Disney, Hugh Attwooll

5 of a possible 20 points

\* of a possible \*\*\*\*\*

Key: \*indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

(j) designates juvenile performer

Points:

- 0 Direction: Robert Stevenson 2<sup>nd</sup> Unit Direction: Peter Bolton Special Effects Unit Direction: Grania O'Shannon
  - 0 Editing: Gordon Stone, Robin Clarke
  - 1 Cinematography: Paul Beeson Additional Photography: David Harcourt, Michael Reed, Ray Sturges
  - Visual Effects: Peter Ellenshaw, Ron Jackson, Martin Shortall, Michael Serafian, others
  - 1 Lighting
  - 0 Screenplay: Lowell S. Hawley based on the story by Jules Verne
  - 1 Music: William Alwyn Music Direction: Muir Matheson
  - Songs: Richard and Robert Sherman
  - 1 Art Direction: Michael Stringer Set Dresser: Vernon Dixon
  - Costume Design: Margaret Furse
  - Make-Up: Harry Frampton
  - 1 Sound Editing: Peter Thornton Sound Recording: Gordon McCallum, Dudley Messenger
  - 0 Acting
  - 0 Creativity
- 5 total points

Cast: Maurice Chevalier (Jacques Paganel), Hayley Mills (j) (Mary Grant), George Sanders (Thomas Ayerton, gun-runner), Wilfred Hyde-White (Lord Glenarvan), Michael Anderson

(John Glenarvan, son of Lord Glenarvan), Antonio Cifariello (Chief Thalcave), Keith Hamshire (j) (Robert Grant, Mary's brother), Wilfrid Brambell (Bill Gaye, religious fanatic), Jack Gwillim (Captain Grant), others

One of the worst films ever to emerge from Walt Disney Studios, *IN SEARCH OF THE CASTAWAYS* is an overwrought, dramatically flaccid adventure epic trying to incorporate elements of romantic comedy, epic drama and musical fluff into a coherent story. It fails miserably on all counts.

The threadbare plot concerns a group of ill-assorted travelers united by a mysterious message in a bottle which has no more credibility than an insultingly contradictory and childish screenplay by Lowell Hawley. Whether looking for stranded crew members among the highest peaks in the Andes --- certainly the least likely locale for sailors --- or bypassing African coastline for no apparent logical reason, the quarreling search party is guided more by dumb hunches of geologist Paganel than either compass or intelligence. Its convoluted pursuit of Captain Grant, whose ship has sunk somewhere in the South Pacific --- or possibly the eastern Indian Ocean --- involves his son and daughter, shipowner Lord Glenarvon, his wiseacre teenage son, and glibly bumbling Paganel. Their mission is centered on the 37<sup>th</sup> parallel. This provides an excuse to visit what is supposed to be Patagonia, the southern Andes, dockside Australia, and volcanos of New Zealand, all exotic locales for North American viewing audiences of the early 1960s. One natural disaster after another befalls the hapless party, ranging from landslides triggered by an earthquake, to flash floods on the pampas, to volcanic explosions in the land of the long white cloud, otherwise known as Kiwiland. Of course, since the film was shot solely in the British Isles, no scene actually shows us kiwis, or Spanish-speaking natives, or vaqueros, or aborigines, or anything native to lands depicted. Simply draping ponchos over shoulders and dressing extras as Maori warriors aping tribal dances suffices for realism. Opportunity is even provided Chevalier to sing a French ditty while ascending Argentine mountain passes in a sort of Jacques On the Trail parody of Ferde Grofe's musical ride into Arizona's Grand Canyon. Such juxtapositions of Sherman Brother songs with William Alwyn score are not so much shocking as absolutely ridiculous, detracting considerably from the art department's paint-and-sculpture recreation of indigenous scenery. Attempting to recapture scientifically-based details of mountain caverns and ashy geysers proves equally futile, merely accentuating the artificiality of studio mock-ups. Typecasting of George Sanders as debonair villain intent on accumulating wealth through gun-running to Maori rebels further insults audience intelligence, especially since his menace is limited to brandishing a pistol occasionally and sneering at the stupidity of clueless aristocrat, naïve adolescents, and utterly incompetent French researcher. As if engaged in a contest to determine which studio could offer the greatest number of stereotyped characters in a single film, unidimensional thick-skulled guards and snobbish nobility people opening scenes, culminating in the sneeringly derisive personality of John Glenarvan, who combines male chauvinism with overbearing condescension, positioning himself optimally for future George Sanders roles. Even more aggravating are performances by Wilfrid Hyde-White as an adult who lives by the motto of perseverance, then hastily espouses retreat as soon as a human obstacle to achievement surfaces, and by Wilfrid Brambell, whose Bill Gaye portrayal is stolen directly from Geoffrey Wilkinson's depiction of marooned Ben Gunn in the 1950 Disney *TREASURE ISLAND*, with sprinkles of religious fanaticism as differentiating garnish. Presumably to satisfy expectations of Hayley Mills' legion of fans, a romance is contrived by the screenwriter for her character and Glenarvan, Junior. Their mutual

antipathy is far more convincing, as the two are at their best when trading insults. The whole movie suffers from a universal department store, offend nobody mentality, forerunner of current surrender to political and social correctness demands. Simply adequate lighting and sound reinforce the notion *IN SEARCH OF THE CASTAWAYS* is bottom drawer Disney, intended to showcase garish special visual effects, with human cast merely supplying advertising fodder. Avoid this picture and settle instead for more satiating delights of its set partner, the 1950 Disney *TREASURE ISLAND*, whose creators wisely avoided contrived romance, irrelevant song inserts, tempests and pseudo-scientific babblings.

*IN SEARCH OF THE CASTAWAYS* can be viewed by indiscriminating audiences of any age, but is more likely to frustrate than please with its surfeit of mindless action and confused, confusing dialogue.