

# Lloyd's of London

US : 1936 : dir. Henry King : 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox : 115 min  
 prod: Kenneth McGowan : scr: Ernest Pascal & Walter Ferris : dir.ph.: Bert Glennon  
*Freddie Bartholomew; Douglas Scott* .....  
 Tyrone Power; Sir Guy Standing; George Sanders; Madeleine Carroll; C Aubrey Smith;  
 Virginia Field; Montagu Love; Gavin Muir; Miles Mander; Una O'Connor; E.E.Clive

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*The most interesting character in the story – Horatio Nelson – is merely a background figure, played as a boy by Douglas Scott Source: indeterminate*

Leonard Maltin's TV Movies and Video Guide review:

“Handsomely mounted fiction of the rise of the British insurance company; young messenger boy Bartholomew grows up to be Power, who

competes with Sanders for the affection of Carroll. \*\*\*½”

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

**Halliwell's Film Guide** review:

"A young messenger boy in the 18th century grows up to found a great insurance company<sup>1</sup>. Thoroughly well mounted, if unconvincing and slightly boring, historical charade in which the Prince of Wales, Lord Nelson, Dr Johnson and other personages make guest appearances. An archetypal prestige film of its time which also turned out to be box office."

"Fictional history with fine production but weak from marquee standpoint.. basically it's the story of the beginning and rise of an insurance company, and how can average audiences be asked to get excited about that?"

- **Variety**

"The name of England is so freely on the characters' lips that we recognise at once an American picture. These people live, make love, bear children all from the most patriotic motives, and it's all rather like London in coronation week." - **Graham Greene**

**The Films of 20th Century Fox** review:

"Zanuck took a chance on Tyrone Power as the lead in this grandly-scaled quasi-historical romance and launched the career of one of his most popular stars. Power here plays Jonathan Blake, who became a leading light of the great British insurance company, Lloyd's. The film invents a close friendship with Lord Nelson and assumes that his victory over Napoleon at Trafalgar in 1815 had a great bearing upon the fortunes of the company. Blake is presented as an enterprising young rogue who gradually becomes more responsible. He falls in love with an English aristocrat (Madeleine Carroll), whose wastrel husband (George Sanders) gravely wounds him. As a history lesson "LLOYD'S OF LONDON" can only be regarded as a whetting of interest, but it proved a highly popular entertainment and advanced Zanuck's plans to put 20th Century Fox in the Hollywood big league."

**The Good Film and Video Guide** review:

"Freddie Bartholomew, who grows up to be Tyrone Power, finds his fortunes entwined with those of Lloyd's, the insurance brokers. It sounds dull, and sometimes is, but this is really

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<sup>1</sup> *No he doesn't*

another of the big '30s adventure stories like "ANTHONY ADVERSE", and also based on a popular novel.. When not at sea, Power is in London drawing-rooms, rivalling George Sanders for Madeleine Carroll. So are, with different preoccupations, Virginia Field and such familiar props of Hollywood's England as Una O'Connor, E.E.Clive, Miles Mander, Sir Guy Standing and, of course, C. Aubrey Smith. \* "

**Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89**

review:

"Engrossing, often exciting story of the famous English insurance and banking firm. This picture tells of its early history and rise to prominence around the time of the battle of Trafalgar. \*\*\*½ "

**Those Endearing Young Charms** - note from Bartholomew filmography:

"In the film documentary of the famous British underwriting syndicate during the years preceding the Battle of Trafalgar, Freddie Bartholomew plays the role of Jonathan Blake, who wins a position with Lloyd's as a reward for information about a defrauding plot."

**TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995** review:

"A good, solid piece of storytelling in the teemingly-detailed Hollywood style of the Thirties. Somehow the scriptwriters contrive to enliven the history of the famous English insurance and banking firm by pumping in romance, shipwrecks, conspiracies and even the Battle of Trafalgar. We watch little Freddie Bartholomew grow up to be Tyrone Power and they share the acting honours. Director Henry King keeps an impressive grip on his sprawling subject. \*\*\* "

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

**Radio Times** review:

“No facet of history was safe from 20th Century Fox, who managed to turn both Rothschild and Lloyd’s into household names in America. The presence of the young Tyrone Power undeniably helped in the latter instance, and this is the movie that consolidated the matinée idol’s stardom. Power’s character vies with suave George Sanders for the beauteous Madeleine Carroll. It’s extremely handsomely mounted and director Henry King treats it all as though it’s a solid piece of Americana, C.Aubrey Smith notwithstanding<sup>2</sup> However, in a well-disposed mood, this is grand-scale entertainment. \*\*\*\*”

“Historical drama portraying the early days of the renowned insurance company. In 1770, young Jonathan Blake overhears pirates plotting to loot a ship’s cargo of gold, and warns Lloyd’s of London. He is made an apprentice at the company and begins a successful career.”

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<sup>2</sup> *Top billing in the film went not to Power or Sanders, nor the "beauteous" Madeleine Carroll, but to Freddie Bartholomew. You'd think they might trouble to mention his name in passing.*

From a novel by Curtis Kenyon. The first 25 minutes is the only part of the film that concerns us, where the young Jonathan Blake (Bartholomew) is a serving lad at a coastal inn, and tight friends with one Horatio Nelson (Scott), much to the chagrin of Nelson's father. The two boys blunder on a wreckers' gang, and after evading capture resolve to journey together to London and inform the proper authorities at Lloyd's shipping underwriters. Returning home to make preparations, Horatio is upbraided by his father, and acquiesces to a birching with the cheery resignation of an upper class English schoolboy. A visiting uncle is recruiting for the navy, and offers Horatio a midshipman's post, which so delights the lad that he dances off to his father's study to "put down" his breeches. Later that night, none the worse for wear, he solemnly informs Jonathan that he must answer his nation's call, and cannot now make their trip to London. Nothing daunted, Bartholomew sets off alone (he'd trudged the same distance the year before in "**DAVID COPPERFIELD**", so he knew the way).

Arriving at Lloyd's with his news, Jonathan's loyalty to the interests of commerce is rewarded by a post as messenger boy with the firm, which at that stage (1770) seems to have transacted its business at a bustling London tavern. One of the underwriters attempts to exploit the boy's naïveté, by some insider trading when an insured vessel is lost, and Jonathan is sternly rebuked on the ethics of even-handedness in business affairs (well, it **was** all a very long time ago). At this point, his usefulness as a boy concluded, Bartholomew metamorphoses painlessly into the fresh-faced Tyrone Power, then - in only his fourth film - a comparative ingenu to the screen.

Although Freddie Bartholomew receives top billing, it is Douglas Scott who has the more interesting part as the fledgling naval hero. Scott, as pucker and double-cream British as a boy could be without serious internal trauma, sounds like an escapee from "**TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS**" (the book, not the film), making even the frightfully demure Freddie Bartholomew seem rough and ready by comparison. Actually he was born in Seattle in 1925, making him 11 here, and although he already had more than two dozen films to his tally, unlike Bartholomew they were generally in very small supporting roles, eg: "**CAVALCADE**" (33). One exception was a semi-documentary tiger hunt film, "**RANGO**" (31), whose director went on to make the now-legendary "**KING KONG**" (33). Scott's other films included "**SINS OF THE FATHERS**" (28), "**BABY FOLLIES**" (30), "**TOO MANY PARENTS**" (36) and Shirley Temple's "**WEE WILLIE WINKIE**" (37).

Freddie, 12, made surprisingly few titles compared with most of his contemporaries (including Scott), but achieved star status almost at once. "**LLOYD'S OF LONDON**" came smack between "**LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY**" and "**CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS**". His career was at its peak, but in this film he's given precious little to do and exits the story a third of the way through. Not the most plausible casting, either, as an illiterate ragamuffin serving at table in Una O'Connor's inn (no need to panic - she only appears in one early scene), and the studio probably assigned him to the film for the box office value of his name (as much later Mark Lester's name was heavily used to promote a tedious version of "**BLACK BEAUTY**" in 1971, although he only appeared in its opening segments).

The shipboard life of the 18<sup>th</sup> century naval midshipman – boys aged 12 to 14 – would be of keen interest to the archive, but few films have touched upon it, notably "**MIDSHIPMAN EASY**" (35) with Hughie Green – yes, that one – and Desmond Tester, and "**H.M.S. DEFIANT**" (aka "**DAMN THE DEFIANT**", 62) with David Robinson.

See subject index under **CHILDHOODS OF THE FAMOUS, HISTORY, WORKING BOYS / WORKING GIRLS** and **EPIC JOURNEYS**, although Jonathan's long trudge to London is passed over in a simple dissolve.