

# Film Review: 'Their Finest'

*Their Finest*

*Director: Lone Scherfig*

*Screenplay: Gaby Chiappe*

*Cast: Gemma Arterton, Sam Claflin, Bill Nighy, Jack Huston*

*Length: 117 minutes*

*Rating: 12A*

During the Second World War, continuous short information and propaganda films were produced by the Ministry of Information Film Division of the British government in order to maintain high morale among the general public at home to ensure their support of the war effort abroad. This film follows Catrin Cole (Arterton) and her professional career as a script writer on such films, charting the working relationships and personal friendships she makes in due course. She lives with 'husband' Ellis Cole (Huston), a war artist who is unable to get an exhibition commission while suffering from a Spanish Civil War injury, through the blitz in 1940s London.

☒ Cole is sent to research a story for possible film adaptation; about two sisters who take their father's boat across the English Channel to assist in the Allied evacuation of Dunkirk. She discovers, however, that the newspaper reports of the story were inaccurate, but decides to present it at the next committee meeting anyway. When it is found out that the story is not based on fact, Cole convinces the Film Division to produce it as fiction, thus "The Nancy Starling" motion picture is born.

She forms an unlikely combative friendship with fellow script writer Tom Buckley (Claflin) and successful working alliance with the film's main actor Ambrose Hilliard (Nighy) in order to accomplish a 90 minutes feature that can be presented to audiences both in Britain and North America in the hope of persuading the United States to join the war effort. We watch

as this film charts the making of another, but still from the perspective of the central character of Cole, on and off the film set.

An uplifting drama, this film doesn't shy away from the heavy damage that the Second World War inflicted on the country. Endless bombing destroys the peace and social order of life, punctuating the generally uplifting tone of the overall story at regular intervals, shocking and surprising the audience should we become too comfortable. We are at war after all, it is unavoidable and inescapable.

With Cole at the centre of the story, we can also see the sexism women faced in the fight for equality, one that still very much continues today. At that time, a man received more pay at work, even if the post the woman employed was of equal importance, and must be the breadwinner of the family at home, with a reversal of these gender roles suffering overbearingly negative connotations.

As the action shifts from the dark, cloudy streets of the war torn capital city to the light, open air of the peaceful Devon countryside, Cole comes into her own and is allowed to pursue her creative freedom to its fullest on location shooting for the motion picture. Gemma Arterton gives a charming performance as Catrin Cole, quarrelling enjoyably with Sam Claflin as the irritated Tom Buckley as the film progresses. Bill Nighy is on scene-stealing form as the arrogant actor Ambrose Hilliard, who is finally redeemed with a part worthy of his of his talents in the new film "The Nancy Starling".

Warm and inviting, smart and inventive, 'Their Finest' is a light drama with bursts of comedy that follows the well proven film-of-a-film formula but with entertaining twists and heart-breaking surprises that elevates it above its competition.

'Their Finest' is in cinemas now.

6/10