

Tony Draws a Horse

UK : 1950 : dir. John Paddy Carstairs : Pinnacle / GFD : 91 min
 prod: : scr: Brock Williams : dir.ph.:
[Anthony Lang](#)
 Cecil Parker; Anne Crawford; Derek Bond; Mervyn Johns; Barbara Murray; Edward Rigby;
 Sebastian Cabot; Dandy Nichols; Barbara Everest; Anne Smith; Susan Dudley; David Hurst

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Ω □ ♀ Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5021	2	7	1	7 7 3 7 7	Excerpts	July 2000

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

“Dr Parker and psychologist Crawford cannot agree on the proper method of rearing their 8-year old son; his mischief ends up affecting their marriage and entire family. Occasionally funny but overly talky (not to mention outdated) satire. **1½ ”

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

“From Lesley Storm’s play about parents who quarrel with their psychiatrist about the raising of a troublesome small boy. Hilarious. **1½ ”

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

“How to deal with a naughty boy causes mounting disagreement in the family. Very theatrical farce which on screen seems merely silly. From the play by Leslie Storm.”

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

“When Tony draws the – sexually explicit – horse on the door of his father’s surgery, there are rows between that gentleman (Cecil Parker) and his psychiatrist wife (Ann Crawford) as to how the boy should be treated. Lesley Storm wrote the original play which defies the above synopsis by being a farce; and as the second – or third – man loses his pants you may decide, with despair, that this is the sort of comedy only the British make.”

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

“A psychiatrist and his wife disagree over the treatment of their son, and as a result a happy marriage is nearly terminated. Mildly amusing comedy has some good moments. **1½ ”

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review

“Pathetic little British comedy about rows between psychologist and wife over correct attitude towards their graffiti-oriented little boy. Cecil Parker, Anne Crawford, Derek Bond, Barbara Murray make it rather heavy going under John Paddy Carstairs’ uninspired direction. 77 ”

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "A Pictorial History of the Talkies", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]



Source: Speelfilm Encyclopedie

What's On TV review:

"A doctor and his psychiatrist wife argue about the significance of their little boy drawing a rude picture. A blustering attempt at comedy.
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"A young boy draws a "naughty" picture on the door of his father's consulting room and sparks off an argument between his parents."

Not *quite* a stinker, though full marks to it for trying. This is on the one hand a grotesque expression of British postwar anxiety over new-fangled theories of child-raising, and on the other it should be required viewing today for acolytes to the child abuse industry. The dramatic pivot of the whole shambolic tale is whether or not these educated parents will cast aside modern fads and give little Tony the thorough spanking he so richly deserves.

As the film starts he is frogmarched to his father's consulting room by an exasperated headmaster who has just expelled him for drawing a caricature of same on his return from the hols. Indignant father questions son about his goals in life, and when the boy announces he wants to be "an artist" rather than a dull old doctor or lawyer, father sends him from the room before he loses self-control altogether. Evidently the child has no sense of values at all.

Tony's next work is in the way of a nature study – he draws a five-legged horse on his father's consulting room door. Outrage upon outrage, the boy doesn't know when anatomical precision must give way to decorum. Dr Fleming waxes Teutonic until wife Clare reminds him of their long-standing agreement never to raise a hand against their son.

Vital dilemma thus defined, the film's midsection meanders off into more traditional Brian Rix territory – wife makes a spur-of-the-moment trip to France, precipitating fears of infidelities – and returns to attend a family wedding at which Tony is to be page: "What do I have to do?" "Carry the train of course!" "Ooh goody, I *like* trains!". In her absence matters have come to a head, and father has finally given vent to instinct and spanked Tony (off camera, of course, this is a *comedy*). Infuriated, she threatens divorce, citing battery of the child.

Wedding preparations are severely hampered by further bouts of free expression from the unchastened boy (he addresses his mother by her *first* name, a sure symptom of parental misguidedness) and the film closes as bride and groom hastily depart the scene, leaving Tony's father whispering "Just *wait* till I get my hands on him!", "You're *not* going to spank him again" his wife replies. "Aren't I!" says he. "No", she smiles, "I am. *You* don't do it hard enough!", and they walk off happily together, marital harmony basking in the imagined rosy glow of Tony's fustigated bottom.

Scarcely have I seen such a blatant reactionary subtext beneath a meagre icing of domestic comedy. Parents in the 1950 audience are invited to smirk at the lunacy of Dr Spock and his kind before sallying home to carry on the good work with their own families. The self-evident wisdom of corporal punishment a shorthand for law and order policies in the wider domain. This is why I say it should be required viewing today for the child protectionist lobby. One received wisdom is no safer than another, when it can make a *volte face* as completely as this. And it reminds us that domestic child-beating was not the male prerogative current myth would have us believe. Women have always been avid practitioners too.

Anthony Lang (a similar boy to Martin Stephens, of "**VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED**") is overlooked by Holmstrom's "Moving Picture Boy", so it's more than likely he made no further film appearances, and his role in this one is only slight. He is the physical embodiment of his parents' errors, and nothing more.

See subject index under **COMEDY** (which in no sense implies humour) and **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**.