

The President Vanishes **February 28, 2012 Showing**

This movie was shown as part of the William A. Wellman Film Festival at the NYC Film Forum.

The President Vanishes started a little slowly while the characters were introduced, but it sustained audience interest throughout. Although it is not a well known title, even for Wellman or Stout fans, the theatre was over half full.

There were at least two "tip-offs" regarding who staged the kidnapping, but I'm not sure that all viewers would figure it out. The characters' behaviors seemed to be melodramatic, but I think that may be generally true of many older movies.

The President Vanishes was published September, 1934, and *Fer-de-Lance*, the first Wolfe book, in October, 1934. Rex Stout published it anonymously to pique interest in it, rather than because of any potential controversial repercussions. The film credits state that it is based on the book *The President Vanishes* with no author stated. Although the NY Times' review mentions that Stout is the author, he did not acknowledge authorship until 1939, by which time he was a proponent of entering the war to stop Germany's and Fascism's worldwide aggression.

The 35mm film was in good condition. There are at least 3 sources for purchase of the DVD version online. However, the quality of these copies and their source is not known. They cost about \$15.

Early in the movie there is a scene in which the President's wife offers him a new brand of stout [beer]. The scene is rather protracted in order to introduce a key "helper" in the plot, played by Andy Devine, who gained wide spread fame in the 1950s as Jingles in the *Wild Bill Hickok* Saturday morning western. However, it is also almost certainly a tribute to the anonymous author and to his newly created, well-received character, Nero Wolfe. This scene created audience reaction so there were quite a few Wolfe fans in the audience.

The Wikipedia article on the book and movie are worth reading:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_President_Vanishes.

According to IMDB (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0025674/>), the Paramount premier was November 17, 1934, and the release date, January 11, 1935.