



***Little Boy Lost* is a 1953 drama, now obscure, starring Bing Crosby and Claude Dauphin. Below is Kino Ken's review of that Zeus dvd release.**

12 of a possible 20 points = *1/2 = a good film**

United States / France 1953 black-and-white 95 minutes

Perlberg-Seaton Productions Producer: William Perlberg a Zeus dvd release

Key: *indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

(j) designates a juvenile performer

Points:

1 Direction: George Seaton

- 1 Editing: Alma Macrorie
- 2 Cinematography: George Barnes
- 1 Lighting
 - Special Visual Effects: Farciot Edouart, Loyal Griggs, Gordon Jennings
- 1 Music: Victor Young
 - Orchestrations / Arrangements: Sidney Cutner, Joseph Lilley (vocals),
Leo Shuken, Van Cleave
- 1 Art Direction: Henry Bumstead and Hal Pereira
 - Set Decoration: Sam Comer and Ross Dowd
 - Costume Design: Edith Head
 - Makeup: Wally Westmore
- 2 Sound
 - Sound Recording: Gene Garvin* and Henry Mills*
- 1 Acting
- 1 Creativity
- 12 total points

Cast: Bing Crosby (Bill Wainwright), Claude Dauphin (Pierre Verdier), Christian Fourcade (j) (Jean, the little boy), Gabrielle Dorziat* (Mother Superior), Nicole Maurey (Lisa Garret, Jean's mother and Bill's wife), Colette Dereal (Nelly), Georgette Anys* (Madame Quilleboeuf), Henri Letondal (Tracing Service clerk), Michael Moore (attaché), Peter Baldwin (Lt. Walker), Tina Blagoi (Sister Therese), Jean Champommier (j) (boy), Yola d'Avril (Madame Le Blanc), Susan Dakins (j) (lost infant boy), René de Loffre (j) (boy), Jean Del Val (Dr. Biroux), Allan Douglas (aide to attaché), Arthur Dulac (waiter), Roger Etienne (waiter), Christiane Fourcade (maid), Jacques Gallo (Paul), Claude Guy (j) (boy), Paul Magranville (pitchman), Christian Pasques (j) (boy), Bruce Payne (Ronnie), Pierre Plauzoles (j) (boy), Gladys de Segonzac (Hélène), Gerard Seidl (j) (boy), Adele St. Maur (nurse), Nino Stratly (Suzanne Pitou), Karin Vengay (stewardess)

By no means essential viewing, the 1953 drama *Little Boy Lost* is of interest mainly because it provides opportunity to watch Bing Crosby essay a largely straight dramatic role. It suffers from vast overdependence on voiceover narration, as Bing's Bill Wainwright's thoughts are given precedence over his

actions. No doubt this was intended to offset the lead's markedly passive approach to drama. It had a negative effect, making the protagonist here seem surly, inhospitable, and little resembling a father seeking reunion with his son. Christian Fourcade appeared to take acting cues from his film parent. He managed to be almost as emotionally distant from his character as Crosby was.

A further drawback was rather bizarre posturing on adoption. For a while it seemed to be promoting the notion Americans should undertake to foster European war orphans. Mother Superior campaigned passionately for that. Except Jean, Fourcade's character, was only half an orphan. And "Wainwright" only accepted responsibility for his guardianship after it had been established the boy was his natural son.

A couple forgettable tunes were shoehorned into the movie, slowing down its tempo and giving Crosby a chance to croon.

Occasionally George Barnes's lively cinematography supplied much needed energy, particularly in scenes within a train coach and at a rail crossing. Too often, though, his work was defeated by stock footage of Paris and backgrounds that looked pasted behind actors.

George Seaton's adaptation of Marghanita Laski's story rarely provided cast members opportunity to simply show through their actions who they truly were and how they felt about their situations. Other than outbursts from Georgette Anys's washerwoman, Gabrielle Dorziat's Mother Superior, and Claude Dauphin's frustrated best friend Pierre Verdier – all directed against dreary coolness and stifling melancholy of Bing Crosby's stolid Bill Wainwright – dialogue is too tame and stuffed with bromides.

It doesn't help matters any that French performers were compelled to stumble through lines in highly accented or fractured English while Crosby took the hatchet to their language when he sang. Nor is it clarifying to listen as laundress Madame Quilleboeuf blasted Wainwright in angry French for questioning Jean's honesty.

Victor Young's music is suitably Gallic, yet devoid of instantly hummable melodies such as graced *Golden Earrings* and *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

Editing is generally adequate, though rushed in spots, especially in regards to climax and conclusion. Those appear forced and formula-driven.

While George Seaton's direction of actors was here simply mundane, the sound recording team of Gene Garvin and Henry Mills did commendable work.

Their carnival sound effects, express train clatter, and volume monitoring of conversation, news broadcasting and singing within confines of a radio station studio were well worth savoring.

Gabrielle Dorziat's portrayal of a Mother Superior's stubbornness, cunning, and underlying compassion for her charges projected full believability. This was also the case for Georgette Anys's Madame Quilleboeuf, whose exuberance and sympathies gushed forth engagingly in speech and gestures.

There are no bonuses on this dvd release.

Suitable for viewing and auditing by teens and adults, the now antiquated French setting and sporadic smatterings of untranslated French and Franglais mashups make the movie inappropriate for preteens.

As entertainment, *Little Boy Lost* is likely to be agreeably pleasant, avoiding surprises, challenging questions, and socially subversive content.