

***Seven Days to Noon* is an Autumn, 2024 LVCA dvd donation to the Ligonier Valley Library of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd.**

17 of a possible 20 points **1/2 of a possible *******

Key: *indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

Great Britain 1950 black-and-white 94 minutes live action feature suspense drama Charter Film Productions / British Lion / London Films / Boulting Brothers Producers: Roy Boulting, John Boulting, Peter De Sarigny

Points:

- 1 Film Direction: John Boulting**
 - 2 Editing: Roy Boulting***
 - 2 Cinematography: Gilbert Taylor*, John Boulting*, and Max Benedict*
Still Photography: Len Lee***
 - 2 Lighting**
 - 1 Screenplay: Frank Harvey, Roy Boulting, Paul Dehn, and James Bernard
from an original story by Paul Dehn and James Bernard
Continuity: Shirley Barnes and E. Kelly (2nd Unit)**
 - 2 Music: John Addison***
 - 2 Art Direction: John Elphick
Wardrobe: Honoria Plesch
Makeup: U. P. Hutchinson**
 - 2 Sound
Sound Editing: Bert Eggleton*
Dubbing Editing: Red Law*
Sound Recording: Bert Ross*
Casting: Dorothy Holloway**
 - 1 Acting**
 - 2 Creativity**
- 17 total points**

Cast: Barry Jones (Professor Willingdon), Olive Sloane (Goldie), Andre Morrell (Superintendent Folland), Joan Hickson (Mrs. Pickett), Sheila Manahan (Ann Willingdon, the professor's daughter), Hugh Cross (Stephen Lane), Ronald Adam (the Prime Minister), Marie Ney (Mrs. Willingdon), Russell Waters (Detective Davis), Frederick Allen (BBC Newsreader),

Geoffrey Keen (Alf), Wyndham Goldie* (Reverend Burgess), Martin Boddey (General Willoughby), Victor Maddern (Private Jackson), Merrill Mueller (American Commentator), Joss Ackland (Station Policeman), Jean Anderson (Mother at Railroad Station), Jack Arrow (Policeman), John Boxer (Army Mechanic), Ernest Clark (Barber), Maurice Colbourne (Ministry Official), Basil Cunard (Civil Defense Warden at Bus Stop), Colin Douglas (Soldier in House Search), Marusa Elias (Evacuee), Frank Howard (Soldier Who Steals Bloomers), John Kevan (Major Fanshawe), James Knight* (Mr. Cooper, pawnbroker), Sam Kydd (Soldier in House Search), Molly Lumley (Evacuee), Martin Lyder (Man on Bus), Jack May (First Newspaper Seller), Henry McGee (Soldier Marching beside Jackson), Ernie Priest (Policeman), Bruce Seton (Brigadier Grant), Leonard Sharp (Fred, the Barman), Bert Simms (Museum Patron), John Snagge (BBC Announcer), George Spence (Man on Bus), Marianne Stone (Woman in Phone Box), John Stratton (Army Mechanic), George Street (Newspaper Editor), Robert Brooks Turner (Railwayman Pasting Labels), John Wilder (Detective Sergeant Carter), Billy Wilmot (Evacuee), Ian Wilson (Sandwich Board Man)

Seven Days to Noon is an Atomic Age suspense thriller from England directed by John Boulting. Based on an original story by Paul Dehn and James Bernard, this British export contemplates the unthinkable: what if a nuclear scientist would decide to blackmail a nation's government? In this instance, the victim selected is 10 Downing Street's territory in the heart of London. Though the plot happens to be fictitious, objective editing and a screenplay constantly resisting melodramatic flourishes team to create an atmosphere smacking of documentary realism. This is reinforced by a complete absence of "stars" in the cast, though future marquee name Joss Ackland plays a minor role.

John Addison's menacing score adds further gravitas to the drama. Matching his skill is sound editing by Bert Eggleton, modulating flawlessly from isolated bird calls to boots tramping in march time down central London streets. Just as finely calibrated is the recording of a hubbub of multiple simultaneous conversations as panicked citizens mill around trains and buses collected for the sole purpose of transporting refugees from their homes to safer suburbs outside a probable blast circle.

It seems Professor Willingdon, senior researcher at an atomic energy research laboratory in England, has become obsessed with the notion various nations, including his own, are insanely manufacturing far too many nuclear warheads to use against each other in the name of providing homeland security against any and all external threats. In the wake of Adolph Hitler's blitzkrieg and Holocaust policies, this would appear to be a rational and predictable response. The problem centers around an untested supposition, namely that an atomic armory guarantees deterrence against potential aggressor states.

Whitehall supports the concept of invincible nuclear defense. Willingdon strongly denies its validity. History supports him, even if the screenplay adopted by this British Lion release doesn't.

To bring leaders of his native land into proper thinking about the issue, the elderly scientist absconds from his workplace with a Gladstone bag containing a small amount of radioactive material in the form of a time bomb. He then sends the Prime Minister the following polite threat: a substantial area of the capital will be destroyed by an atomic blast at noontime seven days from the postmarked date of his note unless the Britain stops creating nuclear weapons.

Initial response of Scotland Yard, army brass, and cabinet officials is dismissal of the ultimatum as a nonsensical prank. Investigation into the identity of its author causes a quick reversal in their attitude, however. Can authorities stop a highly intelligent kook from incinerating a significant portion of the world's most populous city? Only if they can find him in the space of a week.

A fatal game of hide-and-seek begins. One none of the players enjoy. Since the militant bomber employs aliases, wardrobe changes, and tonsorial makeovers to elude detection, Superintendent Folland and his associates have no firm leads to follow concerning his whereabouts. Even plastering photos of the suspect on bus and train windows throughout Greater London fails to disclose where the mad blackmailer is biding his time. Neither Willingdon's wife nor his daughter have any helpful information about where to look for him. His chief subordinate is just as clueless.

Meanwhile, public curiosity slides into growing unease. Why is this senior citizen nobody heard of before suddenly a celebrity who must be located immediately?

How much should the citizenry be told about an unfolding doomsday scenario? Will people panic and make matters even worse?

You'll have to watch the film to find out.

The best performances turned in are by Wyndham Goldie as chess-playing rector Reverend Burgess, who claims to be Willingdon's best friend, and James Knights as Mr. Cooper, a pawnbroker. Leads are adequate, but unremarkable.

One of the finest assets of the film is Gilbert Taylor's cinematography, which capitalizes on contrasts between dark, gloomy interiors and sunny, inviting streets. The latter counterpoints splendidly with the former, metaphorically representing suicidal depression pitted against naïve innocence.

A minor classic from 1950's cold war hysteria, *Seven Days to Noon* is unfortunately even more relevant today than when first released. Check it out and see why.