

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

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"THANKS FOR EVERYTHING" TOPS AS XMAS SLUMP HITS BOX OFFICE

*Of Eight New Releases in the Past Week, One Rated Over
100%; While the Other Seven Were Very Weak*

By NORMAN WEBB

NOTE: The usual pro-Xmas slump has hit the theaters very heavily during the past week. Previous to the slump, theater grosses were already off from 15 to 20% below this same time last year. The majority of first-run houses that have a big "A" attraction are forcing the picture into second and third weeks, as there are few new releases of any importance this week, and until after the Christmas shopping spree is over, at which time several big, very important productions are due to be released. With one exception, all the pictures released this past week have been "B" product.

Fox—2 New Releases

20th Century-Fox has two new releases this week, one a new outstanding Darryl Zanuck musical hit, while the second is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit.

"THANKS FOR EVERYTHING" is the latest musical comedy production to come from the Fox lot, and with a well balanced cast of featured players, plus a good theme, it is bound to do fairly good business. However, on its initial bookings in the Eastern cities, it is only averaging around 104%, due to the fact that it was released in the midst of the annual pre-Xmas slump, and we are of the opinion that the picture will pick up considerably on its future bookings.

"THANKS FOR EVERYTHING" is based on the "Mr. Average Man" theme, and was originally written for Eddie Cantor, who, not liking the part, stepped out of the picture and was supplanted by Jack Haley. Undoubtedly this will react very satisfactory for the exhibitor, as Eddie Cantor's last two pictures didn't do so well. Furthermore, the opinion of many critics was that Jack Haley handled the role very capably, many stating that he filled the role much better than Eddie Cantor could have.

Co-starred with Mr. Haley is a very outstanding cast of featured players, including Adolphe Menjou, Jack Oakie, Arleen Whelan, Tony Martin, and Binnie Barnes. The musical comedy hit was supervised by Harry Joe Brown, with the very reliable Bill Seiter back of the megaphone. Fox's foremost tunesters, Gordon and Revel, wrote the music and lyrics, while the screenplay was written by Harry Tugend from Curtis Kenyon and Art Arthur's adaptation of Gilbert Wright's original story.

20th Century-Fox's second release, "UP THE RIVER," is a much better than average programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit. While it has opened up rather weak at a 76% average, due to the lack of marquee names, it is the type of picture that word-of-mouth advertising will build considerably. The picture is a hundred per-cent laugh riot, and will undoubtedly prove to be a good box office picture when it hits the "nabes."

Preston Foster and Arthur Treacher lead off with the comedy, while Tony Martin and Phyllis Brooks carry the romantic leads. Slim Summerville, Alan Dinehart, Jane Darwell, Sidney Toler, and Bill Robinson are among the more prominent supporting players. This picture serves to introduce Lou Wertheimer as an associate producer, and Al Werker directed. Lou Berslow and John Patrick wrote the screenplay from Maurine Watkin's original.

Early reports show that exhibitors who will go out of their way a little in exploiting this one will be well rewarded.

MGM—1 New Release

MGM has a new program release this week, "SPRING
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8 New Releases Not in Last Issue

1 Over 100%.....7 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Thanks for Everything.....	FOX.....	104.....	110
2. Up The River	FOX.....	76.....	85
3. Spring Madness	MGM.....	74.....	85
4. Comet Over Broadway	WAR.....	74.....	80
5. Say it in French	PAR.....	74.....	85
6. Next Time I Marry	RKO.....	71.....	75
7. Adventure in Sahara	COL.....	69.....	70
8. Secrets of A Nurse	UNIV.....	67.....	75

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ "Honor Box" ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY-FOX** Wins With

"THANKS FOR EVERYTHING" - 104%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer
HARRY JOE BROWN



Director
WILLIAM SEITER

Screenplay
HARRY TUGEND

Adaptation
CURTIS KENYON
ART ARTHUR

Story by
GILBERT WRIGHT

Editor
ROBERT SIMPSON



Music and Lyrics
MACK GORDON AND HARRY REVEL

Featured
JACK OAKIE
BINNIE BARNES
TONY MARTIN
GEORGE BARBIER
WARREN HYMER

Photography
LUCIEN ANDRIOT, A. S. C.



JACK HALEY



ARLEEN WHELAN



ADOLPHE MENJOU

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

WE NEED EACH OTHER

We stated last week that it was our belief that the industry was on the edge of a boom year, and gave as our reason the fact that practically all the major factors in production and distribution were nearing a healthy stability financially.

Perhaps the thought will bear elaboration:

Remove the dread of over-drawn bank accounts; the operating indecision created by receivers and bank-dictated set-ups; and we have taken the first step in a new boom cycle.

Put showmen on the captain's bridge, and PICTURE WORKERS in the crew—and we'll sail pleasant seas.

Those days are just over the hill in 1939.

* * * *

It is the obvious fact, but nevertheless sad one, that the company in financial straits, or in the throes of internal disorganization or dissension, is the company least able to function intelligently or efficiently. And of course, equally obvious that this is the company needing intelligence and efficiency.

The process of running a successful company is no secret. Everyone knows it. In three words it is: "Make good pictures." Slightly extended it is: "Good stories, capable directors, and STARS."

So simple.

Merely a question of man-power. "Get top executives who know good stories, recognize capable directing skill, tell them to buy stars."

So simple.

But let's work it backwards, from star to director, to story, to executive desk.

Stars may dicker interminably for the last dollar and pound of flesh when signing a contract for their services—but all the money in the world won't buy you a top flight star tomorrow—until you can place in evidence your ability to deliver a top flight director. And today's top flight directors won't sign on the dotted line just to get the feel of your cash—they must be assured

your story material is right. And you can't compete for top money novels or plays, or maintain permanent story creating organizations to tap brain power, unless you have some assurance of permanence on star and director angles. And you can't—

Oh, shucks—its a vicious circle, or a tortuous triangle, or what have you. You can't take the first step in any intelligent direction unless your company's financial house is in order, unless the internal set-up is such as to allow production to function with a minimum of New York interference.

The right set-up can't do it, if the bank balance is vague; money alone can't do it if the set-up—the division of authority and responsibility—is wrong.

* * * *

And that is why we see prosperity ahead as we see one company after another whip its internal problems.

Clear heads can function; functioning heads will result in a more even spread of star value among all companies; already ace directing ability is available for any company able to recognize it and handle it.

A greater spread of star values, a greater spread of creative brain values, is the need of the industry, and, if brought about, will bring prosperity.

No one, two, or three companies in this industry can hog all the strength, can afford to starve out competition—because the bigger the company the bigger its theater investment.

And the bigger the theater investments—the more days there are on the booking sheets when you can be found dipping into the red ink. What value—if you have hogged ALL the box office values, and then are able to give your OWN theaters profitable box office product for only fifty per cent of the dates?

Even if you succeeded in whole-hogging it for your own theaters, what value if

(Continued on Page 4)

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

			%
1.	M. G. M.	41 Releases	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	49 Releases	92
3.	United Artists	15 Releases	92
4.	Paramount	36 Releases	88
5.	Warner Brothers	50 Releases	86
6.	R. K. O.*	38 Releases	80
7.	Columbia	29 Releases	80
8.	Universal	34 Releases	77
9.	Republic	25 Releases	73
10.	Monogram	13 Releases	69
11.	Grand National	5 Releases	66
12.	Gaumont British	10 Releases	59

345

(*R. K. O. has 38 Releases, 80%; but including Walt Disney's "Snow White" makes R.K.O. 39 Releases, 83%)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

There comes a telegram to the desk. It is from Joe Cohen, MGM production executive. It reads: "Gentlemen: Your crediting me as producer of the Hardy Family series is incorrect and embarrassing. Any producer credit on this series should be given to Lou Ostrow and I would appreciate any correction you will wish to make. J. J. Cohen." So an orchid goes to modest Joe Cohen, and merited credit to popular Lou Ostrow right here at the top of the well known column. Money couldn't buy this space, Lou.

Except for the rush of previews, with the boys evidently deciding to clear the cutting rooms before Christmas, the week didn't produce any startling Highlights of news for the yawning presses. Which is probably just as well. There is more news to exhibitors in knowing that they have a MacDonald-Eddy spectacle, a "Kentucky," a "Duke of West Point," a new Bing Crosby, ready for delivery than there is in the usual headline. And with the class of attractions the distributors offered their first run show shops for the few weeks preceding the holidays this year, the exhibitor needs all the borrowed cheer he can get, even if he has to borrow on the future's offerings.

The distributors showed the white feather this year without shame. Despite the flash copy the ad departments are expected to turn out each year telling of the great array of holiday attractions each company is supposed to be ready to dump in the showman's lap, the distribution heads seemed to freeze up even earlier than usual in seeking to avoid damage to grosses. Now they'll all be out cutting each other's jugulars in January and February.

Eddie Small Makes Good Start

Eddie Small, whose past production record has its share of showmanship evidence—remember "Monte Cristo"—seems to be getting under way in stride for his new United Artists program. Without benefit of automatic star value, he has found means of substituting that box office touch. "The Duke of West Point" was well received last week, and the West Point lure that has never failed should help to move Louis Hayward nearer the money class since the picture will back up the lure as entertainment. Small then has "The Man In the Iron Mask" ready to move, and that's a classic title with a goodly share of the advance box office that always attaches to such subjects. Then there's the widely-talked of best-seller "My Son, My Son" in the future. Though that fine book is certainly going to be a tough job for the scripter. Capable George Bruce has the assignment. . . . We don't know of any figure in the industry who could have received more whole-hearted sympathy on a messy situation than was felt by Hollywood last week for George Burns. Since we have our adequate share of phonies in this racket, why couldn't it be one of the phonies and not an outstanding regular like Burns who would be pulled into

4 FEATURES "GOING UP" ---

	Was	Now
1. I Am The Law	COL 100	103
2. just Around the Corner	FOX 98	101
3. The Mad Miss Manton	RKO 90	92
4. Gangsters Boy	MONO 83	86

one of those city slicker nets. . . . As for those who might be worrying about the possible effect on George's audience popularity, let them forget it. The first genial wisecrack session on the airway will make everybody else do so.

There's A New Studio Epidemic

As you skip from day to day reading of the studio announcements it is borne in on the casual reader that a new epidemic has attacked the production colony. This is a disease called "added scenes." Can it be, says the cynic, that such a great number of pictures are coming in with wobbly underpinnings that the added scenes are a necessity—or, says the optimist, are they all so surprisingly good that added money is just demanded to make "good" "better"—and "Better" "Best." . . . Dick Powell and Joan Blondell reach the parting of the ways on their Warner association. No announcements as to the future, but it is a pretty safe bet that the team did not walk out on the side walk without some knowledge of its destination . . . what are the odds that they will wind up under the Darryl Zanuck wing? . . . Bill Sistrom, one of the really capable production veterans, returns to the Radio fold to handle the making of a picture in "The Saint" series in London. Sistrom is the man for the job. He discovered the rogue-detective character for the screen, and he knows his picture-making.

Paramount Sets A Melon Cutting

Paramount has set itself for one of the biggest melons of the coming year with the closing of negotiations that will bring Gary Cooper to the screen in the remake of "Beau Geste." There's a natural that just shouts sensational money. Take the original "Beau Geste," and "Bengal Lancer," wrap 'em up together and you have part of the answer. The

12 FEATURES "GOING DOWN" ---

	Was	Now
1. Cowboy and the Lady	U.A. 143	136
2. If I Were King	PAR 127	124
3. Drums	U.A. 109	103
4. Submarine Patrol	FOX 107	102
5. The Great Waltz	MGM 105	101
6. Young In Heart	U.A. 106	101
7. The Shining Hour	MGM 103	99
8. Boy Meets Girl	WAR 102	96
9. Valley of the Giants	WAR 99	94
10. Dark Rapture	UNIV 100	88
11. Thanks for the Memory	PAR 78	71
12. Peck's Bad Boy at the Circus	RKO 68	62

The News at a Glance

additional ingredient is William Wellman, straining at the leash to get his teeth in a subject like this. Wellman — Cooper — "Beau Geste"—there's a money tinkle to the sound already, and remember there are two other money male parts in the leads of the picture. . . . Paramount should also feel cheerful over the fact that Mark Sandrich will swing into action immediately after the first of the year with "Man About Town," the Jack Benny subject. Sandrich is a money director. . . . If David Selznick can line up Ronald Colman for the picture that England's ace, Alfred Hitchcock, will direct, he also is one of the boys putting money in the bank in advance these days. Hitchcock alone means an outstanding picture, the combination spells box office. . . . Dick Arlen signs the papers on the deal for six at Universal, thus setting another item in that company's next year schedule. Universal, you will note, is in shape these days to do some advance planning. . . . There are so many units shooting on "Union Pacific" just now that they must need a professional train dispatcher to keep track of the epics. Latest is veteran James Hogan to take over a portion of the chores. Well, building railroads isn't any pickayune job.

Millions, Millions, Millions Everywhere

The MGM court trial in New York continues to provide interesting reading, but little excitement. Millions to the right of us, millions to the left of us, bonuses here and stock options there. But the only fact that stands out is that the company made the criminal mistake of making money. Now if that group of executives had only played around with 77B and some of the other recently popular nostrums, all would have been well. There wouldn't have been any profits, and if there were no profits there wouldn't have been any worry about keeping the executives within the fold. Simple, Doctor Watson. Of course, there could have been another solution. The boys could have modestly refused to ask for what they thought they could get. And the stockholders would be pinning bouquets on them now. Mebbe.

We Need Each Other

(Continued from Page 3)

you starved out fifty per cent of the nation's playhouses?

The industry needs most of those theaters. The industry needs a legitimate number of theaters in every community supplying good entertainment, profiting by so doing, and KEEPING THE THEATER GOING HABIT ALIVE.

When weak attractions at the other fellow's theater kill off the habit for many customers—he's killing them off for you too, in far too many cases.

Think it over.

SEVEN MILLION IN THE CUTTING ROOM . . .

By **Norman Webb**

After a recent preview out at the Village the other night, we heard some people discussing the great activity in some studios and the less activity in others. One of the speakers pointed out that MGM, Warner Brothers, and Paramount all had nine units shooting simultaneously, which was the heaviest schedule of the year for these three studios.

Another speaker interrupted with: "Yes, and look at Fox, one of the major studios of the industry, with only three units shooting."

Arriving back home that night, we looked up our advance production charts and shooting schedules and found that this was true—that MGM, Warner Brothers, and Paramount all had nine units shooting and Fox only had three.

In our next morning's mail we received our advance release chart from Harry Brand's office announcing all the forthcoming product and a statement that Fox had \$7,000,000 WORTH OF COMPLETED NEGATIVES IN THE CUTTING ROOM. So we began to figure the current lull at the 20th Century-Fox studios. Ordinarily, one on the outside would say 20th Century-Fox must have had a temporary set-back, but on the other hand, Fox is right up to date on their current '38-'39 release schedule, with 12 pictures now being edited, representing a total investment of the said \$7,000,000.

It so happens that during Production Chief Darryl F. Zanuck's recent trip to Europe that he had his writing staff going full force, and when he returned, the wheels started moving rapidly. Thus today 20th-Fox has one of the greatest group of releases that this company has ever had, now in the final stages of editing.

Of these 12 productions, six are Darryl Zanuck "A" specials, three in Technicolor and three in black and white; while the remaining six are releases from the Sol Wurtzel program unit. Of Zanuck's six specials, three are big technicolor productions, "Kentucky," "Jesse James," "The Little Princess," which represent a total investment of almost \$5,000,000 alone.

In order of releases, "Kentucky," which is previewed this week, comes first. This is the famous horse story of Old Kentucky in the Civil War days, right up to the present, with many of today's favorite bang-tails taking part in the picture. Loretta Young and Richard Greene (whose fan mail is building faster than any other player on the Fox lot) are starred, supported by such prominent featured players such as Walter Brennan, Douglas Dumbrille, Karen Morley, and a big supporting cast of over twenty players. "Kentucky" was handled under Gene Markey's supervision, with David Butler direction, which should mean something from a box office standpoint. "Kentucky" was adapted from John Taintor Foote's novel, "The Look Of Eagles," and he also collaborated with Lamar Trotti on the screenplay.

A few weeks ago Spyros Skouras, the head

of National Theatres of New York, planed out to Hollywood at Darryl Zanuck's request to take a look at "Kentucky." Mr. Skouras went into raves and predicted it would be one of 20th-Fox's greatest money makers for the coming year.

20th Century-Fox's second big technicolor special is "Jesse James." There has been so much advance publicity released on this picture that few will argue with us that there is no doubt that this picture will be a terrific box office sensation. The names of Tyrone Power, Randy Scott, Henry Fonda, and Nancy Kelly, in a big technicolor western epic based on the life of Jesse James, should spell box office on any marquee. Furthermore, this picture was directed by Henry King, who made this year's biggest box office attraction, "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

20th Century-Fox's third and last, but not least, technicolor special is Frances Hodgson Burnett's "Little Princess," starring Shirley Temple at the head of a big cast which includes Arthur Treacher, Richard Greene, Anita Louise, Sybil Jason, Ian Hunter, and Cesar Romero. This picture was directed by Walter Lang. Shirley Temple's biggest box office picture to date was "Wee Willie Winkie" and those who have seen "Little Princess" in its present form, say that it is equally as good as "Wee Willie Winkie." But still Zanuck is not satisfied, and has added another \$100,000 to the budget for a special ballet scene, which of course will be headed by Miss Temple.

So much for the three technicolor specials. Zanuck's other three "A" specials are "Tail-

spin," "Wife, Husband and Friend," and "The Girl From Brooklyn."

"Tailspin" is 20th-Fox's answer to MGM's "Test Pilot," only featuring feminine aviators this time—with Alice Faye, Connie Bennett, Joan Davis, Nancy Kelly, Jane Wyman, and Charles Farrell.

Next is "Wife, Husband and Friend," a sequel to Fox's "Wife, Doctor, and Nurse," starring Loretta Young and Warner Baxter.

Then there is also "The Girl From Brooklyn," which co-stars the popular Alice Faye with Warner Baxter. So all in all it looks like Fox's \$7,000,000 in the cutting room is pretty well spent, as will shortly be verified by exhibitor reports, as these pictures are all set for early 1939 releases.

And don't forget the pictures in preparation, which are to be started in January and February. Among the more important ones are "The Cisco Kid Returns," with Warner Baxter; "Rose Of Washington Square," with Alice Faye, Tyrone Power, and Al Jolson; "The Hound of the Baskervilles," with Richard Greene, Anita Louise, and Basil Rathbone; "Alexander Graham Bell," with Don Ameche, Henry Fonda, and Loretta Young; and still a little later will be placed in production the new Ritz Brothers comedy, "The Gorilla;" Sonja Henie in "Love Interest;" Shirley Temple in "Sussanah Of The Mounties;" Spencer Tracy in "Stanley And Livingston." And among other great properties are "Drums Along The Mohawk," "Hudson Bay Company," "The Mark Of Zorro," "The Rains Came," "Falling Star," and "Burton of Arabia."

Releases of Week

(Continued from Page 1)

MADNESS," which is just doing so-so at a 74% average. While this is considerably below what we estimated, this picture will probably also build considerably higher after the pre-Xmas slump, as Lew Ayres last release, "THE YOUNG DR. KILDARE," has done exceptionally well, according to reports from coast to coast. As a matter of fact, "KILDARE" has gone over so well that M-G-M has now taken Lew Ayres out of "BROADWAY SERENADE," he will be co-starred with Jeanette MacDonald.

Maureen O'Sullivan is seen opposite Lew Ayres in "SPRING MADNESS," and the supporting cast includes Burgess, Joyce Compton, and Ruth Hussey. This picture was made by the Joe Cohn program unit under Eddie Chodorov's supervision, who also wrote the screenplay, with Sylvan Simon directing as his first MGM assignment, having recently left the "U" lot.

WARNERS—1 NEW RELEASE

Warner Brothers' new release this week is "COMET OVER BROADWAY," 74%

which serves as Kay Francis' final picture under her long Warner Brothers contract. For many years Kay was one of Warners' outstanding stars; but even our top stars, who have nothing special to offer, eventually become tiresome to the public and their box office grows dimmer and dimmer. And such is the case with Kay Francis.

About a year ago, Warner Brothers starred Miss Francis in a very ultra sophisticated drama of Washington, (D. C.) society—dealing with the social end of our national capitol, this picture was adapted from a stage-play which was fairly successful—yet on the screen it was 95% dialogue and practically no action. Practically all our exhibitor reports show that this was not only Miss Francis' weakest picture, but also hurt her following releases considerably. "THE FIRST LADY" was very successful in a few carriage-trade houses but in national appeal, was entirely lacking. Thereafter, Miss Francis was shifted to Bryan Foy's "B" unit to finish out her contract, and "COMET OVER BROADWAY" is the finale.

Where Fay Francis is still popular, the exhibitors will probably fare satisfactory with this one; but in most instances this one will
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"Sweethearts" Lavish Musi-Spectacle

M. G. M.
(EST. 140%)

Producer Hunt Stromberg
Director W. S. Van Dyke, II
Screenplay..... Dorothy Parker, Alan Campbell
Based on the Operetta "Sweethearts"
Book and Lyrics Fred de Gresca,
Harry B. Smith, Robert B. Smith
Stars..... Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy
Featured: Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, Florence Rice, Mischa Auer, Herman Bing, George Barbier, Reginald Gardiner, Fay Holden, Allyn Joslyn, Lucile Watson, Gene Lockhart, Kathleen Lockhart, Berton Churchill, Terry Kilburn, Raymond Walburn, Douglas McPhail, Betty Jaynes, Olin Howland, Dalies Frantz.

Photographer Oliver T. Marsh
Technicolor Photographer Allen Davey
Technicolor Color Director Natalie Kalmus
Music Victor Herbert
Music Adaptation Herbert Stothart
Special Lyrics Bob Wright, Chet Forrest
Dances and Ensembles..... Albertina Rasch
Film Editor Robert J. Kern
Time 110 Minutes

"Sweethearts" is Hollywood on a champagne jamboree. It almost staggers under the weight of lavish magnificence, but you don't use the word "stagger" when the inspiration is champagne.

With the magic MacDonald and Eddy names for the marquee, with glitter, glamor and glory for the eye, with song, song, and then some more song, for the ear, "Sweethearts" is definitely in for the money; and is definitely a pteous money's-worth for any one viewing it at the nominal price of picture theater admissions.

It cannot be said, however, that Leo the Lion has held up his end on all counts. Using the fact that Victor Herbert wrote an operetta called "Sweethearts" for its basis, the producers have evolved a story within a story

CURRENT REVIEWS		
4 Over 100%..... 3 Okay..... 2 Weak		
1. Sweethearts	MGM	140
2. Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
3. Kentucky	FOX	130
4. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	120
5. Duke of West Point	U.A.	90
6. There's That Woman Again	COL	90
7. Chan in Honolulu	FOX	80
8. Next Time I Marry	RKO	75
9. Nancy Drew—Detective	WAR	70

that is never sufficiently a story to arouse any great amount of concern, and frequently too much of story to avoid stalls.

Comedy is woefully lacking. MacDonald and Eddy are seen as the happily married stars of a six-year Broadway stage hit, the plot evolves around efforts to lure them to Hollywood, which would be a disaster to stage producer Frank Morgan and his cohorts. In the background are the parasitical families of Eddy and MacDonald, assorted veterans of the stage.

Humor must therefore depend too largely on strictly professional wise-cracks, some limited entirely to Hollywood appeal. Story must depend on a problem that doesn't make a heck of a lot of difference to anyone but the characters themselves. It is too much of a burden when contrasted with the ponderous magnificence of the whole.

But to more pleasant things—the eye has never feasted on a more gargantuan repast. In Technicolor at its best, the numbers are staged with admirable taste, and considerable novelty. They are a treat. Producer Hunt Stromberg, and his aides from Albertine Rasch on the dance ensembles to Merrill Pye, credited with musical presentations, have outdone themselves.

Nelson Eddy is the standout in the cast. He has never been seen or heard to better advantage, he gains new stature in assurance with each release. Jeanette MacDonald is an eye-ful in Technicolor and a delight in song, though direction has allowed her a bit too much of the kittenish in action. Florence Rice and Frank Morgan excellently top the support.

Herman Bing and Mischa Auer never quite get under way with their comedy, while talents like those of Ray Bolger and Gene Lockhart are wasted in the parts given them. The Victor Herbert music is tastefully presented, without any number exactly standing out for 1939 ear-tickling. And there's a bit too much song before the evening is over.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "By far the best of the MacDonald and Eddie series. This has a freshness and humor which will win a new audience for them besides sending their vast and loyal followers into new transports of delight. It makes friends of the sophisticates with its smart approach. It has color and Victor Herbert music for the old-fashioned type. It's money in the till and money well earned."

VARIETY: "An orgy of melody, beauty and seductive color has been crowded into the translation of Victor Herbert's operetta to its elaborated screen equivalent."

"There's That Woman Again" Fast Fun

COLUMBIA
(EST. 90%)

Associate Producer B. B. Kahane
Director Alexander Hall
Screenplay Philip G. Epstein,
James Edward Grant, Ken Englund
Story Gladys Lehman
Based on a work by William Collison
Stars Melvyn Douglas,
Virginia Bruce
Featured: Margaret Lindsay, Stanley Ridges,
Gordon Oliver, Tom Dugan, Don Beddoe,
Jonathan Hale, Pierre Watkin, Paul Harvey.

Photographer Joseph Walker
Art Director Lionel Banks
Musical Director M. W. Stoloff
Film Editor Viola Lawrence
Time 74 Minutes

Every bit as good as its predecessor in this Columbia 'Thin Man' series is "There's That Woman Again." As a merry, lively, mystery farce, it need bow its head to no one in entertainment qualities and certainly not at that final testing ground, the box office.

This time Columbia has handed Melvyn Douglas a new wife, Virginia Bruce, in place

of Joan Blondell. Since comparisons are said to be odious, sufficient to say that Miss Bruce has never been seen to better advantage. As the beautiful, but slightly dizzy, wife of detective Bill Reardon, she is utterly hilarious. Wandering from one entanglement into another in her unique search for a solution to this particular "whodunit," beautiful Miss Bruce will keep any audience in an uproar. And Melvyn Douglas, in his 'every thing happens to me' role of the woe-begone husband will garner his share of laughs, too.

Top credit for the success of the picture should also go to director and screenplay writers who, dragging in everything but the kitchen sink to get laughs, have succeeded nobly. Director Hall and writers Epstein, Grant, and Englund, have shown their astuteness by concentrating completely upon the farcial aspects of the story. They even commit the once cardinal crime of letting the audience know whom the dastardly villain is, 'way before the final denouement. But nobody cares much, anyhow, they're all laughing too hard.

But for the record, it seems that this time

there have been several robberies committed in a ritzy jewelry store. Sleuth Douglas is retained by the store as detective, but after another wholesale robbery and several murders, he is just washed up. Of course, it is through the unwelcome aid of his much-disparaged wife that a solution is finally reached. That sounds rather staid; the picture is anything but.

It would be unjust to conclude this review without a word of praise for the capable fashion in which associate producer B. B. Kahane has guided the production. And also for the excellent support given the principals by Tommy Dugan, the dopey dick, Margaret Lindsay, the calm and collected villainess, and many others in a grade 'A' supporting cast.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOW SAID:

REPORTER: "A good follow-up to a good original picture. More hijinks from that super-sleuthing couple. . . . It will look awfully sporting at the box office."

VARIETY: "Crammed with the same hilarious flavor that marked its predecessor, "There's That Woman Again" emerges as a fitting sequel to Columbia's successful "There's Always A Woman."

"Dawn Patrol" Smash For Box Offices

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 135%)

Executive Producer Hal. B. Wallis
Associate Producer Robert Lord
Director Edmund Goulding
Screenplay Seton I. Miller, Don Tothoroh
Original John Monk Saunders
Stars Errol Flynn
Featured: Basil Rathbone, David Niven, Donald Crisp, Melville Cooper, Barry Fitzgerald, Carl Esmond, Peter Willes, Morton Lowry, Michael Brooke, James Burke, Stuart Hall, Herbert Evans, Sidney Bracy.
Photographer Tony Gaudio
Time 108 Minutes

Set this in definitely as one of your top money makers for the coming year. It will do sensational business. Every element, from timeliness of subject to sock dramatic strength, is present for a natural box office combination. Warner Brothers greet the new year with bells ringing, and with bells on.

The subject was a box office winner some eight years ago, and Jack Warner and Hal Wallis must have consulted a crystal gazer to determine the moment of all moments to bring it back to the screen. They assigned direction to Edmund Goulding, who went two-fistedly

to the spectacular effects, without ever losing his unerring skill at depicting dynamic human emotion in repressed eloquence. And they rounded up a seventeen-jewel cast to interpret an intelligently written, skillfully constructed script by Seton I. Miller and Don Tothoroh.

For the marquee there is Errol Flynn, and he delivers a cleverly keyed performance, but from the screen it is David Niven's picture. The latter player has the more colorful role in its emotional changes, and he comes through with flying colors. It is a performance that will send his stock to new heights. Canny Sam Goldwyn has something in this boy.

Basil Rathbone's performance of the squad-ran commander, torn between demands of duty and pangs of conscience, is the skillfully shaded delineation that one would expect of Rathbone. Support, headed by Donald Crisp, is all up to the high standard of the entire production, with Earl Esmond, as a German aviator prisoner with his dialogue entirely in the Teutonic tongue, getting the stand-out opportunity.

The theme of the picture, the almost use-

less sacrifice of the youth of the world to feed the god of War, will be remembered from the early version. It takes on new timeliness because of every newspaper headline of the past year, and without sacrificing story strength, the producers have this time emphasized the theme with powerful results. Skillful is the manner of presenting the preachment against the horror and futility of war, without preaching to the detriment of entertainment. It is in the action of spectacular air battles culminating in Flynn's solo raid that destroys the enemy's munitions base, the drama of men who must send mere boys to their death inadequately trained and inadequately equipped, the comedy of character unfoldment by men who are boys at heart, jibing at what they fear to fear, that the picture takes on its strength.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOW SAID:

REPORTER: "An exciting, thrilling dramatic picture on the utter waste of war. It is magnificently written, directed and acted and packs a tremendous wallop."

VARIETY: "Strong, legitimate drama of fighting men doing their battle chores is this superbly made 'Dawn Patrol.' "

Sidney Toler's "Chan" Debut Success

20th CENTURY-FOX

(EST. 80%)

Associate Producer John Stone
Director H. Bruce Humberstone
Original Screenplay Charles Belden
Based on the character created by
 Earl Derr Biggers
Star Sidney Toler
Featured: Phyllis Brooks, Sen Yung, Eddie Collins, John King, Claire Dodd, George Zucco, Robert Barrat, Marc Lawrence, Richard Lane, Layne Tom, Jr., Paul Harvey, Philip Ahn.
Photographer Charles Clarke
Time 65 Minutes

To appease a palpitating public, let us report that Charlie Chan is in safe hands. Charlie will go marching on to cheerful tunes in the person of Sidney Toler. It isn't an imitation Warner Oland characterization that Toler delivers, but it is a thoroughly satisfying, neatly shaded Charlie Chan.

With that important fact recorded, we can

proceed to the equally important one that "Charlie Chan in Honolulu" will take rank among the best of the pictures in the series. Producer John Stone has provided a story that is a neat blend of the comedy in the detective's unique character, suspenseful chills, and sufficient of "whodunit" mystery to hold the interest to the end.

Bruce Humberstone, who has directed enough of the Chan pictures to warrant considerable of the credit for the series' success, takes these elements and dresses them skillfully in major league direction. Humberstone, though young in years, is a screen veteran, and his touch is sure in balancing the laugh with the thrill, in maintaining pace, and in attaining atmosphere within budget limitations.

This time, the excellent original screenplay provided by Charles Belden, introduces our new Chan in the bosom of his numerous progeny, then plunges him into the solution of a murder aboard a freighter just arriving in

Honolulu. Affairs are complicated by the efforts of Chan's Number Two son to become a sleuth, but after another murder, and the weeding out of a plentitude of suspects all ends happily.

Eddie Collins provides a fine running vein of comedy as the guardian of a wild animal consignment aboard ship. Sen Yung steps into Key Luke's shoes satisfactorily. George Zucco does a good menace job.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It was a happy thought that made 20th Century-Fox decide to continue the Charlie Chan series and a very happy thought, indeed, to nominate Sidney Toler for the job of carrying-on."

VARIETY: "Sidney Toler makes his debut in the late Warner Oland's role in 'Charlie Chan in Honolulu.' Making no effort to fill the same figurative shoes that Oland wore, he moves in without any attempt to imitate, and, because of this, he stands better than an even chance of building for himself a following equal to that won by his predecessor."

"Next Time I Marry" Entertaining "B"

R. K. O.

(EST. 75%)

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
Producer Cliff Reid
Director Garson Kanin
Screenplay John Twist, Helen Meinardi
Story Thames Williamson
Featured: Lucille Ball, James Ellison, Lee Bowman, Granville Bates, Mantan Moreland.
Photographer Russell Metty
Time 65 Minutes

From a story germ that stems somewhere in the "My Man Godfrey" and "It Happened One Night" classifications, Director Garson Kanin, and screenplay writer John Twist and Helen Meinardi, have taken three junior Radio stars and sizzled along to a screwball comedy that

gives the exhibitor at least one break in his "B" purchases.

"Next Time I Marry" is good fun, and perhaps of more lasting importance, serves notice that this newcomer Garson Kanin, who directed the surprise "A Man To Remember," is not one of the pan flashers. He steps adroitly from the more serious subject to this frothy 65 minutes of gayety. And in doing so, he has done a fine job in drawing attention to the possibilities in the three up and coming Radio players, James Ellison, Lucille Ball, and Lee Bowman.

It all concerns the flighty Lucille and what happens to her when she buys a husband from

the W. P. A. rolls in order to collect the coin due under her father's will by meeting its insistence on a one hundred per cent American. Of course she intends all along to quickly ditch the American, Jimmy, and hitch herself to a title in the possession of Lee Bowman. Complications enter—and the fun.

With the familiar basis, and nothing super-extra for the production budget, it can be seen that the entertainment depends on the material provided by the scripters both in dialogue and situation, and the ability of the director to keep the whirligig in motion. They delivered, and the Radio department guided by Lee Marcus can take another bow.

"Duke of West Point" Colorful Yarn

EDWARD SMALL-U. A.
(EST. 90%)

Producer Edward Small
Director Alfred E. Green
Technical Director Lt. Walter K. Tuller, Jr.
Original Screenplay George Bruce
Featured: Louis Hayward, Joan Fontaine, Tom Brown, Richard Carlson, Alan Curtis, Donald Barry, Gaylord Pendleton Charles D. Brown, Jed Prouty, Marjorie Gateson, Emma Dunn, George McKay, James Flavin, Nick Lukats.
Photographer Robert Planck
Art Director John DeCasse Schultz
Musical Director Frank Tours
Film Editor Grant Whytock
Time 105 Minutes

Of all the backgrounds around which a picture can be built that just can't miss, West Point undoubtedly tops the list. For excitement, color, youth, and all around 'umph' it can't be beat, and "The Duke of West Point" is no exception to this rule. The picture has all the accepted trimmings of a service school story, and, as such, will not mar Uncle Sam's perfect record of never failing at the box office.

Despite all its good qualities, however, "The Duke of West Point" has one flaw—it tries to do too much. The picture in its present state

is overlength, and can definitely stand scissoring. Possibly the dropping of complete sequences, worthwhile in themselves, but whose eradication is necessary to speed up the entire effort. At any rate, an hour and forty-five minutes is too much running time for this type of film.

The story lends a somewhat novel twist to the ancient 'Hold 'em Army' routine. Louis Hayward, one of our three plebes starting in at the Point, has spent eight years in school in England, acquiring an Etonian accent which quickly places him in the doghouse with the upperclassmen. Playing his role to the hilt, Hayward delivers splendidly in his first big part in an 'A' picture, as the nonchalant, care-free, playboy.

Tom Brown and Richard Carlson complete the trio of roommates. Brown is his usual dependable self, and Carlson lives up to his 'Young in Heart' reputation, particularly in his more serious moments. Joan Fontaine very prettily handles the minor feminine interest of the film. Alan Curtis in the familiar role of hard-boiled upperclassman is all that such a part can be.

As to the plot, it might be stated in several

sentences: Hayward, in sneaking out of bounds to help his roommate, violates the honor code of the Academy when caught. Result—ostracism, until a letter from the roommate's mother vindicates him. Needless to say, the entire picture is interspersed with a plentitude of athletics, first football, and topping it all off with intercollegiate ice hockey. The "big game" of the film is the little-known international hockey match between the Royal Military College of Canada and West Point. The only athletic contest in the world in which the loser gets the trophy cup.

George Bruce, who gave the screen "Navy Blue and Gold," has implanted all the sure-fire elements of this type of story in creating an original screen play for this one. Director Al Green is thoroughly at home in this type of picture and skillfully balances dramatic, comedy, and athletic factors to advantage.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A picture about one of our two most popular service schools and, believe it or not, it's fresh, has a new idea, and brings still another sport into major production, hockey."

VARIETY: "With 'The Duke of West Point' Edward Small returns to United Artists packing a hit picture."

"Nancy Drew-Detective" Starts New Series

WARNER BROTHERS
(EST. 70%)

Producer Bryan Foy
Director William Clemens
Original Screenplay Kenneth Gamet
Based on characters by Carolyn Keene
Star Bonita Granville
Featured: John Litel, Frankie Thomas, James Stephenson, Frank Orth, Charles Trowbridge, Renie Riano, Helena Phillips Evans, Dick Purcell, Ed Keane, Brandon Tynan, Mae Busch, Tommy Bupp, Lottie Spire, Buddy Bangs, Byron Armstrong.
Time 65 Minutes

This new Nancy Drew series from Warner Brothers has apparently been aimed at that heterogenous audience which is responsible for the present day popularity of the comic page's adventure strips and the bang school of radio playlets. If this, the first in the series, is to be the model it can be reported as a series that will find a satisfactory spot on the dual bills, without exciting any undue adult interest.

The workmanlike crew under the Bryan Foy banner at Warner Brothers combine their proven knowledge of fast action thrills and broad laughs in "Nancy Drew—Detective," with a capable cast streamlining through the 65 minutes. Bonita Granville and Frankie Thomas, two of the screen's more promising adolescents, hold the center of the interest capably, with John Litel, Frank Orth and other standbys furnishing the proper adult balance. Original screenplay by Kenneth Gamet and direction by William Clemens are in the forthright Foy metier.

Bonita becomes Nancy Drew, the amateur detective, when she finds that her school is about to lose a quarter million endowment be-

cause of nasty racketeers who have kidnapped the would-be benefactress. With Frankie Thomas as stooge and chief lieutenant, and with the aid of "ham" radio operators, carrier pigeons, and any number of youngsters she brings a bad end to the bad men. John Litel is in the role of Bonita's father, and evidently destined to go along through the series with Bonita and the Thomas lad.

Appeal of the series will lean to the juvenile side, probably a bit too strongly so for all

around exhibitors satisfaction, but great for Friday nights and the Saturday matinees.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "If this one is a tipoff to what is to follow in a series based on the same characters, Warners has a winning box office combination."

VARIETY: " 'Nancy Drew—Detective,' first of series around adventures of a teen-aged girl, unfolds as an unpretentious little feature that speaks well for coming members of the group."

Releases of Week

(Continued from Page 5)

have to be double billed with a much stronger box office attraction.

Supporting Miss Francis are John Litel, Ian Hunter, Sybil Jason, and Donald Crisp. The picture was directed by Busby Berkeley.

PARAMOUNT—1 NEW RELEASE

Paramount has a very amusing comedy in their new release, "SAY IT IN FRENCH," which is suffering along with the other pre-Xmas releases, at a 74% average. However, due to the popularity of the stars, this one should also take a considerable jump on its future bookings.

"SAY IT IN FRENCH" was made by producer-director Andrew L. Stone, with Frederick Jackson writing the screenplay from Jacques Deval's original.

RKO—ALSO 1 NEW RELEASE

RKO's new release this week is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit, "NEXT TIME I MARRY" which is excellent entertainment, but due to the lack of marquee

names is doing very poorly at a 71% average.

Jimmie Ellison, of Hopalong Cassidy fame, is co-starred with one of RKO's new featured players, Lucille Ball, which doesn't mean so much on the average marquee, but since the picture is very entertaining, it will undoubtedly fill on the lower half of the average double bill.

COLUMBIA—1 NEW RELEASE

Columbia also has a new programmer from the Irving Briskin unit, entitled "ADVENTURE IN SAHARA," 69%. Paul Kelly, Lorna Gray, and C. Henry Gordon are featured—if that means anything to the average exhibitor.

UNIVERSAL—1 NEW RELEASE

Universal's new release this week, "SECRETS OF A NURSE," 67%, is another programmer that, lacking marquee names, will have to depend more or less on the title to sell tickets. After an absence from the screen for some time, Edmund Lowe returns as the lead in this picture and is capably supported by Helen Mack and Dick Foran; but after all, these names have little marquee value and so not much can be expected from this one.

"Kentucky" Built For Showmen

20th CENTURY-FOX
(EST. 130%)

Associate Producer Gene Markey
 Director David Butler
 Screenplay Lamar Trotti
 John Taintor Foote
 From the story by John Taintor Foote
 Stars Loretta Young, Richard Greene
 Featured: Walter Brennan, Douglas Dumbrille, Karen Morley, Moroni Olsen, Russell Hicks, Willard Robertson, Charles Waldron, George Reed, Bobs Watson, Delmar Watson, Leona Roberts, Charles Lane, Charles Middleton, Harry Hayden, Robert Middlemass, Madame Sul-Te-Wan, Cliff Clark, Meredith Howard, Fred Burton, Charles Trowbridge, Eddie Anderson, Stanley Andrews.
 Photographer Ernest Palmer
 Technicolor Photographer Ray Rennahan
 Technicolor Director Natalie Kalmus
 Art Directors Bernard Herzbrun, Lewis Creber
 Musical Director Louis Silvers
 Film Editor Irene Morra
 Time 95 Minutes

Showmanship wrapped up in a Zanuck package, that's "Kentucky." Fundamentally you could call it "just another race track story." But from that point on you would have to start using the adjectives that would describe all the glittering trappings of the cellophane wrapper, and you'd finish with the one word, "Showmanship."

First of all, there is the device of lending dignity to the turf yarn by glorifying the grand old state of Kentucky, land of fair wo-

men and fast horses. A crisply dramatic Civil War prologue gets this keynote under way with a bang. Then there is eye-filling and breathtaking Technicolor, used with probably the most satisfying effect it has achieved on the screen. Then, under the direction of David Butler, the formula of the plot takes on the strength of a succession of effective scenes, acquiring a suspenseful interest that only such sure-handed direction could have given it. And there is a gem-studded cast. Zanuck and his associate producer, Gene Markey, outdid themselves in spotting each role, to the smallest.

Walter Brennan walks off with the acting honors, both because the story's strength leaned that way, and because of this fine trouper's genius at infusing corpuscles into a characterization. It is one of Brennan's best jobs, and if the picture comes within this year's Academy schedule, the supporting player award is already made. Brennan is the name.

But the picture also serves to progress the career of Richard Greene. Given his best opportunity to date, Greene continues to improve in ease and assurance, and his personality is one that will grow on audiences. Loretta Young contributes her own decorative competence, while the players in support, in even the briefest of spot roles, are all so excellent it seems unfair to single out names. Though no review should omit mention of the fact that the colored players present are the most

competent selection of negro actors yet made by a producer.

Lamar Trotti and John Taintor Foote placed an intelligently adult script in Director Butler's hands. And over it all there is the spell of the beauties of Kentucky and Kentucky's horse flesh in Ray Rennahan's subtly gorgeous Technicolor.

The story? Oh, yes. Well the Civil War episode serves to establish a feud between two Kentucky families—one of Yankee ancestry, the other true South. The feud continues to the present day, carried on by descendants Loretta Young and Richard Greene, fanned to life by unreconstructed rebel, Walter Brennan. The winning of the Kentucky Derby by the girl's horse solves all problems and pays off on all bets. And what a race David Butler put up on that screen! Honest, you can rent the bookie concession in your lobby for the run—and there'll be those to make you bets.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Boyoboy, what a treat for lovers of horse-flesh, Kentucky, the Derby, Southern tradition, exciting racing sequences and delicious humor! It's a knockout from the word go to the very last moment of the big race."

VARIETY: "The beauty of the blue grass region with its celebrated breeding farms and the traditional gallantries of Kentucky are here blended in a picture of romantic charm, vigorous drama and stirring spectacle."

"Paris Honeymoon" Fine Crosby Picture

PARAMOUNT
(EST. 135%)

Producer Harlan Thompson
 Director Frank Tuttle
 Screenplay Frank Butler, Don Hartman
 Story Angela Sherwood
 Stars Bing Crosby, Franciska Gaal
 Featured: Akim Tamiroff, Shirley Ross, Edward Everett Horton, Ben Blue, Rafaela Ottiano, Gregory Gaye, Luana Walters, Alex Melesh, Victor Kilian, Michael Visaroff.
 Photographer Karl Struss
 Music and Lyrics Leo Robin, Ralph Rainger
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Art Directors Hans Dreier, Roland Anderson
 Dance Director LeRoy Prinz
 Film Editor Archie Marshak
 Time 83 Minutes

"Paris Honeymoon" will take high ranking in the consistently above average pictures that have maintained Bing Crosby's box office standing. Working from a slender farce basis that is a refreshing departure from routine formula, Producer Harlan Thompson and Director Frank Tuttle have blended sure-fire elements of song and comedy in a skillful manner. It is showmanlike in its direct aim for unmuted belly laughs in its comedy moments, delightful in the intelligent smoothness of its presentation of melodies.

The naively winning Crosby personality holds events together through the course of the picture, but it is in the opportunities given an adroitly selected cast that the all-around feeling of satisfaction comes. Akim Tamiroff may have had more important dramatic roles in epics, but he has never turned in a more cer-

tainly winning performance than his comic deliniation here. He is the mayor of a French village, with ideas inspired by experience in Chicago's rackets. Franciska Gaal is a demure eyeful and, in Tuttle's hands, a saucily effective comedienne. Shirley Ross in the thankless "other woman" part, is surprisingly good, almost too appealing for the demands of the part. Which showed intelligence on the part of the producers in the casting. Even Ben Blue, who has not always fared well at the hands of scripters and directors, is handled in just the right way to get every laugh for which he is intended, while not over-reaching. An indication of the cast strength is given in the fact that the tried and true Edward Everett Horton just steps along in the company of peers.

It's a slight story basis—merely sufficient to

introduce us to Bing and Shirley on the day of their wedding which is unavoidably postponed because she must journey to Paris to iron out some red tape on a divorce from her previous hubby. Bing journeys along, and to while away the time while the courts do the deed, rents a castle in a village where Tamiroff is the big pooh-bah. This brings him into contact with the local Cinderella, Franciska Gaal, who is domiciled with the bashful Bing for a week as one of her rewards for winning the crown as village queen. From there, Scripters Frank Butler and Don Hartman clothe it with intelligent dialogue, many laughs in the lines, and workmanship in the structure.

Frank Tuttle's unique ability to blend his music and action with sheerly delightful smoothness was never better used, while his handling of the high-spot comedy sequences milks them to the utmost. Robin and Rainger contribute three numbers, the hit possibilities of which can be judged by the fact that votes in equal number for each can be found from the preview audience. Our vote goes for "Joobalai."

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Paris Honeymoon' has only Bing Crosby to stamp it as out of the ordinary run-of-the-mill film fare. It is scarcely a fitting successor to 'Sing You Sinners,' even granting that the latter was tops."

VARIETY: "Frothy and gay, 'Paris Honeymoon' emerges from the mill bearing every indication it will reap a harvest equal to if not greater than Bing Crosby's previous number, 'Sing You Sinners.' "

• The Dun
and
Bradstreet
of the
Industry •

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1398

A. OVER \$500,000

Alexander's Ractime Band.....	FOX.....	227	%
Snow White.....	RKO.....	225	
Test Pilot.....	MGM.....	187	
In Old Chicago.....	FOX.....	181	
Boys Town.....	MGM.....	174	
Adventures of Robin Hood.....	WAR.....	173	
You Can't Take It With You.....	COL.....	164	
Marie Antoinette.....	MGM.....	153	
Happy Landing.....	FOX.....	152	
Too Hot To Handle.....	MGM.....	146	
That Certain Age.....	UNIV.....	146	
That Certain Age.....	UNIV.....	144	
Angels With Dirty Faces.....	WAR.....	143	
Mad About Music.....	UNIV.....	140	
Girl of the Golden West.....	MGM.....	139	
Bluebird's 8th Wife.....	PAR.....	137	
The Buccaneer.....	PAR.....	137	
The Cowboy And The Lady.....	U.A.....	136	
Suez.....	FOX.....	133	
The Crowd Roars.....	MGM.....	132	
A Yank at Oxford.....	MGM.....	130	
Jezebel.....	WAR.....	126	
My Lucky Star.....	FOX.....	125	
If I Were King.....	PAR.....	124	
Men With Wings.....	PAR.....	122	
Carefree.....	RKO.....	122	
Three Loves Has Nancy.....	MGM.....	120	
Sing You Sinners.....	PAR.....	110	
Adventures of Tom Sawyer.....	PAR.....	119	
Mannequin.....	MGM.....	119	
Adventures of Marco Polo.....	U. A.....	119	
Rebecca of Sunnybrook.....	FOX.....	118	
Algiers.....	U.A.....	118	
The Goldwyn Follies.....	U. A.....	118	
The Citadel.....	MGM.....	117	
Vivacious Lady.....	RKO.....	117	
Bringing Up Baby.....	RKO.....	117	
Spawn of the North.....	PAR.....	115	
Three Comrades.....	MGM.....	115	
The Sisters.....	WAR.....	114	
Little Miss Broadway.....	FOX.....	111	
Letter Of Introduction.....	UNIV.....	109	
Hollywood Hotel.....	WAR.....	109	
Room Service.....	RKO.....	108	
Kentucky Moonshine.....	FOX.....	108	
Joy of Living.....	RKO.....	108	
Sally, Irene and Mary.....	FOX.....	105	
Tropic Holiday.....	PAR.....	105	
Three Blind Mice.....	FOX.....	103	
Dr. Rhythm.....	PAR.....	103	
Drums.....	U.A.....	103	
Gold Is Where You Find It.....	WAR.....	103	
Arkansas Traveler.....	PAR.....	103	
Thanks For Everything.....	FOX.....	102	
Submarine Patrol.....	FOX.....	102	
Having Wonderful Time.....	RKO.....	102	
Boy Meets Girl.....	WAR.....	102	
There Goes My Heart.....	U.A.....	102	
Just Around The Corner.....	FOX.....	101	
The Young In Heart.....	U.A.....	101	
The Great Waltz.....	MGM.....	101	
Batmaness and the Butler.....	FOX.....	101	
The Race of Paris.....	UNIV.....	101	
The Shining Hour.....	MGM.....	99	
Big Broadcast of 1938.....	PAR.....	99	
Four's A Crowd.....	WAR.....	98	
Boy Meets Girl.....	WAR.....	96	
Every Day's a Holiday.....	PAR.....	96	
Worship We Live.....	MGM.....	95	
Holiday.....	COL.....	94	
Her Uncle Love.....	PAR.....	94	
The Texans.....	PAR.....	94	
College Swing.....	PAR.....	91	
College Swing.....	PAR.....	93	
Boekade.....	FOX.....	93	
Boekade.....	U. A.....	93	
Always Goodbye.....	FOX.....	93	

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Out West With the Hardys.....	MGM.....	144	%
Stablemates.....	MGM.....	134	
Love Finds Andy Hardy.....	MGM.....	131	
Bad Man of Birmstone.....	MGM.....	130	
Brother Rat.....	WAR.....	124	
Four Daughters.....	WAR.....	120	
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse.....	WAR.....	113	
A Slight Case of Murder.....	WAR.....	112	
I Am The Law.....	COL.....	103	
Straight, Place And Show.....	FOX.....	98	
Port of Seven Seas.....	MGM.....	95	
Judge Hardy's Children.....	MGM.....	95	
Valley Of The Giants.....	WAR.....	94	
Four Men and a Prayer.....	FOX.....	93	
Shopworn Angel.....	MGM.....	93	
Cowboy From Brooklyn.....	WAR.....	93	
The Mad Miss Manton.....	RKO.....	92	
Lord Jeff.....	MGM.....	92	
Hold That Co-Ed.....	FOX.....	90	

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Crime School.....	WAR.....	103	%
Blondie.....	COL.....	100	
Little Tough Guy.....	UNIV.....	86	
Girls School.....	COL.....	83	
Smashing The Rackets.....	RKO.....	82	
Girls On Probation.....	WAR.....	81	
King Of Alcatraz.....	PAR.....	81	
Saint In New York.....	RKO.....	81	

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

D. BELOW \$100,000

The Birth Of A Baby.....IND.....167

Dark Rapture	UNIV	88
Gangster's Boy	MONO	80
Ganges of New York	REP	81
The Higgins Family	REP	80
Storm Over Bengal	REP	80
Crime Takes A Holiday	COL	79
Tenth Avenue Kid	REP	79
Call of the Yukon	REP	78
Making the Headlines	COL	78
Reformatory	COL	78
Juvenile Court	COL	78
Down In Arkansas	REP	78
King of the Newsboys	REP	77
Mr. Wong, Detective	MONO	77
Flight Into Nowhere	COL	77
City Streets	COL	76
The Wrong Road	REP	76
Sergeant Murphy	WAR	76
The Spy Ring	UNIV	76
Prison Nurse	REP	76
Outside of Paradise	REP	76
Lady Behave	REP	74
Mama Runs Wild	REP	74
I Stand Accused	REP	74
Fenrod's Double Trouble	WAR	73
Fenrod's Twin Brother	WAR	73
Little Miss Thoroughbred	WAR	73
Escape by Night	REP	73
The Higgins Family	REP	73
Flight to Fame	COL	72
Crime Ring	REP	72
Hollywood Stadium Mystery	REP	72
Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	72
Romance of the Limberlost	MONO	72
Last Express	UNIV	71
The Missing Guest	UNIV	71
Blonde Cheat	REP	71
Marriage Forbidden	G.N.	71
The Duke Comes Back	REP	71
Exiled to Shanghai	REP	71
When G-Men Stop In	COL	71
Arson Gang Busters	REP	71
Come On Leathernecks	REP	71
Delinquent Parents	IND	70
Adventure In Sahara	COL	69
Telephone Operator	MONO	69
Invisible Enemy	REP	69
Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
A Man To Remember	REP	68
Rose Of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
Woman Against the World	MONO	68
Numbered Women	MONO	67
Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	67
Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
Under the Big Top	MONO	66
Mr. Chump	WAR	66
Fugitives For A Night	REP	66
Saleslady	MONO	66
Ladies In Distress	REP	65
Convicted	COL	65
Reckless Living	UNIV	65
Romance on the Run	REP	64
The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
Cipher Bureau	G.N.	64
Mystery House	WAR	64
Lady in the Morgue	UNIV	64
My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	63
Maid's Night Out	REP	63
This Marriage Business	REP	63
Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
Main Event	MONO	63
Highway Patrol	COL	63
International Crime	G.N.	60
Born to Be Wild	REP	59

Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Tip Off Girls	PAR	78
City Girl	FOX	78
Condemned Woman	RKO	78
Change of Heart	FOX	78
Touchdown Army	PAR	78
Time Out for Murder	FOX	77
No Time to Marry	COL	77
Torchy Blane Gets Her Man	WAR	77
Girls School	COL	77
Always In Trouble	FOX	77
Scandal Street	PAR	77
Double Danger	RKO	77
Crashing Hollywood	RKO	77
Sharpshooters	FOX	77
Blondes at Work	WAR	76
He Couldn't Say No	WAR	76
Affairs Of Annabelle	RKO	76
Women In Prison	COL	76
Bulldog Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
Youth Takes A Fling	UNIV	76
Illegal Traffic	PAR	76
Speed to Burn	FOX	74
Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
Blind Alibi	RKO	74
Over the Wall	WAR	74
Dancers on to Know	PAR	74
Island in the Sky	FOX	74
Beloved Brat	WAR	74
Broadway Musketeers	WAR	74
Prison	PAR	74
Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	74
The Lady Objects	WAR	74
Little Tough Guys in Society	COL	74
Prison Break	UNIV	73
One Wild Night	FOX	73
Mr. Moto's Gamble	FOX	73
Love on a Budget	FOX	73
Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
Prescription for Romance	UNIV	73
Swing That Cheer	UNIV	72
Down On The Farm	FOX	72
Boo-Boo	PAR	72
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	72
Torchy Blane in Panama	WAR	72
Little Miss Rouchneck	WAR	72
Midnight Intruder	COL	72
International Settlement	UNIV	72
Passport Husband	FOX	72
Next Time I Marry	FOX	72
The Kid Comes Back	RKO	71
Go Chase Yourself	WAR	71
The Patient in Room 18	RKO	71
Everybody's Doing It	WAR	71
Mr. Moto's Chance	FOX	71
Bulldog Drummond in Africa	PAR	71
Fast Company	MGM	71
The Black Doll	UNIV	71
Tarnished Angel	RKO	70
I'm From the City	RKO	70
Dare Devil Drivers	WAR	70
Hunted Men	WAR	70
Campus Confessions	PAR	70
Nurse From Brooklyn	PAR	70
Young Fugitives	UNIV	70
Night Spot	UNIV	70
Exposed	RKO	70
Sinners in Paradise	UNIV	70
Safety In Numbers	UNIV	70
Mr. Doodle Kicks Off	FOX	70
Freshman Year	RKO	70
The Chaser	UNIV	69
Lone Wolf in Paris	MGM	69
Meet the Girls	COL	69
Annabelle Takes A Tour	FOX	68
The Devils Party	RKO	68
The Crime of Dr. Hallett	UNIV	68
The Jury's Secret	UNIV	68
Love, Honor and Behave	UNIV	68
She Loved a Fireman	WAR	68
Glamorous Night	WAR	68
Sons of the Legion	REP	68
Secrets Of A Nurse	PAR	68
When Were You Born?	UNIV	67
Wives Under Suspicion	WAR	67
Men Are Such Fools	UNIV	67
Vacation From Love	WAR	67
Personal Secretary	MGM	66
Peck's Bad Boy at Circus	UNIV	66
Men With 100 Faces	RKO	62
Sez O'Reilly to McNabb	FOX	62
Three On A Weekend	G.B.	61
Strange Boarders	G.B.	61
To the Victor	G.B.	59
Dark Sands	B. I. P.	58
Crime Over London	G.B.	58

There's Always a Woman	COL	87
Everybody Sings	MGM	87
Garden Of The Moon	WAR	86
Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	85
I'll Give A Million	FOX	85
Yellow Jack	MGM	84
White Banners	WAR	84
Listen Darling	MGM	83
Racket Busters	WAR	83
Mother Carey's Chickens	RKO	83
Penitentiary	COL	82
Hold That Kiss	MGM	82
Give Me A Sailor	PAR	82
Rasals	FOX	81
The Gladiator	COL	80
Wide Open Faces	COL	80
Cheekers	FOX	80
Paradise for Three	MGM	80
Gateway	FOX	80
You and Me	PAR	80
Woman Against Woman	MGM	80
Swing Your Lady	WAR	79
Of Human Hearts	MGM	79
Five Of A Kind	FOX	78
Breaking The Ice	RKO	78
The Road To Reno	UNIV	77
Wise Girl	RKO	77
Up The River	FOX	76
Swiss Miss	MGM	76
I Met My Love Again	U. A.	76
Army Girl	REP	76
Blockheads	MGM	76
Service DeLuxe	UNIV	75
Keep Smiling	FOX	75
Arsene Lupin Returns	MGM	75
First 100 Years	MGM	75
Love Is a Headache	MGM	74
Say It In French	PAR	74
Battle of Broadway	FOX	74
Spring Madness	MGM	74
Secrets Of An Actress	MGM	74
Comet Over Broadway	WAR	74
The Storm	UNIV	74
Stolen Heaven	PAR	73
Rich Man, Poor Girl	MGM	72
Hawaii Calls	RKO	72
Goodbye Broadway	UNIV	72
Start Cheering	COL	72
My Bill	WAR	71
Women Are Like That	WAR	71
Thanks For The Memory	PAR	71
Sailing Along	G. B.	70
Look Out For Love	G. B.	52
The Girl Was Young	G. B.	46
Return of Scarlet Pimpernel	U. A.	44

Professor Beware	PAR	84
Kidnapped	FOX	84
Radle City Revels	RKO	83
The Toy Wife	MGM	81
Gold Diggers in Paris	WAR	81
Cocoanut Grove	PAR	76
Fools for Scandal	WAR	72
Divorce of Lady X	U. A.	72
Sixty Glorious Years	RKO	71
We're Going to Be Rich	FOX	69

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

William A. Seiter

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"THANKS FOR EVERYTHING"

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ARTS AND SCIENCES
HOLLYWOOD CALIFORNIA

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 7. No. 22

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 3, 1939

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$10

M-G-M's "SWEETHEARTS" TOPS; "ARTISTS AND MODELS" STRONG

*Of Ten New Releases in the Past Week, three Rated Over 100%;
Three Came Thru Okay; And Four Were Very Weak.*

By NORMAN WEBB

M-G-M—3 New Releases

M-G-M is finishing up 1938 with three new releases—one an outstanding box office smash and two fairly good program pictures.

"SWEETHEARTS" has broken in several big key-city runs, and in spite of the fact that several of these openings were a few days previous to Christmas, this picture has been "draggin' em in" in a big way, averaging 52% above normal business. This conclusively proves that the Jeanette MacDonald-Nelson Eddy team continue to be tops in the industry. Furthermore, the addition of gorgeous Technicolor has undoubtedly aided "SWEETHEARTS" considerably.

Supporting Miss MacDonald and Mr. Eddy is an outstanding cast of MGM featured players, including Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, Florence Rice, Mischa Auer, Herman Bing, Reginald Gardiner, and Gene Lockhart.

MGM's famous producer-director team of Hunt Stromberg and Woody Van Dyke, who have been responsible for so many of the big Eddy-MacDonald successes such as "ROSE MARIE" and "NAUGHTY MARIETTA," are also responsible for "SWEETHEARTS."

Exhibitors will do well to go the limit on advertising this one and should certainly give it added playing time.

MGM's second release is Charles Dickens' "CHRISTMAS CAROL," which on its many pre-Xmas bookings, has been doing a very spotty business. In New York City, at the Radio City Music Hall, "CHRISTMAS CAROL"

smashed attendance records, giving this theater one of its biggest pre-Xmas weeks. On the other hand, other exhibitors who booked "CHRISTMAS CAROL" on a single bill and minus a stage show, reported that business was almost 50% below normal. So we have received exhibitor reports ranging from 50% below normal to 30% above, certainly indicating that this picture is each exhibitor's individual problem, and on its present runs it is averaging around 82%, which will undoubtedly drop considerably as the Christmas spirit wanes.

"CHRISTMAS CAROL" features Reginald Owen, Gene and Kathleen Lockhart, Terry Kilburn, Lynne Carver, and Ann Rutherford. It was produced by Joseph Mankiewicz and directed by Eddie Marin, from Hugo Butler's screenplay.

MGM's third and last release this week is David Loew's newest Joe E. Brown comedy, "FLIRTING WITH FATE," 78%. In the past year Mr. Loew distributed his Joe E. Brown features through RKO and Columbia, but having fulfilled his contracts with these two companies, MGM is handling the distribution on this one.

10 New Releases Not in Last Issue

3 Over 100%.....3 O. K.....4 Weak

		%	We Est.
1.	Sweethearts	MGM.....	152.....140
2.	Artists And Models Abroad.....	PAR.....	132.....130
3.	Trade Winds	U.A.....	121.....125
4.	Duke Of West Point	U.A.....	95.....120
5.	Christmas Carol	MGM.....	82.....
6.	Strange Case of Dr. Mead	COL.....	82..... 80
7.	Flirting With Fate	MGM.....	78..... 85
8.	Smashing The Spy Ring	COL.....	76..... 80
9.	Swing, Sister, Swing	UNIV.....	68..... 70
10.	Little Orphan Annie	PAR.....	66..... 75

Paramount 2 New Releases

Paramount has two new releases this week, one an outstanding box office attraction while the other is a very weak sister.

Jack Benny's first release in some time, "ARTISTS AND MODELS ABROAD," has opened up very strongly

(Continued on Page 5)

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ "Honor Box" ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **M. G. M.** Wins With

"SWEETHEARTS" - 152%



Producer
HUNT STROMBERG

Screenplay
DOROTHY PARKER
ALAN CAMPBELL

Based on Operetta
"SWEETHEARTS"

Book and Lyrics
FRED DE GRESAC
HARRY B. SMITH

Photographer
OLIVER T. MARSH

Technicolor Photographer
ALLEN DAVEY



Director
W. S. VAN DYKE, II.

Music
VICTOR HERBERT

Musical Presentations
MERRILL PYE

Dance Arrangements
ALBERTINA RASCH

Featured
RAY BOLGER
FLORENCE RICE
MISCHA AUER
HERMAN BING
GEORGE BARBIER
REGINALD GARDINER
FAY HOLDEN



NELSON EDDY



JEANETTE MacDONALD



FRANK MORGAN



NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

USE ALL OUR BRAINS

There is one vicious circle continually operating in this business that it seems impossible to erase without the co-operation of both producers and exhibitors.

It comes out of these basic factors:

First: Under present day exhibition conditions the theater owner has little time, opportunity, or money to help build new stars—he is geared by economic necessities to cling to the sure-things;

Second: Under such conditions, it necessarily follows that the producer and distributor has little incentive to brave the dangers of presenting new stars;

Third, and finally: Under such a set-up for exhibition and production it must follow—as it has—that there are always a number of stars still hanging on like barnacles long after their usefulness has passed. Hanging on to the point where they have become a detriment, rather than an asset. And hanging like thorns along the path the new star must travel.

There's the circle.

How can we get out of it?

* * * *

It seems hopeless.

There is not a producer—and that even includes the competents—who cannot show you a set of burned figures as the result of some effort to establish a new star.

There is not an exhibitor who won't meet your statement that the industry needs new stars with the fact reply: "What can I do? The public makes the stars by its patronage. I have nothing to do with it. The old stars kill themselves by growing self-satisfied, or the producers kill them with poor pictures. But I have nothing to do with it."

Round and round it goes—and apparently it will keep on whirling without help or hindrance from any conscious efforts on our part to interrupt its gyrations.

Old stars grow musty; new stars are almost impossible to establish. Gosh, there must be a way out of that jam.

* * *

Our own suggestion is simple:

Let the brass hats give more intelligent recognition to the brains they have in their advertising and publicity departments, to the national—yes, international—power that can be wielded from those departments.

"But—" you say, "We do that now. Don't we climb all over the publicity departments when we are out to build a new star?"

You missed the point. We said: "Intelligent recognition."

By which we mean:

First of all: Let 'em in on the secrets. Tell 'em the truth—is Miss Lizzie Glutz to be given star build-up treatment because you really think she has something, or because she has never missed a Palm Springs week-end?

Second: Listen to them. You hired them as able bodied adults, so if they tell you that with all the publicity space they can beg, borrow or steal they just couldn't make star material of the particular Miss Glutz—give their views consideration. At least listen with a proportion of the respect you give to the opinion of that myopic third cousin of your wife's brother-in-law.

Give them a chance, let them in on the secrets early—and you'll find them leading Miss Glutz around to the exhibitor's marquee in such shape that a real showman will meet you fifty-fifty on the selling.

There are publicity and advertising staffs in this industry with better knowledge of stories than the hybrid fugitives from New York mushroom beds infesting the story departments; there are selling brains in these departments—sharpened to keen edge in most cases by the actual human contacts of newspaper life—to add luster to any producer's record.

And we are not tapping half of those resources.

Because we are still working on the 1912 principle that a publicity man is a fellow who gets his boss's name in the papers—or keeps it out—and who can do a good job of wire pulling on a traffic ticket or for choice football tickets.

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

			%
1.	M. G. M.	45 Releases	103
2.	United Artists	49 Releases	91
3.	20th Century-Fox	17 Releases	94
4.	Paramount	39 Releases	89
5.	Warner Brothers	52 Releases	87
6.	R. K. O.	39 Releases	83
7.	Columbia	32 Releases	79
8.	Universal	37 Releases	76
9.	Republic	25 Releases	73
10.	Monogram	13 Releases	69
11.	Grand National	5 Releases	65
12.	Gaumont British	10 Releases	59

362

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

The News at a Glance

Metro gets nicked \$600,000 in a plagiarism suit over "Letty Lynton." Gosh, that's better than straight selling of your story. Just wait until you can get a cut in the gross and profits. Maybe the reaction will be to cause more owners of outstanding properties to hold back for profit sharing—or royalty—deals for their screen rights. But we had better tip them off that they must first be sure to have the deal with a company that piles up the grosses MGM does. "Royalty" is a fine-sounding word, particularly when the headlines are juggling ciphers like that \$600,000 one. But in the legit the playwrights take it on the chin far more often than they collect, while in the picture business the writer has been paid—something—the day the picture starts in production. Whether there is red ink at the end of the trail or not.

Unfortunately, the New York court verdict in the "Letty Lynton" case is going to give new courage to lawyers who will go to court on any and all pretexts in connection with a suit against a picture company; new basis for beliefs to the many misguided ones around the country who feel that the motion picture is riddled with plagiarism.

And equally unfortunately, it won't do a darn thing towards alleviating the real ulcer of the plagiarism situation which exists right here in Hollywood. This is the stealing, not of entire story plots, because no good thief would be so crude, but the lifting of situations, new angles, unusual characters that happens somewhere along the winding trail that runs from the reading departments to the "junior writers" to the associate producers, to the two to six writers getting eventual credit on the screen.

This condition exists—and serves to choke off considerable originality and ambition—and it will continue we suppose as long as motion pictures continue to be concoctions, rather than individual creations. Too many cooks can not only spoil the broth—but too many cooks also create a condition where there is no one cook to assume responsibility for the ingredients.

RKO Goes Into The Black Ink Column

RKO-Radio shows a second-half statement that is in the black ink, after a disastrous first six months period. Good news. Give the credit to Walt Disney and "Snow White" if you will, but what's the difference in the final results? The result has been to enable Radio to scrape a lot of barnacles off the ship in the form of past mistakes, and clears things for the coming year. And it is our bet that there is a picture up there on Gower Street now in George Stevens' "Gunga Din" that will make this year one in which the "first half" calls for black ink use. Let that happen once, and Radio will be able to go places. Radio's his-

7 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was	Now
1.	The Great Waltz	MGM	100 103
2.	Hard To Get	WAR	89 91
3.	Spring Madness	MGM	73 78
4.	Thanks For the Memory	PAR	71 76
5.	Exposed	UNIV	67 70
6.	Peck's Bad Boy at Circus	RKO	63 68
7.	Road Demon	FOX	62 65

tory has been too full of repetition of the process of "paying for past mistakes" every time the present and future gave any sign of encouragement An orchid to Harry Wurtzel and Harman-Ising. When the judge from the bench actually congratulates the people on the other side of the mahogany on their handling of a 77B case, it's news. Wurtzel stepped into the Harman-Ising situation and deftly maneuvered to leave everybody happy. Creditor smiling and paid; Harman-Ising happily functioning at MGM. And His Honor went out of his way to bestow his benediction What's all the excitement about whether Goldwyn, Warners or Republic will jump the gun on a cooperative medical story. Has anyone told MGM they have the cooperative medicine natural in the pretty good picture—an ace picture—called "The Citadel?"

Rounding The Studio Corners

Not surprised to hear that Radio is hurrying the return of Lee Tracy to the screen after his sensational London stage success. There must be lots of additional gelt now in the Tracy name for the British market, particularly if we judge by the offers he has received from English producers. And the American screen needs the Tracy trouping skill and personality. In a real picture. Not in one of those sluff-offs that the last few years brought to the market Maureen O'Sullivan is going to conveniently demise in the next "Tarzan" we are told. Glad to hear it for that young lady's sake. She has too much skill, a popularity back-log in being known to a vast world audience through "Tarzan" and other pictures of the past, not to start to go places as she deserves. Hollywood picture makers overlook that build-up factor too often—and are inclined to give credit to a particular picture for the suddenness with which certain players

8 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

		Was	Now
1.	Out West With Hardys	MGM	144 141
2.	Drums	U.A.	103 100
3.	Dramatic School	MGM	88 81
4.	Heart Of The North	WAR	85 81
5.	Up The River	FOX	78 76
6.	Say It In French	PAR	76 74
7.	Juvenile Court	COL	78 72
8.	I Stand Accused	REP	74 71

blossom into box office assets. Mickey Rooney is an example. The paying customers have been wanting this boy to be a star for years while Hollywood waited on the street corners. . . . Universal winds up shooting on "Son of Frankenstein" and is rushing it for mid-January release. Hurry, hurry, boys, the box office can use this Rowland Lee picture. . . . Hollywood looks like Hollywood of yore with Al Christie again in our midst preparing for feature production.

Option Time Now A Headache

Twentieth Century-Fox drops a dozen or so of writers from the contract list because option time rolled around and the writers demanded the increases called for in the documents if they were to continue. Frankly, these first few months of 1939 are going to bring not a few headaches for those with options coming due and big raises demanded. Producers took quite a licking and got quite a scare with the gloomy business drop of the past six months, together with the uncertain foreign situation. First to suffer will be the first optioners to come up. Not having to worry will be those having box office accomplishments standing out in the period just past. Because stray box office accomplishments stood out like sore thumbs. . . . Quite a number of puzzled brows, and not a few laughs, about the result of the year-end popularity polls announced to date. They mean just as little as they ever did, boys and girls, unless you are in a position to psycho-analyze them and all the factors responsible for the results they present. There is only one answer that doesn't need analyzing—the box office figures, properly gathered and compiled. That's what you'll get in The Digest's Box Office Annual. It won't be long now. . . . Leigh Jason brings the Corrigan picture in under the wire. A heavy burden they gave Jason with that one. A tough star to act with, and a star from whom the edge may be taken by the time the picture is released. But they won't make any alibis for the director. . . . Ray Johnston arrives in Studio-land, on the new arrangement which will find the Monogram prexy dividing his time between New York and Hollywood. Coincident with the company's celebration of Ray's Silver Jubilee year in the industry. A pretty consistent record chalked up in those years, too. . . . No news in the fact that MGM has lifted the option on Henry Bucquet as feature director. In the course of covering pre-views we have had to see the last three reels of his "Doctor Kildare" at least a half dozen times—in addition to having seen the picture in its entirety originally. And when a subject is so neatly handled that it can still gain and retain your interest after all those viewings—it's a job of craftsmanship.

"Zaza" Ace-High Woman's Picture

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 125%)

Producer Albert Lewin
 Director George Cukor
 Screenplay Zoe Akins
 From the play by Pierre Berton
 Charles Simon
 Star Claudette Colbert
 Featured: Herbert Marshall, Bert Lahr, Helen Westley, Constance Collier, Genevieve Tobin, Walter Catlett, Ann Todd, Rex O'Malley, Ernest Cossart, Janet Waldo, Dorothy Tree, Monty Woolley, Maurice Murphy, Frank Puglia.
 Photographer Charles Lang, Jr.
 Special Photographic Effects, Gordon Jennings
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Songs Frederick Hollander, Frank Loesser
 Dance Director LeRoy Prinz
 Film Editor Edward Dmytryk
 Time 83 Minutes

CURRENT REVIEWS

3 Over 100%.....3 Okay.....2 Weak

		%
1. Stand Up And Fight	MGM.....	135
2. Zaza	PAR.....	125
3. Topper Takes A Trip	U.A.....	100
4. They Made Me A Criminal	WAR.....	90
5. Devil's Island	WAR.....	85
6. Whispering Enemies	COL.....	80
7. Chasing Danger	FOX.....	75
8. Tough Kid	MONO.....	70

Under its own name, and in a variety of disguises—such as the well-remembered "Trespasser"—"Zaza" has never failed to make money. The Lewin-Cukor-Colbert combination will do it again for Paramount this time.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: "Lavishly produced and beautifully to look at, it all adds up to much ado

about nothing. It's a super-super build-up to a terrific letdown."

VARIETY: "Zaza" provides a great dramatic role, and Claudette Colbert meets the challenge with a superb performance. Twice before Paramount has brought the Pierre Berton and Charles Simon play to the screen with top feminine stars of their day, but this, the first talking version, easily tops the others in playing, direction and production elegance."

"Zaza," in what it accomplishes and in what it avoids, is a gem of production skill—so our first bow must go to the man behind the gun, Associate Producer Albert Lewin. Taking a creaky vehicle that might at any moment have betrayed its aged bones, Lewin charted a directly honest course for a heart-throb woman's picture and with George Cukor's sure-handed skill to carry the assignment through, reached his aim.

The picture is a trouper's holiday—and the cast flawless. Topping all, of course, is Miss Colbert. Her's is the burden from start to finish, and she comes through with all the assurance one should expect of a seasoned star essaying a traditional star role.

"Zaza" has formed the basis for so many plays and pictures over the years that it is too late now for anyone to start analyzing the why and wherefore of this "other woman" formula in its appeal to box office. It has never failed—and Paramount has given it the type of production skill in all departments to assure that it will not this time.

The original story has been stripped to essentials for this screen version. Colbert is the vivacious gamin-star of the provincial theaters, Helen Westley her cognac soaked foster-mother, Bert Lahr, her manager-partner. She meets Herbert Marshall, staid business man with a mysterious background in far-off Paris. Love blossoms and blooms as well as it can under the Hays code. Comes the time when Zaza learn that Herbert is a married man, comes the meeting with his four-year-old child, Ann Todd. Comes the renunciation.

That's all. But in George Cukor's hands, with an intelligent script from Zoe Akins, the players give it flesh and blood, verity and emotional moments aplenty. Bert Lahr is a pleasant surprise in a straight part, his personality peeking through the strictly legitimate requirements of the role, while that tried and true, never-failing trouper Helen Westley, has never turned in a more polished performance. She is a standout. Capable in smaller parts are Constance Collier, Genevieve Tobin, and little Ann Todd.

Herbert Marshall, sharing leads with Miss Colbert, is negatively efficient in a colorless role, all pointing in story and dialoguing being done towards the part played by the star.

RELEASES OF THE WEEK

(Continued from Page 1)

at 132% average, indicating that "Buck" Benny is still holding on to his big following. Supporting Benny in this big musical extravaganza are Joan Bennett, Mary Boland, The Yacht Club Boys, Fritz Feld, Joyce Compton, and a big "chorus of beauties."

Arthur Hornblow, Jr., produced "ARTISTS AND MODELS ABROAD" for Paramount with Mitchell Leisen directing. Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse wrote the original, as well as collaborating on the screenplay with Ken England.

Paramount's second release this week is "LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE" the first picture to be made by the Colonial Film Company, a new independent organization. The critics were not very kind to this picture and the box office seems to verify their statements as the picture has opened up very poorly at a 66% average, probably indicating that it is drawing largely juvenile trade. Accordingly exhibitors who have bought this one and don't care to shelve it, had better book it with a much stronger attraction.

The cast of featured players gives satisfactory performances but have little or no marquee value. Among them are Ann Gillis, Robert Kent, June Travis, and J. Farrell MacDonald. John Speaks produced and Ben Holmes directed from Bud Schulberg and Sam Ornitz's screenplay.

U. A.—2 NEW RELEASES

United Artists have two new releases this week, one of which is doing exceptionally well and the second not so bad, considering the cast. United Artists' biggest hit is Walter Wanger's new production, "TRADE WINDS," an adventure story co-starring Freddie March and Joan Bennett.

"TRADE WINDS" has opened fairly well at a 121% average, probably indicating continued success for this picture. Among the more prominent featured players are Ralph Bellamy, Ann Sothorn, and Sidney Blackmer. Tay Garnett, who wrote the original story,

also directed.

United Artists' second release, "THE DUKE OF WEST POINT," is Edward Small's first release on his new U.A. contract, which calls for four releases a year. "THE DUKE OF WEST POINT" is really an outstanding production, but due to the lack of marquee names, is only averaging around 95% on its first bookings.

Louis Hayward, Joan Fontaine, and Tom Brown head the cast, and as none of them are outstanding marquee names, exhibitors will have to exploit this one very strongly. Al Greene directed from George Bruce's original screenplay.

COLUMBIA—

ALSO 2 NEW RELEASES

Columbia Pictures also have two new releases this week, the first being "THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. MEAD." This is the latest of the Larry Darmour series starring Jack Holt. This one seems to be doing the best of this whole series for some time, as it is averaging 85% on its first bookings, and will probably do even better in the "nabes," where Jack Holt has his best following.

Beverly Roberts and Noah Beery, Jr., head the supporting cast. Lew Collins directed for Mr. Darmour.

Columbia's second release, "SMASHING THE SPY RING," 76%, being based on a current topic, should prove satisfactory for the average exhibitor, especially in houses where they prefer action pictures. Fay Wray and Ralph Bellamy are co-starred. This one was produced by the Irving Briskin program unit, with Christy Cabanne directing.

UNIVERSAL—1 NEW RELEASE

Universal's new release this week, "SWING, SISTER, SWING," 68%, is a poor attempt to make a musical on a small budget, minus marquee names. Ken Murray, Johnny Downs, Eddie Quillan, and Ernest Truex are featured. Burt Kelly produced and Joe Santley directed.

Better book this one on a bank night, or with a big percentage picture.

By Norman Webb

"Devil's Island" Straight Raw Meat

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 85 %)

Associate Producer Bryan Foy
 Director William Clemens
 Screenplay Kenneth Gamet, Don Ryan
 Original Anthony Coldeway,
 Raymond L. Schrock
 Featured: Boris Karloff, Nedda Harrigan,
 James Stephenson, Adia Kuznetzoff, Rolla
 Courvitch, Will Stanton, Edward Keane,
 Robert Warwick, Pedro de Cordoba, Tom
 Wilson, John Harmon, Richard Bond, Earl
 Gunn, Sidney Bracy, George Lloyd, Charles
 Richman, Stuart Holmes, Leonard Mudie,
 Egon Brecher, Frank Reicher.
 Photographer George Barnes
 Film Editor Frank Magee
 Time 60 Minutes

If they want horror—in an unadulterated Warner version, Boris Karloff and all, and the name of France's notorious penal colony to give it an excuse for being here it is. The picture has not been made for those who seek sweetness, lightness or jollity in their screen fare, and it is not expected that any such would

respond to the title on the marquee. But for those who will respond—and each exhibitor knows his own answer to that—here is a rather naive, starkly unrelieved "Devil's Island."

From guillotining scenes that use the last inch of grasping terror, to punishment cells, and the horrors of attempted escape, the action passes. It is presented objectively, with any attempts that Warners may have had in mind to preach a political sermon apparently blunted by French official interference.

As a result of "pulling the punches" it emerges a straight line story of a man unjustly sentenced to prison, sufficient reels of that prison life to make us feel at home (?), and his final exoneration. Karloff is the victim, a famous French surgeon innocently involved in treasonable activities. He performs an operation that saves the life of the prison colonel's child, but it gains him no relief from hardship. He engineers an escape, is recaptured, and saved in the last final second just when we thought Warners might slip and let the guil-

lotine knife remove that excellent actor from our midst. No punches are pulled on this sort of stuff throughout the picture.

Kenneth Gamet and Don Ryan provided the script which combines in workmanlike fashion with William Clements forthright direction. James Stephenson is advantageously seen as the Colonel, with Nedda Harrigan, the lone female of the cast, handling her role acceptably. Supporting players are excellently selected as types and troupers.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "There's drawing power in the title, and a quite acceptable story of man's inhumanity to man in the French penal colony. While its setting is grim, it isn't too horrible and will do well for the dramatic portion of the program."

VARIETY: "Grim and horrific is Warners treatment of prison life on Devil's Island, but well made and attention compelling in story and enactment. It will have no trouble on the majority of the theaters duals to hold up its end."

"Chasing Danger" Not Up to Par

20th CENTURY-FOX

(EST. 75 %)

Director Ricardo Cortez
 Screenplay Robert Ellis, Helen Logan
 Original Leonardo Bercovici
 Featured: Preston Foster, Lynn Bari, Wally
 Vernon, Henry Wilcoxon, Joan Woodbury,
 Howard Huber, Jody Gilbert, Pedro de
 Cordoba, Stanley Fields, Roy D'Arcy.
 Photographer Virgil Miller
 Musical Director Samuel Kaylin
 Film Editor Norman Colbert
 Time 60 Minutes

Somehow, somewhere, a cog slipped in that intricate machinery used by the Wurtzel unit at Twentieth-Century Fox for manufacturing entertaining 'B' pictures, during the making of "Chasing Danger." Certainly it is not up to the other efficient workmanlike product turned out by this unit at Fox; but then, even the experts must have their off-days. Perhaps that is the word for the picture, an off-day film; even the best of studios have them,

even the best of players and technicians are associated with them.

The first demerit should be given to the story. Robert Ellis and Helen Logan, whose "screenplay by" credits would fill a volume and whose work is largely responsible for so many of the successful "series" films at Fox, turned out just one script too many in 1938. "Chasing Danger" is really rather badly knit as drama and even the redoubtable Wally Vernon has a dickens of a time getting laughs out of some of the dialogue and situations given him.

Director Cortez, whose first assignments at Fox were handled so capably, unfortunately couldn't do much with the material handed him this time. However, it is to his credit that the picture never really "dies," its fault is rather that it is all a little inane.

Preston Foster is the daredevil newscamera-man this time and the heretofore men-

tioned Vernon his woe - begone buddy. They are both quite up to standard; it is just that they are hampered by the parts. Lynn Bari is the feminine lead and Henry Wilcoxon the real 'hero' of the piece. Joan Woodbury, Harold Huber, Stanley Fields and Pedro de Cordoba complete the cast.

The story concerns some half-caste Frenchman who steals a million dollars and goes out into North Africa to build a desert empire. Our characters are brought into the story through his gun running activities. His final capture is not particularly thrilling.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Chasing Danger' is a minor offering. It will give poor support, other than that suggested by its cast name-value, on a double bill, and it will have difficulty making the grade in less important spots on its own."

VARIETY: "Story weaknesses and uneven direction relegate 'Chasing Danger' to the lower berth on dualers."

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1939 BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Hunt Stromberg

PRODUCED

"SWEETHEARTS"

A Metro-Goldwyn-
Mayer Picture

"Stand Up and Fight" Box Office Show

M. G. M.

(EST. 135%)

Producer Mervyn LeRoy
 Director W. S. Van Dyke, II
 Screenplay James M. Cain,
 Jane Murfin, Harvey Ferguson
 Original Forbes Parkhill
 Stars Wallace Beery, Robert Taylor
 Featured: Florence Rice, Helen Broderick,
 Charles Bickford, Barton MacLane, Charley
 Grapewin, John Qualen, Robert Gleckler,
 Clinton Rosemond, Cy Kendall, Paul Ever-
 ton, Claudia Morgan, Selmer Jackson,
 Robert Middlemass, Jonathan Hale.
 Photographer Leonard Smith
 Musical Score Dr. William Axt
 Film Editor Frank Sullivan
 Time 95 Minutes

"Stand Up and Fight" will garner plenty box office shekels—and then some more. From the forthright action title on through to the last foot of celluloid, Producer Mervyn LeRoy has built with canny directness for wide mass appeal—and the result is proof that any time LeRoy wants to go to town for audiences with glorified hokum, he can do it.

"Glorified hokum"—that's what the picture is—and we mean nothing but praise by the use of the phrase. A straight action yarn is given dignity—glorification—by a theme that touches on that certain portion of time when the stage coach era and the steam engine met in mortal combat. There is present another theme tempting greater expansion—the underground smuggling days of the slave period. There is

the authentic MGM production that enhances any subject, and is forcefully present in a period picture such as this.

But with it all, neither producer, director or writers at any time place a chip on their shoulders by telling you they are making some sort of "epic." The dignified trappings become background, and gain in strength by that; the story and the characters are in the foreground. It is all good "motion picture."

Robert Taylor's fans will be well pleased with his work in the romantic lead; Wallace Beery's likewise. The picture also marks the definite "jumping of the hurdle" stage in the career of Florence Rice. This part does not make the exacting demands that some of her less important roles have made, but it puts her in the spotlight. And she comes through, and in a he-man story in a way that will be talked of. So mark the Rice gal down for one of Leo's real build-ups for 1939.

In support, Helen Broderick, as a New England aunt in a Southern atmosphere, proves that she has reached the point where almost anything she says is funny to an audience even before she has opened her mouth. Clinton Rosemond, that really remarkable negro actor who has seemingly been forgotten since LeRoy spotted his ability in "They Won't Forget," turns in a heart-wrenching performance as a slave. Solidly safe troupers such as Charles Bickford, Charles Grapewine, John Qualen,

Robert Gleckler and Cy Kendall round out the support.

The story transpires in Maryland—when Maryland was a frontier where two battles were waged, the slavery struggle, and the coming grapple of the railroad versus the horse. Taylor, son of the gentlefolk South and Beery, hard-bitten boss of the coach line are the antagonists, with the upsetting element supplied by Florence Rice as Boston-born owner of the stage line. There's enough romance and love and not too much; enough of saloon brawling and man-eat-man battle in snow drifts, and not too much; there is comedy along the route.

The scripting trio—James H. Cain, Jane Murfin, and Harvey Ferguson—do a fine job. It is adult dialogue and treatment in Buffalo Bill surroundings.

Van Dyke handles the elements in his usual forthright way, without any too creditable an attempt at finesse, subtleties, or details. LeRoy set out to give them a box office knockout to balance against some recent artistic triumphs, and landed his punch. Socko!

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "There's no doubt about it, Mervyn LeRoy has got one Grade A piece of entertainment, which for production and entertainment spells box office in gold."

VARIETY: "Melodrama running from the extreme of burlesque comedy to stark tragedy puts Wallace Beery and Robert Taylor through their paces in a severe test of versatility. 'Stand Up And Fight' has story enough for several pictures."

"They Made Me a Criminal" Fine

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 90 %)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
 Associate Producer Benjamin Glazer
 Director Busby Berkeley
 Screenplay Sig Herzig
 Original Bertram Millhauser,
 Beulah Marie Dix

Featured: John Garfield, Claude Rains, Ann Sheridan, May Robson, Billy Halop, Bobby Jordan, Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, Gabriel Dell, Bernard Punsley, Gloria Dickson, Robert Gleckler, John Ridgely, Barbara Pepper, William Davidson, Ward Bond, Robert Strange, Louis Jean Heydt, Frank Riggi, Cliff Clarke, Dick Wessel, Raymond Brown, Sam Hayes.

Photographer James Wong Howe
 Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
 Art Director Anton Grot
 Film Editor Jack Killifer
 Time 89 Minutes

John Garfield can be moved definitely into the star bracket after "They Made Me a Criminal" gets its play in the country's theaters.

The boy tops all the promise of "Four Daughters" so Warners starts the New Year with another arrow in the bow.

That element aside, it can also be reported that "They Made Me a Criminal" is a corking good entertainment on its own. It has the Dead End Kids at their deadliest best, and this group will never tire if they continue to get the careful handling Warner gives them in this one. It has Gloria Dickson as the heart interest registering consistent development in

her career, May Robson for some human chuckles, and Claude Rains for a top notch performance.

And it has the Warner approach to any subject concerned with the near-underworld. Which means it has the slightly cockeyed moral twists—but who cares, if the story moves, and moves in a succession of well chosen scenes.

Garfield is seen as a prize fighter who on the evening of winning the championship, also becomes embroiled in a brawl that ends with him innocently accused of murder, and a fugitive from justice. There is the flight, haven at a California date ranch operated by May Robson and her daughter, abode also of the Dead End Kids, consigned from New York slums for regeneration purposes. There is a deceased priest patron of the ranch-reformatory, frequently mentioned and cutely present

in wall photographs to give it the proper Warner touch of appealing to all.

The story becomes one of regeneration, with the ever present menace in the long arm of Claude Rains, metropolitan detective. Of course Garfield makes the proper sacrifice by allowing his identity to become known while fighting to save the ranch, but a satisfyingly happy ending saves him from a return to prison. It varies little from the original version which presented Doug Fairbanks, Jr.

The outline does not do justice to the personality factors present in Garfield and the Dead End Kids, to the finely tooled scripting job that balances its laughs, thrills, and paces all with true Warner technique. The picture gives Benjamin Glazer a corking bow-out on his Warner associate producer deal.

Title may mislead in its suggestion of a ponderous theme, but don't be fooled. It's just good "movin' pitcher." Highlight is a thrill scene which shows Garfield and the kids in danger of drowning in a huge water tank—a situation someone was clever enough to lift from a recent Warner Floyd Gibbons short. It's a real thriller—you'll hold your breath.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Another arresting title, but this time a picture to go along with it that's a natural for entertainment that packs a wallop. Play it with the greatest of ease."

VARIETY: " 'They Made Me A Criminal' is an effective showcasing for Warners new star, John Garfield, who turns in a splendid account of his talents and possibilities for roles of dramatic vigor."

The Digest

publishes the only
AUTHENTIC
 box office figures

"Topper Takes a Trip" Good Fun

HAL ROACH-UNITED ARTISTS
(EST. 100 %)

Producer Milton Bren
Director Norman Z. MacLeod
Screenplay Jack Jevne,
Eddie Moran, Corey Ford
Original Thorne Smith
Stars Constance Bennett, Roland Young
Featured: Billie Burke, Alan Mowbray, Verree
Teasdale, Franklin Pangborn, Alexander
D'Arcy, Paul Hurst, Armand Kaliz, Eddy
Conrad, Spencer Charters, Irving Pichel,
Leon Belasco, Georges Renavent, Skippy.
Photographer Norbert Brodine
Photographic Effects Roy Seawright
Musical Score Edward Powell,
Hugo Friedhofer
Art Director Charles D. Hall
Film Editor William Terhune
Time 78 Minutes

It is fortunate that Norman McLeod's directorial skill was on the job to keep "Topper Takes a Trip" bubbling and frothy, because the creators of the story didn't supply any sustenance to speak of. As it is, McLeod's skill, plus the ever-effective photographic tricks, pumps a plentitude of laughs into the footage and the evening ends in general satisfaction.

Opening footage from the original "Topper" hit is used to establish the unique basis of the

"Topper" yarn, and we see Carey Grant and Constance Bennett at the time of their motor crash, and their introduction into the ghostly land from which they cannot escape until they have performed a good deed. It seems that Connie's previous good deed has backfired, and Topper Roland Young and the Missus, Billie Burke, are now in court with the latter seeking a divorce. Grant fades out of the action for some mysterious reason and it is left for Connie to carry on alone.

She first succeeds in messing up the divorce attempt in America, but faces a new problem when Billie Burke, prodded by her catty pal, Verree Teasdale, journeys to France for the unhitching. Connie forces Young to follow, and on the Riviera the complications pile up with a mercenary Baron in the center of the action. All ends happily, with Miss Bennett evidently free from her thralldom at the finish and on the way to her reward.

McLeod doesn't miss a trick in his handling of the individual scenes, with the result that the laughs are frequent. He couldn't afford to slight a foot of film with this tissue thin and starkly unoriginal yarn. The director's

best support comes from the trick camera effects and the playing of Roland Young and Billie Burke, the latter in particular, with every line a sure laugh-getter. Miss Bennett is present in a nonchalantly satisfying manner, with Franklyn Pangborn, Paul Hurst and Alan Mowbray getting their share of laughs. Alexander D'Arcy turns in an atrociously stiff job as the intriguing baron—or maybe it was his banal lines that threw him for a loss.

The picture should do well at the box office and give general satisfaction, without, naturally, having the surprise novelty appeal of the initial "Topper" to give it healthier rating.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Repeat mechanical nonsense from your old friend 'Topper.'" Billie Burke grabs all the honors, and, for those who enjoyed the first of this duo, there's plenty of the same kind of trick comedy. Next year, however, there will have to be new fun for 'Topper' to garner the right amount of laughs."

VARIETY: "Relying wholly upon novelty in photographic effects, 'Topper Takes a Trip' through its first reels amuses as a whimsical farce, then wears thin toward the end as the slight story proves insufficient to hold up the initial interest and suspense."

"Whispering Enemies" Jack Holt's Best

DARMOUR-COLUMBIA
(EST. 80%)

Producer Larry Darmour
Director Lewis D. Collins
Screenplay Gordon Rigby, Tom Kilpatrick
Original John Rawlins, Harold Tarshis
Star Jack Holt
Featured: Dolores Costello, Addison Richards,
Joseph Crehan, Donald Briggs, Pert Kel-
ton, Paul Everton.
Photographer James S. Brown, Jr.
Film Editor Dwight Campbell
Time 62 Minutes

Larry Darmour continues to turn out a grade of entertainment in this Jack Holt series for Columbia release that maintains that star's definite rating at the box office. In "Whispering Enemies" he has a picture that will stand up in any man's entertainment league.

Darmour spotted a story by John Rawlins and Harold Tarshis with a refreshing angle on the racketeer yarn—that of the damage done by whispering campaigns—secured a neatly constructed script from Gordon Rigby and Tom Kilpatrick, and gave it into capable hands for direction.

Director Lewis Collins' chief virtue in direction is in keeping his tale moving forward at all times, and his melodramatics crisply legitimate. Choice of photographic angles and other touches are also a help.

The story is hand-tailored for Jack Holt, who is forced into bankruptcy by a whispering campaign on the part of rivals which is nothing less than a kid glove racket that cannot be touched by the authorities. Holt fights

back, only to land into new troubles that finally bring him to prison. Dolores Costello, decidedly welcome in the female lead, is involved in the action and present for the happy ending.

There have been some good Jack Holt pictures in the past year's roster, and this ranks with the best of them. There will be many to consider it the best.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Whispering Enemies' is a sound candidate for top dual billing in spots which like Jack Holt, and suggests strongly that with class A names and budget it would be a money-maker in that division."

VARIETY: "Story material bearing air of freshness, good performances and steady direction go to make 'Whispering Enemies' one of the best Jack Holt starrers Larry Darmour has yet turned out."

"Tough Kid" Okay Mono Actioner

MONOGRAM
(EST. 70%)

Associate Producer Lindsley Parsons
Director Howard Bretherton
Screenplay Wellyn Totman
Original Brenda Weisberg
Star Frankie Darro
Featured: Dick Purcell, Judith Allen, Lillian
Elliott, Don Rowan, William Ruhl, Lew
Kelly, Ralph Peters, Max Marx, Jean Joyce
Wilbur Mack, Joe Lynch, Cliff Howell.
Photographer Harry Neumann
Film Editor Russell Schoengarth
Time 60 Minutes

Associate producer Lindsay Parsons tailor-made this Frankie Darro picture for Monogram customers, and in its budget classification the picture will do more than stand up for general entertainment. It will be one of the "good buys" of the year's list.

Story weaves all the elements we expect now in these various versions—each company

seems to have its own—of the Dead End inspiration, with a dash of "Boy of the Streets," mother love, and what have you. The blend has been capably scripted, and moves at all times under Howard Bretherton's direction.

Frankie Darro is seen as the kid brother of Dick Purcell, a prize fighter who has come under the wing of a wily manager willing to make a dishonest dollar from both ends of the racket. Young Frankie is caught between gangs of crooks and almost thrown for a loss when Dick is forced to agree to throw a fight in order to get money for sweetie Judith Allen, who needs medical care.

It is all told in fast-moving action, with suspense elements well handled to keep the interest alive to the final scene. The producers give an intelligent twist to the end in which Purcell does lose the crucial fight, but with Frankie on the job all comes to a happy con-

clusion.

Picture has been capably cast, with Frankie Darro carrying the burden, but with Dick Purcell scoring effectively as the prize-fighting brother. Miss Allen's opportunities are limited in this juvenile-male appeal type of subject, but she comes through creditably. Director Bretherton and Scriptor Totman, as noted above, delivered well on their assignments.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Monogram's 'Tough Kid' turns out to be an exciting melodrama that should fare well in the niche for which it is intended. The picture packs a wallop in its fight."

VARIETY: "Sure-fire entertainment for the neighborhoods is offered in second of the Frankie Darro starrers for Monogram. A family picture sure to please, 'Tough Kid,' contains all the elements needed to satisfy the cash customers."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Alexander's Ractime Band.....	FOX.....	227
Snow White.....	RKO.....	219
Test Pilot.....	MGM.....	187
In Old Chicago.....	FOX.....	181
Boys Town.....	MGM.....	174
Adventures of Robin Hood.....	WAR.....	170
You Can't Take It With You.....	COL.....	164
Marie Antoinette.....	MGM.....	153
Happy Landings.....	FOX.....	152
Sweethearts.....	MGM.....	152
Too Hot To Handle.....	MGM.....	146
That Certain Age.....	UNIV.....	146
Angels With Dirty Faces.....	WAR.....	143
Mad About Music.....	UNIV.....	140
Girl of the Golden West.....	MGM.....	139
Cowboy And The Lady.....	U.A.....	138
Bluebeard's 8th Wife.....	PAR.....	137
The Buccaneer.....	PAR.....	137
Suez.....	FOX.....	133
The Crowd Rears.....	MGM.....	132
Artists And Models Abroad.....	PAR.....	132
A Yank at Oxford.....	MGM.....	130
Dawn Patrol.....	WAR.....	129
Jezebel.....	WAR.....	126
My Lucky Star.....	FOX.....	125
If I Were King.....	PAR.....	123
Men With Wings.....	PAR.....	122
Carefree.....	RKO.....	122
Trade Winds.....	U.A.....	121
Three Loves Has Nancy.....	MGM.....	120
Sing You Sinners.....	PAR.....	119
Adventures Of Tom Sawyer.....	PAR.....	119
Mannequin.....	MGM.....	119
Adventures of Marco Polo.....	U.A.....	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook.....	FOX.....	118
Algiers.....	U.A.....	118
The Goldwyn Follies.....	U.A.....	118
The Citadel.....	MGM.....	117
Vivacious Lady.....	RKO.....	117
Bringing Up Baby.....	RKO.....	117
Spawn of the North.....	PAR.....	115
Three Comrades.....	MGM.....	115
The Sisters.....	WAR.....	112
Little Miss Broadway.....	FOX.....	111
The Sisters.....	WAR.....	111
Hollywood Hotel.....	WAR.....	109
Room Service.....	RKO.....	108
Kentucky Moonshine.....	FOX.....	108
Joy of Living.....	RKO.....	108
Sally, Irene and Mary.....	FOX.....	105
Tropic Holiday.....	PAR.....	105
Three Blind Mice.....	FOX.....	103
Dr. Rhythm.....	PAR.....	103
Gold Is Where You Find It.....	WAR.....	103
The Great Walkz.....	MGM.....	103
Thanks For Everything.....	FOX.....	102
Letter Of Introduction.....	UNIV.....	102
Having Wonderful Time.....	RKO.....	102
Boy Meets Girl.....	WAR.....	102
Baroness and the Butler.....	FOX.....	101
The Rags of Paris.....	UNIV.....	101
The Shipping Hour.....	MGM.....	100
Drums.....	U.A.....	100
Submarine Patrol.....	FOX.....	100
Big Broadcast of 1938.....	PAR.....	99
The Young In Heart.....	U.A.....	98
Four's A Crowd.....	WAR.....	98
Arkansas Traveler.....	PAR.....	97
Boy Meets Girl.....	WAR.....	96
Every Day's a Holiday.....	PAR.....	96
Merrily We Live.....	MGM.....	95
Holiday.....	COL.....	94
Her Jungle Love.....	PAR.....	94
The Texans.....	PAR.....	94
College Swing.....	PAR.....	93
Josette.....	FOX.....	93
Blockade.....	U.A.....	93
Always Goodbye.....	FOX.....	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Out West With the Hardys.....	MGM.....	141
Stablenmates.....	MGM.....	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy.....	MGM.....	131
Bad Man of Brimstone.....	MGM.....	130
Brother Rat.....	WAR.....	124
Four Daughters.....	WAR.....	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse.....	WAR.....	113
A Slight Case of Murder.....	WAR.....	112
I Am The Law.....	COL.....	103
Straight, Place And Show.....	FOX.....	98
Duke of West Point.....	U.A.....	95
Port of Seven Seas.....	MGM.....	95
Judge Hardy's Children.....	MGM.....	95
Valley Of The Giants.....	WAR.....	94
Four Men and a Prayer.....	FOX.....	93
Shopworn Angel.....	MGM.....	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn.....	WAR.....	93
Lord Jeff.....	MGM.....	92
Hard To Get.....	WAR.....	91
Hold That Co-Ed.....	FOX.....	90

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

The Birth Of A Baby.....IND.....167

Crime School.....WAR...105
Blondie.....COL.....101

Little Tough Guy.....UNIV... 86
King Of Alcatraz.....PAR... 83
Christmas Carol.....MGM... 82
Smashing The Rackets.....RKO... 82
Saint in New York.....RKO... 81
Girls on Probation.....WAR... 80
Sky Giant.....RKO... 80

There's Always a Woman	COL	87	Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
Everybody Sing	MGM	87	Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	85	Tip Off Girls	PAR	78
I'll Give A Million	FOX	84	City Girl	FOX	78
Yellow Jack	MGM	81	Condemned Woman	RKO	78
White Banners	WAR	81	Change of Heart	FOX	78
Listen Darling	MGM	83	Little Tough Guys in Society	UNIV	78
Racket Busters	WAR	83	Touchdown Army	PAR	78
Mother Carey's Chickens	RKO	83	Time Out For Murder	FOX	77
Fenitentiary	COL	82	No Time to Marry	COL	77
Hold That Kiss	MGM	82	Girls School	COL	75
Give Me A Sailor	PAR	82	Always In Trouble	FOX	77
Rascals	FOX	81	Scandal Street	PAR	77
Garden of the North	WAR	81	Double Danger	RKO	77
The Gladiator	COL	80	Crashing Hollywood	FOX	77
Wide Open Faces	COL	80	Sharpshooters	FOX	77
Checkers	FOX	80	Blondes at Work	WAR	76
Paradise for Three	MGM	80	He Couldn't Say No	WAR	76
Gateway	FOX	80	Torchy Blane Gets Her Man	UNIV	76
You and Me	PAR	80	Affairs Of Annabelle	RKO	76
Woman Against Woman	MGM	80	Smashing The Spy Ring	COL	76
			Women in Prison	COL	76
			Bulldog Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
			Illegal Traffic	PAR	75
			Youth Takes A Fling	UNIV	75
			Speed to Burn	FOX	74
			Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
			Blind Alibi	RKO	74
			Over the Wall	WAR	74
			Dangerous to Know	PAR	74
			Island in the Sky	FOX	74
			Beloved Brat	WAR	74
			Broadway Musketiers	WAR	74
			Prison Farm	PAR	74
			Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	74
			Prison Break	UNIV	73
			One Wild Night	FOX	73
			Mr. Moto's Gamble	FOX	73
			Love on a Budget	FOX	73
			Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
			Prescription for Romance	UNIV	72
			Swing That Cheer	UNIV	72
			Down On The Farm	FOX	72
			The Lady Objects	COL	72
			Boofoo	PAR	72
			Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	72
			Torchy Blane in Panama	WAR	72
			Little Miss Roughneck	COL	72
			Midnight Intruder	UNIV	72
			International Settlement	FOX	72
			Passport Husband	FOX	72
			Next Time I Marry	RKO	71
			The Kid Comes Back	WAR	71
			Go Chase Yourself	RKO	71
			The Patient in Room 18	WAR	71
			Everybody's Doing It	FOX	71
			Mr. Moto's Chance	FOX	71
			Bulldog Drummond In Africa	PAR	71
			East Company	MGM	71
			The Black Doll	UNIV	71
			Annabelle Takes A Tour	RKO	70
			His Exciting Night	UNIV	70
			Exposed	UNIV	70
			Tarnished Angel	RKO	70
			I'm From the City	WAR	70
			Dare Devil Drivers	WAR	70
			Hunted Men	PAR	70
			Campus Confessions	PAR	70
			Nurse From Brooklyn	UNIV	70
			Young Fugitives	UNIV	70
			Night Spot	RKO	70
			Simmers in Paradise	UNIV	70
			Safety in Numbers	FOX	70
			Mr. Doodle Kicks Off	RKO	70
			Freshman Year	UNIV	69
			The Chaser	MGM	69
			Lone Wolf in Paris	COL	69
			Meet the Girls	FOX	68
			Swing, Sister, Swing	UNIV	68
			The Devils Party	UNIV	68
			Peek's Bad Boy at Circus	RKO	68
			The Crime of Dr. Hallett	UNIV	68
			The Jury's Secret	UNIV	68
			Love, Honor and Behave	WAR	68
			She Loved a Fireman	WAR	68
			Glamorous Night	REP	68
			Sons of the Legion	PAR	68
			When Were You Born?	WAR	67
			Wives Under Suspicion	UNIV	67
			Men Are Such Fools	WAR	67
			Little Orphan Annie	PAR	66
			Vacation From Love	MGM	66
			Personal Secretary	UNIV	66
			Road Demon	FOX	65
			Men With 100 Faces	G.B.	65
			Sez O'Reilly to McNabb	G.B.	61
			Three On A Weekend	G.B.	61
			Strange Boarders	G.B.	61
			To the Victor	G.B.	59
			Dark Sands	B. I. P.	58
			Crime Over London	G.B.	58

Professor Beware	PAR	84	Storm Over Bengal	REP	79
Kidnapped	FOX	84	Crime Takes A Holiday	COL	79
Radio City Revels	RKO	83	Tenth Avenue Kid	REP	78
			Call of the Yukon	REP	78
			Making the Headlines	COL	78
			Reformatory	COL	78
			Juvenile Court	COL	78
			Down In Arkansas	REP	78
			Mr. Wons, Detective	MONO	78
			King of the Newsboys	REP	77
			Flight Into Nowhere	COL	77
			City Streets	COL	76
			The Wrong Road	REP	76
			Serjeant Murphy	WAR	76
			The Spy Ring	UNIV	76
			Prison Nurse	REP	76
			Outside of Paradise	REP	75
			Lady Behave	REP	74
			Mama Rains Wild	REP	74
			The Higgins Family	REP	74
			Peetrod's Twin Brother	WAR	73
			Peetrod's Double Trouble	WAR	73
			Little Miss Thoroughbred	WAR	73
			Escape by Night	REP	72
			Juvenile Courts	COL	72
			Flight to Fame	COL	72
			Cyrene Ring	RKO	72
			Hollywood Stadium Mystery	REP	72
			Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	72
			Romance of the Limberlost	MONO	72
			I Stand Accused	REP	71
			The Missing Guest	UNIV	71
			Blonde Cheat	RKO	71
			Marriage Forbidden	G.N.	71
			The Duke Comes Back	REP	71
			Exiled to Shanghai	REP	71
			When G-Men Step In	COL	71
			Arson Gang Busters	REP	71
			Come On Leathernecks	REP	71
			Delinquent Parents	IND	70
			Little Adventurer	COL	70
			Adventure In Sahara	COL	69
			Telephone Operator	MONO	69
			Invisible Enemy	REP	69
			Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
			A Man To Remember	RKO	68
			Last Express	UNIV	68
			Rose Of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
			Last Warning	UNIV	68
			Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
			Woman Against the World	COL	68
			Numbered Women	MONO	67
			Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
			Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	67
			Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
			Under the Big Top	MONO	66
			Mr. Chump	WAR	66
			Fugitives For A Night	RKO	66
			Saleslady	MONO	66
			Ladies in Distress	REP	65
			Convicted	COL	65
			Reckless Living	UNIV	65
			Romance on the Run	REP	65
			The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
			Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
			Mystery House	WAR	64
			Lady in the Morgue	UNIV	64
			My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	63
			Maid's Night Out	RKO	63
			This Marriage Business	RKO	63
			Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
			Main Event	COL	63
			Highway Patrol	COL	63
			Cipher Bureau	G.N.	61
			International Crime	G.N.	60
			Born to Be Wild	REP	59

Up the River	FOX	76	Thanks for the Memory	PAR	76
Swiss Miss	MGM	76	I Met My Love Again	U. A.	76
Army Girl	REP	76	Blackheads	MGM	76
Comet Over Broadway	WAR	76			
Keep Smiling	FOX	75			
Arsene Lupin Returns	MGM	75			
First 100 Years	MGM	75			
Love Is a Headache	MGM	74			
Battle of Broadway	FOX	74			
Secrets Of An Actress	WAR	74			
The Storm	UNIV	74			
Say It In French	PAR	74			
Service Deluxe	UNIV	73			
Spring Madness	MGM	73			
Stolen Heaven	PAR	73			
Rich Man, Poor Girl	MGM	72			
Hawaii Calls	RKO	72			
Goodbye Broadway	UNIV	72			
Start Cheering	COL	72			
My Bill	WAR	71			
Women Are Like That	WAR	71			
Sailing Along	G. B.	70			
Action For Slander	U. A.	61			
Gaiety Girls	U. A.	62			
Storm in a Teacup	U. A.	61			
The Rat	RKO	61			
Romance in the Dark	PAR	60			
Look Out For Love	G. B.	62			
The Girl Was Young	G. B.	46			
Return of Scarlet Pimpernel	U. A.	44			

There's Always a Woman	COL	87	Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
Everybody Sing	MGM	87	Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	85	Tip Off Girls	PAR	78
I'll Give A Million	FOX	84	City Girl	FOX	78
Yellow Jack	MGM	81	Condemned Woman	RKO	78
White Banners	WAR	81	Change of Heart	FOX	78
Listen Darling	MGM	83	Little Tough Guys in Society	UNIV	78
Racket Busters	WAR	83	Touchdown Army	PAR	78
Mother Carey's Chickens	RKO	83	Time Out For Murder	FOX	77
Fenitentiary	COL	82	No Time to Marry	COL	77
Hold That Kiss	MGM	82	Girls School	COL	75
Give Me A Sailor	PAR	82	Always In Trouble	FOX	77
Rascals	FOX	81	Scandal Street	PAR	77
Garden of the North	WAR	81	Double Danger	RKO	77
The Gladiator	COL	80	Crashing Hollywood	FOX	77
Wide Open Faces	COL	80	Sharpshooters	FOX	77
Checkers	FOX	80	Blondes at Work	WAR	76
Paradise for Three	MGM	80	He Couldn't Say No	WAR	76
Gateway	FOX	80	Torchy Blane Gets Her Man	UNIV	76
You and Me	PAR	80	Affairs Of Annabelle	RKO	76
Woman Against Woman	MGM	80	Smashing The Spy Ring	COL	76
			Women in Prison	COL	76
			Bulldog Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
			Illegal Traffic	PAR	75
			Youth Takes A Fling	UNIV	75
			Speed to Burn	FOX	74
			Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
			Blind Alibi	RKO	74
			Over the Wall	WAR	74
			Dangerous to Know	PAR	74
			Island in the Sky	FOX	74
			Beloved Brat	WAR	74
			Broadway Musketiers	WAR	74
			Prison Farm	PAR	74
			Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	74
			Prison Break	UNIV	73
			One Wild Night	FOX	73
			Mr. Moto's Gamble	FOX	73
			Love on a Budget	FOX	73
			Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
			Prescription for Romance	UNIV	72
			Swing That Cheer	UNIV	72
			Down On The Farm	FOX	72
			The Lady Objects	COL	

The TOP 10

The LOW 50

The ?

- § Now is the season for polls, questionnaires, and contests—
- § The Ten Top Stars, the Ten Best This, and Ten Best That—
- § Some say this—some say that.
- § **BUT ONLY THE BOX OFFICE TELLS THE TRUTH!**
- § And the only completely authentic complication of box office figures appears in **NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST**.
- § The 1939 edition of the **BOX OFFICE ANNUAL** is now in preparation. It will be published late in January.
- § Copies are \$5 to non-subscribers; subscribers to **National Box Office Digest** receive the **ANNUAL** free.
- § Make your reservation now. Last year's **BOX OFFICE ANNUAL** was a complete sell-out. We do not print a surplus of copies.

Only The National Box Office Digest Tells the Truth

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HOLLYWOOD, - CALIFORNIA

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 7. No. 24

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 17, 1939

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$10

PARAMOUNT TOPS THE WEEK WITH "ZAZA" AND "PARIS HONEYMOON"

*Of Six New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%;
and Three Came Thru Okay.*

By **NORMAN WEBB**

Paramount—2 New Releases

Paramount has come thru the first week of 1939 with flashing colors, with two big box office attractions—"ZAZA" being tops at 130%, and "PARIS HONEYMOON" close behind at 127%.

Claudette Colbert's latest Paramount release, "ZAZA," opened up around New Years in several key locations, and is clicking very well at 130% average. Exhibitors will undoubtedly remember that "ZAZA" has been filmed twice before in the past twenty years, once starring the late Pauline Fredericks, and the other version starring Gloria Swanson. Of course the latest version with Claudette Colbert starred, has been modernized considerably, and with Miss Colbert's box office strength will take on new appeal.

Seen opposite Miss Colbert is Herbert Marshall, and among the important featured players are Bert Lahr, Helen Westley, Constance Collier and Genevieve Tobin. Albert Lewin was associate producer and George Cukor directed.

Paramount's second release this week, "PARIS HONEYMOON," 127%, is doing almost as well as "ZAZA" on its first few bookings. "PARIS HONEYMOON" is the newest Bing Crosby vehicle. Franciska Gaal is Bing's new leading lady, and among the important supporting players are Akim Tamiroff, Shirley Ross, Edward Everett Horton, and Ben Blue.

Harlan Thompson was associate producer, and Frank Tuttle, who directed Bing's biggest b. o. picture to date, "WAIKIKI WEDDING," also directed this one.

U. A.—1 New Release

United Artists Corporation have started off the New

Year with an apparent box office winner in Hal Roach's latest production, "TOPPER TAKES A TRIP," which of course is a sequel to his famous "TOPPER" of some eight or nine months ago. While there haven't been enough bookings so far, for us to get an accurate check on this picture, the first dope we have received indicates that this one is running around 111%.

The cast is practically the same as in the last "TOPPER," with the exception that Cary Grant is missing, which may or may not have its box office effects. Roland Young is again seen as Topper, with Billie Burke as his wife, and the other players are Constance Bennett, Alan Mowbray, and Franklin Pangborn. Like the original "TOPPER," "TOPPER TAKES A TRIP" was also produced under Milton Bren's supervision, with Norman McLeod handling the direction.

R.K.O.—1 New Release

R.K.O. starts the New Year off with "PACIFIC LINER," 84%, as their first release. This picture could almost be classified as an action picture, as most of the scenes take place in the boiler room on a big passenger steamer. With Victor McLaglen and Chester Morris co-starred, it is more or less of a man's picture; although with Wendy Barrie added for the romantic interest, it also has some feminine appeal. Alan Hale, Barry Fitzgerald, and Allan Lane complete the featured cast.

Bob Sisk supervised production for the Lee Marcus unit, with Lew Landers handling the direction. John Twist wrote the very realistic screenplay.

Warners—Also

1 New Release

Warner Brothers' program unit, under Bryan Foy, has

(Continued on Page 5)

6 New Releases Not in Last Issue

3 Over 100%—3 O. K.

			% We Est.
1.	Zaza PAR.....	130.....	125
2.	Paris Honeymoon..... PAR.....	127.....	120
3.	Topper Takes a Trip..... U.A.....	111.....	100
4.	Pacific Liner..... RKO.....	84.....	85
5.	King of the Underworld..... WAR.....	84.....	85
6.	Charlie Chan in Honolulu..... FOX.....	82.....	80

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ *"Honor Box"* ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With

"ZAZA" - 130%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production
WILLIAM LE BARON



Producer
ALBERT LEWIN



Director
GEORGE CUKOR



CLAUDETTE COLBERT

•
Screenplay
ZOE AKINS

From the Play by
PIERRE BERTON—CHARLES SIMON

Photographer
CHARLES LANG, JR.

Music and Lyrics
**FREDERICK HOLLANDER
FRANK LOESSER**

Film Editor
EDWARD DMYTRYK

Featured
**CONSTANCE COLLIER
GENEVIEVE TOBIN
WALTER CATLETT
ANN TODD
REX O'MALLEY
ERNEST COSSART**



HERBERT MARSHALL



BERT LAHR



HELEN WESTLEY

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

THERE'S NO TIME TO SELL

One of the favorite "means of escape" when pondering current hazardous grosses in this industry is to bemoan the lack of showmanship of the old time variety displayed by our exhibitors.

It is always a convenient and easily shrugged off alibi: "If we only had live-wire exploitation—stunts, teaser campaigns, enticing lobby displays—like the good old days, we would be cleaning up on the marvelous super-super epics we are producing today."

Coincident with the expression of that tongue-rolling dictum, there is always the unspoken thought that the exhibitor to be blamed is the independent one, a mythical unattached theater owner scattered throughout the country.

The fellow whose cash is very acceptable when you are taking it in, but who in some hill-billy, backward way is holding back this grand and glorious industry from stupendous rewards.

Of course—oh, of course—the vast first-run-controlling chains of the producers themselves can't be at fault. Of course not, haven't they the benefit of master-mind direction from behind home office desks?

Let's look into the situation.

* * * *

First of all, a glance at the pages of those excellent service publications, Motion Picture Herald and Showman's Trade Review, any week will make clear that if there is any live exploitation and selling of the product to the ultimate consumer in this industry it is being done by independents and semi-independents.

Second, that the unlucky manager for a chain is pretty fortunate if he has time to check the cans of celluloid in and out from the delivery service without getting time to exploit a current picture.

He has those home office reports to make on the condition of the ushers' uniforms and the progress of their pyorrhea, he has that \$3.98 item for extra exploitation when he luncheoned the local chief of police to squeeze by on the report as "advertising;" he is morally

certain that the home office expects him to explain his share of blame for the fact that it rained last week.

Third, that—aside from the live-wire independent theater man—the only actual selling of pictures to the customer across the box office slab that is being done is by the volume pressure of the studio exploitation departments' advance work, and the concentration of that pressure as release time nears by the producer's home office.

The first run gets protection and all the safeguards that would encompass the national mint—it is delivering little "quid pro quo" in the form of advance selling for the subsequent run.

And the first runs in key spots are pretty well "producer controlled."

But is the zone manager of producer controlled theaters, or his individual theater aides, to blame for this condition?

No—he is also the victim of a system. He suffers from a sort of pump-priming which results in the desire, anytime a picture looks like an anyway possible satisfier, to RUSH IT OUT—GET THE QUICK AND EASY MONEY.

"Why bother with advance selling, grab the cream off those one week first run engagements, rush it to the subsequents for their cash, pile up a figure on the books in six months. What does it matter if we could have got two or three hundred thousand extra out of the picture by proper MERCHANDISING? We never see anything but today's cash balance and tomorrow's 'maybes'."

Witness the situation on "Son of Frankenstein." We'll wager a bet that the neighborhood theater man in Los Angeles who dug up some eight year old negatives to revive the horror cycle made more money in proportion to overhead investments than the local top-price first runs will show on a brand new, superbly produced "Frankenstein."

Why? Well—he SOLD his bill of goods; first runs are organized to do no more than ANNOUNCE theirs.

Selling, and announcing—there's a difference.

Too much of our first run theater operation today is little more than announcing.

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

			%
1.	M. G. M.	45 Releases	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	51 Releases	92
3.	United Artists	17 Releases	92
4.	Paramount	40 Releases	88
5.	Warner Brothers	53 Releases	87
6.	R. K. O.	39 Releases	83
7.	Columbia	33 Releases	80
8.	Universal	39 Releases	77
9.	Republic	25 Releases	73
10.	Monogram	14 Releases	69
11.	Grand National	5 Releases	66
12.	Gaumont British	10 Releases	59

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

The News at a Glance

Well, at least you can't criticise David Selznick for lack of courage. What a burden that young man has taken on his shoulders. There was no "following the line of least resistance" in choosing a comparatively unknown British girl to portray the much discussed Scarlett O'Hara. Now the Vivian Leigh person will have to be good. Definitely good. Because even a moderately successful performance will not save David from an avalanche of criticism from some source. London will praise, while Atlanta growls. The critics may rave, while the public finds its faults. It's a tough spot to be on. So we repeat—David Selznick is not lacking in any units of courage.

Random Thoughts for a Random Week

So little real headline news to dignify with Highlight mention that perhaps we can be forgiven a few inches of stray thoughts on things in general. For instance: It's our humble thought that something will have to be done about this Tyrone Power problem. Ty's Jesse James is just the same fellow who built the Suez Canal. And Ty's fellow who built the Suez Canal was two other guys. There's no kidding about this, despite the sensational grosses that "Jesse James" will roll up. Zanuck showmanship is doing that. But Ty just can't go on through all the characters of history with that one soulful look to the left of the camera. We can't put all the burden on Zanuck wet-nursing . . . Still on random thoughts: Is it going to take a punch on the nose before producers awake to the fact that audiences of ordinary human beings are being fed up with tough kids? The Legion of Decency saved this industry millions of dollars by sterilizing its worst minds, but the Legion can't do an Emily Post job. And it is going to get pretty obnoxious to Mr. and Mrs. America to leave their dinner table with daughter and son and every evening encounter a glorification of what we—in our days beyond recall—termed, "snotty-nosed kids." . . . And while we are on the subject of good taste, and what-have-you, we have a private note to Joe Breen. D'ya remember, Joe, when we once spent the better part of a week getting an okay from your office for a scene in one of our pictures in which Bob Armstrong, as an American doughboy, took a couple of drinks? Have you seen the last year's pictures, Joe? Hell, in too many of them our heavies have to get the DT's and our daintiest heroines the jitters before the first laugh comes . . . Oh, well, everything we have said is solely in the cause of preventive medicine for ailing box offices. And preventive medicine is the stylish thing these days.

Rambling Is Good--- Let's Keep It Up

Still rambling, since news is so scarce, we are impressed with the sudden discovery of heart interest the daily papers could find in

8 FEATURES "GOING UP"

	Was	Now
1. <i>Sweethearts</i>	MGM...148	163
2. <i>Dawn Patrol</i>	WAR...130	135
3. <i>Blondie</i>	COL...100	104
4. <i>Going Places</i>	WAR...84	86
5. <i>Smashing the Spy Ring</i>	COL...78	80
6. <i>Tom Sawyer, Detective</i>	PAR...76	80
7. <i>Annabelle Takes a Tour</i>	RKO...72	74
8. <i>Adventure in Sahara</i>	COL...70	73

the passing of Harry Burns, and depressed by the lack of prominent names that the most searching of said heart interest reporters could link with their story. We would hate to present a question tomorrow to some of our near-big-shots and ask them: "Are you ready to meet Harry tomorrow over in that valley from which there is no returning?" On the other hand, we also know a number of big shots who can fill our fingers being numbered, who could walk up to Harry Burns in that Process-Shot-Land and say with a smile, "Hello, Harry, how are things?" . . . While we are still wandering in thoughts, may we recall the readers' interest to what looks like another smart move on the part of a greatly underrated picture figure, Harry Cohn. Harry, we read, is closing up rights to "Front Page," with the idea in mind of giving it to Howard Hawks for production. Harry's no dumbbell. (If you have the slightest suspicion that he is, just balance on the scales the fact that Frank Capra is a pretty able bodied citizen—and Capra stays with Cohn. Think that over.) But to get back to our subject. If Harry settles for "Front Page" and then closes a Howard Hawks deal—heck, he is just buying government bonds. And don't be surprised if one of these days you find Harry Cohn forgetting the present type of Columbia organization and just concentrating on about four of those sure-fire producer-directors. . . . Say there's a good evening's pastime. What names would you add, if you had a four name lineup with Frank Capra and Howard Hawks already set . . . Two more names needed. What say you?

Oh, Well, Let's Just Keep Talking

No big outstanding news has come up in the last few minutes to disturb our progress,

6 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was	Now
1. <i>Cowboy and the Lady</i>	U.A....130	128
2. <i>There's That Woman Again</i>	COL...95	91
3. <i>Heart of the North</i>	WAR...83	81
4. <i>Storm Over Bengal</i>	REP...79	75
5. <i>The Chaser</i>	MGM...69	66
6. <i>To the Victor</i>	G.B....59	56

so let's just keep on talking. We could talk a lot, for example, about the damage that might be done to some current pictures by factors beyond the director's control. Just imagine, for example that you are Mark Sandrich trying to get Jack Benny in the proper mood while the studio newsboy is covering the set with headlines about indictments. Or, that you are George Marshall with a higher-up decree that your Bergen-Fields picture must be released on Washington's Birthday for exploitation reasons. Then try and tell Bill Fields that Washington, being the Father of His Country, is now the Father of Release Dates. Nice easy work . . . But then, just imagine also that you are Samuel Goldwyn's publicity man and are forced to announce week after week that Sam has from five to ten stories ready for the cameras. And then have only one picture a year to sell . . . Lots of easy work around, it would appear . . . Or maybe you could be the MGM publicity department called upon once a year to announce a great new series of four reels that was going to kill the double feature evil. After three or four years even you might grow tired using the old phrases . . . On the other hand, if you want real dire sorrow, just imagine yourself one of Hollywood's long-haired big money boys picking up last's week papers and reading the official Soviet salaries for directors and writers and players. Gosh, it's enough to make a fellow feel not only that he can't respect his bourgeoisie mother, but he can't even rely on Stalin. That makes it tough.

Gosh, There Must Be Some News Somewhere

We just can't finish this page rambling on with rambling thoughts . . . There must be some news. Maybe this is it: "Republic changes title of 'Wagons Westward' to 'Man of Conquest.'" The reason given being that the exchange managers were afraid the exhibitor customers would think 'Wagons Westward' from Republic was just another horse opera. So they change to a title that is just as appealing as putting "Encyclopedia Britannica" on the marquee. And it is all a lot of hooley. This getting exchange men's opinions on titles and themes. We know, because we have been through it. Just to keep the argument from becoming a book we will ask a question: Would the same exchange managers have okayed a title as cheap as "Jesse James?" And if they had turned down Darryl Zanuck on that title, would he have meekly changed it to "Man of Destiny?" . . . Our battle in this paper is for "the field" against Hollywood, nine times out of ten—but there is the one time in ten when we have to rise up and say the field doesn't know a damn thing about what makes motion pictures until AFTER they are made. And sold, and bought.

"Wings of the Navy" Exploitation Job

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 125%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer Lou Edelman
Original Screenplay Michael Fessier
Director Lloyd Bacon
Stars George Brent, Oliver de Havilland
Featured: John Payne, Frank McHugh, John Litel, Victor Jory, Henry O'Neill, John Ridgely, John Gallaudet, Donald Briggs, Edgar Edwards, Regis Toomey, Albert Morin, Jonathan Hale, Pierre Watkin, Don Douglas, Max Hoffman, Alan Davis.
Photographer Arthur Edeson
Aerial Photographer Elmer Dyer
Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
Film Editor George Amy
Time 90 Minutes

"Wings of the Navy" will make money—plenty money—and will deserve it for its newsreel appeal capitalizing on the current red hot interest in things of aviation, particularly warlike aviation. But it won't deserve the money as a job of motion picture creation.

Even the uncanny Warner Brothers can wear a formula thread-bare; or else grow so tired of it themselves as to lapse and make its presentation lackadaisically slipshod. That's what happens in "Wings of the Navy."

It is Formula 1A in service yarns with its presentation of the elder and younger brother theme in the persons of George Brent and John Payne. Formula is preserved by the presence

of Frank McHugh for comedy purposes, in a stooge role a la "Submarine D-1" and as many others as you remember. Formula is not sacrificed by having Olivia de Havilland on hand in a part even more neutral-hued than is usually the fate of heroines in service yarns.

All of which might have been overcome had not direction and writing been too strongly affected by the general air of ennui. Director Lloyd Bacon cannot place all the blame on the navy and the formula. Few pictures of 1938-39 vintage will see so many sequences in which two people just talk to each other immovably center stage until the required amount of footage, after which they give way to a corking air sequence, on the heels of which two other people take up the talk. Typical of the general air of nonchalance is a scene in which Brent, whom we have last seen in a Pensacola hospital, strides "from the wings" in a San Diego location into a conversation with Payne and de Havilland. Payne says with naive unconcern, and the audience is with him, "How did you get here?"

The usually capable Michael Fessier hasn't helped with the screenplay and dialogue. It seems as though the assignment was merely to write some scenes to hitch together the air stuff for which Uncle Sam was paying.

Which brings us around to that air stuff. It makes what there is of the picture, and will

make plenty of box office. You've seen quite a bit of it in newsreels, but you haven't seen any better. There is a new thrill—a power dive—that you haven't seen anywhere, and it is powerful. There is a plentitude of interesting "inside" information about Uncle Sam's planes and pilot-training.

Frank McHugh, among the players, lifts his part to audience value. John Payne's ability is proven by the fact that he almost overcomes his banal lines, George Brent took the role in stereotyped stride. A grand little trouper Olivia de Havilland works as hard as two troupers to get something of life into her part.

We suffered along with her as she tried to make her lines mean something, so let's give the gal an orchid for intentions.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A No. 1 thrills and entertainment for kids and grownups and the whole darned family. The Navy always was a nice thing to join up with to see the world and the Navy birdseye view is a pleasure. Take a spin with the Navy and watch that box office hit the mark every time."

VARIETY: "Warners makes an important contribution towards education of the people to Uncle Sam's defense working with 'Wings of the Navy,' a stirring picture that builds entertainment from training of novices into flying aces."

"Ambush" Surprise Thriller from Para

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 80%)

Associate Producer..... William H. Wright
Director..... Kurt Neumann
Screenplay..... Laura and S. J. Perelman
Original..... Robert Ray
Stars..... Gladys Swarthout, Lloyd Nolan
Featured: William Henry, William Frawley, Ernest Truex, Broderick Crawford, Rufe Davis, John Hartley, Antonio Moreno, Harry Fleischmann, Polly Moran, Richard Denning, Raymond Hatton, Clem Bevans, Max Hoffman, Jr., Archie Twitchell, Wade Boteler, Jane Dewey, Billy Lee.
Photographer..... William C. Mellor
Art Director..... Hans Dreier, William Flannery
Musical Director..... Boris Morros
Film Editor..... Stuart Gilmore
Time..... 61 Minutes

There was probably one period in its planning when "Ambush" was considered a good joke on Gladys Swarthout—Paramount, in winding up its deal with the young lady, was presenting her in a picture giving her no opportunity to vocalize.

If there is any joke left we know it isn't on Swarthout, and we don't really think there is a joke on anybody, unless it is Paramount's higher-uppers. Because "Ambush" is a rattling good melodrama, with all the low-brow punch one could desire clothed in intelligent direction, scripting and playing. It may not have big money selling angles, but it is a darned good entertainment sleeper in the group that Paramount has sold to you.

(Incidentally, be careful not to overplay the Swarthout name in publicity, and disappoint those who may expect to hear her warble.)

"Ambush" is "cops and robbers" with a story that could very easily have gone cheap, but which through slick scripting and direction, steps along at a continually interesting, suspenseful, pace. It is Ernest Truex' picture, as a mysterious heavy wearing a derby and carrying a cane, and author of all the evil things that happen. Lloyd Nolan, in an "honest truck driver" role not entirely new to him, shares honors with Truex and definitely registers. Gladys Swarthout?—well, even without the high C's, class will tell—and Gladys is so far ahead of the usual B heroines in assurance and sheer class as the gal in the meller that

she stands out. Despite the fact that the camera apparently wasn't worrying any too much about her angles.

Skilful handling by associate producer William Wright is evidenced in the welcome presence for practically minor roles of such sure fire audience bets as Bill Frawley, Polly Moran, Rufe Davis, Raymond Hatton, Antonio Moreno, Clem Bevans. William Henry in a sympathetic juvenile role, intrigues us with his possibilities for bigger spots. Broderick Crawford, fresh from New York stage success, is an effective sub-heavy.

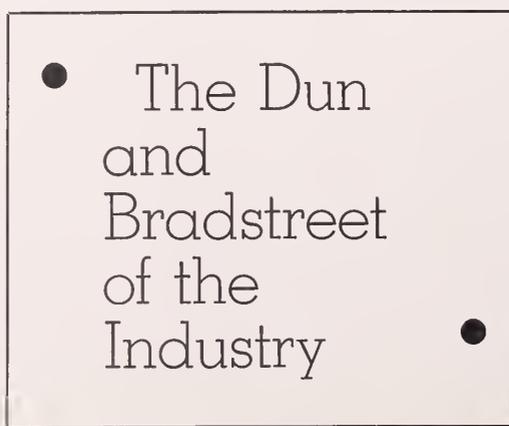
Kurt Neumann, evidently on a tough assignment from the picture's inception, comes through with flying colors in adroit handling of his tempo and suspense. All of which, of course, brings us to again mention the fine scripting job by Laura and S. J. Perelman.

If the whole joke doesn't do anything else it should lift capable Kurt Neumann from these B assignments and it is proof that the Perelmans will do a class job even with tongues in cheeks.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount seems to have a 'system' for the type of meanie melodrama in which 'Ambush' falls. Like 'King of Alcatraz,' 'Illegal Traffic,' and others of the studio's second division budget product, this one packs a continuous wallop but rises to those so necessary climaxes at intervals."

VARIETY: "Cops and robbers melodrama, with enough action to carry over the draggy spots, 'Ambush' should fit nicely into its intended niche."



"King of the Underworld" Good Hokum

WARNER BROTHERS
(EST. 85%)

Associate Producer Bryan Foy
Screenplay.....George Bricker, Vincent Sherman
Original W. R. Burnett
Director Lewis Seiler
Star Humphrey Bogart
Featured: Kay Francis, James Stephenson, John Eldredge, Jessie Busley, Arthur Aylesworth, Raymond Brown, Harland Tucker, Ralph Remley, Charley Foy, Murray Alper, Joe Devlin, Elliott Sullivan, Alan Davis, John Harmon, John Ridgely, Richard Bond, Pierre Watkin, Charles Trowbridge Ed Stanley.
Photographer Sid Hickox
Art Director Charles Novi
Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
Film Editor Frank Dewar
Time 67 Minutes

Warners tagged a selling title for a great majority of theaters on "King of the Underworld," and the picture behind it measures up to all we would expect of Warner skill

in making this type of subject. So there is money in it for the exhibitor who knows he can get money with another dose of the underworld, and audience satisfaction for "them audiences as wants it."

It is a re-telling, with modern variations, of a yarn presented by Warners some years ago as "Doctor Socrates." The straight low-down underworld yarn hasn't lost anything in the re-telling, it has gained new flavor in the delineation of leads by Humphrey Bogart and Kay Francis. The switch gives Miss Francis the originally played by Paul Muni.

Bogart wraps up all his peculiar audience appeal when given a star chance; Miss Francis seems to have saved her most effective acting for her final Warner appearances.

The tale finds Miss Francis a lady surgeon, working with her husband, also a scalpel wielder. Hubby is a bit of a weakling, the ponies being his failing, and it easy for him to come into

the clutches of the racketeering Bogart. Fate works events around to where Miss Francis, seeking to save her husband, is involved with the Bogart gang at the moment the police are tightening their net. Good melodramatic machinery brings an effective climax.

Direction and scripting are standard for Warner in this type of picture, which means that they are satisfactory without lifting the picture any above its B classification. The title does that to some extent.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Passable entertainment for the lower half of the program. Gangster stuff that is familiarly and capably done with a new twist in the finish."

VARIETY: "Theater-goers who either failed to see or have forgotten 'Dr. Socrates,' filmed by Warners in 1935, will herald 'King of the Underworld' as bang-up entertainment. As a matter, it has everything that comes within definition of 'showmanship,' and thus equipped, should drag in customers."

"Mysterious Miss X" Okay Programmer

REPUBLIC
(EST. 70%)

Associate Producer Herman Schlom
Director Gus Meins
Screenplay Olive Cooper
Original George W. Yates
Featured: Michael Whalen, Mary Hart, Chick Chandler, Mabel Todd, Frank M. Thomas, Regis Toomey, Don Douglas, Wade Boteler, Dorothy Tree, Eddie Acuff, Pierre Watkin, Harlan Briggs.
Photographer Ernie Miller
Art Director John Victor Mackay
Musical Director Cy Feuer
Film Editor Lester Orlebeck
Time 62 Minutes

"Mysterious Miss X" is a perfect example of the type of picture which certain companies can do well on short budget and sharply-carved shooting schedules. It has a basically clever idea, a capable cast, sparks of good dialogue, and the director jazzes it up with a sure-fire gag whenever in doubt.

The result is satisfactory entertainment in its budget group. It doesn't have to rate higher to make all concerned with its making and exhibition well satisfied. If it doesn't rate higher it is solely because there isn't more time on these pictures to smooth script structure, and the director can't pause for needed medium and close-up camera set-ups.

But in the basic elements of picture-making "Mysterious Miss X" comes through satisfactorily for its spot on double bills. Gus Meins knows his tempo and gags, and used his knowledge. The cast is likeable. Michael Whalen serves notice that his personality is still worthy of the screen's consideration, Chick Chandler and Mary Todd combine for sure-fire laughs worthy of anybody's picture. Mary Hart is a capable love interest. Support is up to this standard.

It seems that Whalen and Chandler, stranded

on the road after acting in a Sherlock Holmes type of piece, are mistaken for real Scotland Yard people in time to get involved in a tricky murder. Fate and a lot of good gags provide excitement and suspense until the pair dumbly solve the mystery.

Production elements are pretty well curbed, photography suffering principally through the short budget. There is a telephone sequence of Regis Toomey which practically entitles that trouper to a libel suit.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This one stacks up as a very amusing screwball whodunit treated more as farce than mystery. It's better than average for the spot for which it is intended."

VARIETY: "Aimed as a comedy drama, 'The Mysterious Miss X' lost its drama enroute, completely missed its mark, and splattered as plain comedy of the tongue-in-check brand. It will serve to fill out dualers only in less choosy situations."

"Boy Slaves" Just Tries Too Hard

R. K. O.
(EST. 65%)

Executive Producer Pandro S. Berman
Producer-Director P. J. Wolfson
Screenplay Albert Bein, Ben Orkow
Original Albert Bein
Featured: Anne Shirley, Roger Daniel, James McCallion, Alan Baxter, Johnny Fitzgerald, Walter Ward, Charles Powers, Walter Tetley, Frank Malo, Paul White, Arthur Hohl, Charles Lane, Norman Willis, Roy Gordon.
Photographer J. Roy Hunt
Special Effects Vernon L. Walker
Art Director Van Nest Polglase
Film Editor Desmond Marquette
Time 71 Minutes

Someone over at RKO must have had a headache one day. In the course of the headache, he or they, can be conceived as muttering—"Whatinell, the company will make enough money this year out of Disney, and Gunga Din, and sneakers like 'Man to Remember' and 'Great Man Votes.' Never let it be said that RKO showed signs of coming out of the doldrums and there wasn't one of

us left to make mistakes. Let's make a picture of 'social significance.'"

The fellow with the headache carried on. Here is the result: "Boy Slaves." The same sort of thing you used to write yourself in your sophomore year at high school when you were full of David Copperfield and his trials; the same sort of thing sophomores re-discover today on behalf of social significance. Which might all be okay if it hadn't been done with such sophomoric blah-ness.

Pandro Berman is the executive producer, P. J. Wolfson is the "producer-director," Albert Bein and Ben Orkow are the writers. The result is a lot of well-intentioned socially significant boys having a heavy afternoon.

Since Warner Brothers had used all the legitimate prison and chain gang themes, since Dickens long ago exhausted "Oliver Twist" angles, since "Devil's Island" was even being redone, the boys had a tough search for a theme—but they found one even if they had to state that "the problem is remote and rather uncommon."

The theme they found is the old "store company" evil of capitalism, told this time through the suffering of youngsters whom turpentine monguls lure to their service.

Grim brutal torture is their fate, with villains who hit a new high in dumb sadistic joy.

A corking cast works hard, particularly a recruit for lighter moments, Walter Tetley. But most of the players are forced to go too heavy for "social significance."

Just be sure you have that type of audience, because the title was especially conceived to keep all others from the theater. And the picture backs up the title.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A strong social tract that demands respectful attention. Built purely to arouse indignation against a dreadful though scattered practice it should achieve that effect."

VARIETY: "By no stretch of the imagination can one vision lines waiting in front of show houses to see anything so drab as 'Boy Slaves' allegedly the story, not of child labor, but of outright child peonage."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Alexander's Ragtime Band	FOX	237
Snow White	RKO	219
Test Pilot	MGM	187
In Old Chicago	FOX	181
Boys Town	MGM	171
Adventures of Robin Hood	WAR	170
You Can't Take It With You	COL	164
Sweethearts	MGM	163
Marie Antoinette	MGM	153
Happy Landing	FOX	152
Too Hot To Handle	MGM	146
That Certain Age	UNIV	146
Angels With Dirty Faces	WAR	146
Mad About Music	UNIV	140
Girl of the Golden West	MGM	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife	PAR	137
The Buccaneer	PAR	137
Kentucky	FOX	137
Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
Suez	FOX	133
The Crowd Roars	MGM	132
A Yank at Oxford	MGM	130
The Cowboy and the Lady	U.A.	128
Jezebel	WAR	126
Mr. Lucky Star	FOX	125
If I Were King	PAR	123
Men With Wings	PAR	122
Carefree	RKO	122
Three Loves Has Nancy	MGM	120
Sing You Sinners	PAR	119
Adventures of Tom Sawyer	PAR	119
Mannquin	MGM	119
Adventures of Marco Polo	U. A.	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook	FOX	118
Alstiers	U. A.	118
The Goldwyn Follies	U. A.	118
Trade Winds	U. A.	117
Artists and Models Abroad	PAR	117
The Ghadid	MGM	117
Vivacious Lady	RKO	117
Bringing Up Baby	RKO	117
Spawn of the North	PAR	115
Three Comrades	MGM	115
The Sisters	WAR	112
Little Miss Broadway	FOX	111
The Sisters	WAR	111
Hollywood Hotel	WAR	109
Room Service	RKO	108
Kentucky Moonshine	FOX	108
Joy of Living	RKO	108
Sally, Irene and Mary	FOX	102
Tropic Holiday	PAR	102
Three Blind Mice	FOX	103
The Shining Hour	MGM	103
Dr. Rhythm	PAR	103
Gold Is Where You Find It	WAR	103
Letter Of Introduction	UNIV	102
Having Wonderful Time	RKO	102
Baroness and the Butler	FOX	101
The Cage of Paris	UNIV	101
The Young In Heart	U. A.	101
There Goes My Heart	U. A.	100
Drums	U. A.	100
Submarine Patrol	FOX	100
The Great Waltz	MGM	100
Big Broadcast of 1938	PAR	99
Four's A Crowd	WAR	98
Just Around The Corner	FOX	98
Arkansas Traveler	PAR	97
Thanks for Everything	FOX	96
Boy Meets Girl	WAR	96
Every Day's a Holiday	PAR	96
Merrily We Live	MGM	95
Holiday	COL	94
Her Jungle Love	PAR	94
The Texans	PAR	94
College Swing	PAR	93
Josette	FOX	93
Blockade	U. A.	93
Always Goodbye	FOX	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Out West With the Hardys	MGM	147
Stablemates	MGM	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy	MGM	131
Bad Man of Brimstone	MGM	130
Brother Kat	WAR	122
Four Daughters	WAR	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse	WAR	113
A Slight Case of Murder	WAR	112
I Am The Law	COL	103
Straight, Place And Show	FOX	98
Port of Seven Seas	MGM	95
Judge Hardy's Children	WAR	93
Valley Of The Giants	MGM	94
Four Men and a Prayer	FOX	93
Shopworn Angel	FOX	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn	WAR	93
Lord Jeff	WAR	93
There's That Woman Again	MGM	92
Hold That Co-Ed	COL	91
Hold That Co-Ed	FOX	90

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Title	Distributor	%
The Birth Of A Baby	IND	167
Little Tough Guy	UNIV	86
King Of Alcatraz	PAR	83
The Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	82
Saint in New York	RKO	81
Girls on Probation	WAR	80
Tom Sawyer, Detective	PAR	80
Smashing the Spy Ring	COL	80
Christmas Carol	MGM	80
Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
White New York Sleeps	FOX	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	78
Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Crime School	WAR	105
Blondie	COL	104

Dark Rapture UNIV. 83
 Gangster's Boy MONO. 82
 Strange Case of Dr. Mead COL. 82
 Ganes of New York REP. 81

Crime Takes a Holiday COL. 80

Tenth Avenue Kid REP. 78
 Call of the Yukon REP. 78
 Mating the Headlines COL. 78
 Reformatory COL. 78
 Juvenile Court COL. 78
 Down In Arkansas REP. 78
 Mr. Wong, Detective MONO. 78
 King of the Newsboys REP. 77
 Flight Into Nowhere COL. 77

City Streets COL. 76
 The Wrong Road REP. 76
 Sergeant Murphy WAR. 76
 The Spy King UNIV. 76
 Prison Nurse REP. 76
 Storm Over Bengal REP. 75
 Outside of Paradise REP. 75
 Lady Rebave REP. 74
 Mama Rins Wild REP. 74
 The Higgins Family REP. 74
 Shadows Over Shanghai G.N. 74
 Adventure in Sahara COL. 73
 Penrod's Twin Brother WAR. 73
 Penrod's Double Trouble WAR. 73
 Little Miss Thoughtful WAR. 73
 Escape by Night REP. 73
 Juvenile Courts COL. 72

Flight to Fame COL. 72
 Crime Ring RKO. 72
 Hollywood Stadium Mystery REP. 72
 Romance of the Limberlost MONO. 72
 Little Adventress COL. 72
 Gang Bullets MONO. 72
 A Man To Remember RKO. 71
 I Stand Accused REP. 71
 The Missing Guest UNIV. 71
 Blondie Cheat RKO. 71
 Marriage Forbidden G.N. 71
 The Duke Comes Bael REP. 71
 Exiled to Shanghai REP. 71
 When G-Men Step In COL. 71
 Arson Gang Busters REP. 71
 Come On Leathernecks REP. 71
 Delinquent Parents IND. 70

Telephone Operator MONO. 69
 Invisible Enemy REP. 69
 Wanted By The Police MONO. 68
 Last Express UNIV. 68
 Rose Of The Rio Grande MONO. 68
 Last Warning UNIV. 68
 Who Killed Gail Preston COL. 68
 Woman Against the World COL. 68
 Numbered Women MONO. 67
 Fort of Missing Girls MONO. 67
 Damaged Goods G.N. 67
 Under the Big Top MONO. 66
 Mr. Champ WAR. 66
 Fugitives For A Night RKO. 66
 Saleslady MONO. 66
 Ladies in Distress REP. 65
 Convicted COL. 65
 Reckless Living UNIV. 65
 Romance on the Run REP. 64
 The Marines Are Here MONO. 64
 Accidents Will Happen WAR. 64
 Mystery House WAR. 64
 Lady in the Morgue UNIV. 63
 My Old Kentucky Home MONO. 63
 Maid's Nigh' Out RKO. 63
 This Marriage Business RKO. 63
 Barfoot Boy MONO. 63
 Main Event COL. 63
 Highway Patrol COL. 63
 Cipher Bureau G.N. 61
 International Crime G.N. 60
 Born to Be Wild REP. 59

Tip Off Girls PAR. 78
 City Girl FOX. 78
 Condemned Woman RKO. 78
 Change of Heart FOX. 78
 Little Tough Guys in Society UNIV. 78
 Touchdown Army PAR. 78
 Time Out For Murder FOX. 77
 No Time to Marry COL. 77
 Girl's School COL. 77
 Always In Trouble FOX. 77
 Scandal Street PAR. 77
 Double Danger RKO. 77
 Crashing Hollywood RKO. 77
 Sharpshooters FOX. 77
 Torchy Blane Gets Her Man WAR. 76
 Blondes at Work WAR. 76
 He Couldn't Say No WAR. 76
 Affairs Of Annabelle RKO. 76
 Campus Confessions PAR. 76
 Women in Prison COL. 76
 Bulldog Drummond's Peril PAR. 76
 Illegal Traffic PAR. 75
 Youth Takes A Fling UNIV. 75
 Speed to Burn FOX. 74
 Mysterious Mr. Moto FOX. 74
 Blind Alibi RKO. 74
 Over the Wall WAR. 74
 Danseons to Know PAR. 74
 Island in the Sky FOX. 74
 Beloved Brat WAR. 74
 Broadway Musketeers WAR. 74
 Prison Farm PAR. 74
 Annabelle Takes a Tour RKO. 74
 Prison Break UNIV. 73
 One Wild Night FOX. 73
 Mr. Moto's Gamble FOX. 73
 Tarnished Angel RKO. 73
 Love on a Budget FOX. 73
 Walking Down Broadway FOX. 73
 Prescription for Romance UNIV. 73
 Nancy Drew, Detective WAR. 72
 Swing That Cheer UNIV. 72
 Down On The Farm FOX. 72
 The Lady Objects COL. 72
 Booboo PAR. 72
 Torchy Blane in Panama WAR. 72
 Little Miss Roughneck COL. 72
 Midnight Intruder UNIV. 72
 International Settlement FOX. 72
 Passnet Husband FOX. 72
 Next Time I Marry RKO. 71
 The Kid Comes Back WAR. 71
 Go Chase Yourself RKO. 71
 The Patient in Room 18 WAR. 71
 Everybody's Doing It FOX. 71
 Mr. Moto's Chance FOX. 71
 Bulldog Drummond In Africa PAR. 71
 Fast Company MGM. 71
 Strange Faces UNIV. 71
 The Black Doll UNIV. 71
 His Exciting Night UNIV. 70
 Exposed UNIV. 70
 I'm From the City RKO. 70
 Sons Of The Legion PAR. 70
 Dare Devil Drivers WAR. 70
 Hunted Men PAR. 70
 Nurse From Brooklyn UNIV. 70
 Young Fugitives UNIV. 70
 Night Spot RKO. 70
 Sinners Of A Nurse UNIV. 70
 Safety In Numbers FOX. 70
 Mr. Doodle Kicks Off RKO. 70

Freshman Year UNIV. 69
 Lone Wolf in Paris COL. 69
 Meet the Girls FOX. 68
 The Devils Party UNIV. 68
 Peck's Bad Boy at Circus RKO. 68
 The Crime of Dr. Hallett UNIV. 68
 The Jury's Secret UNIV. 68
 Love, Honor and Behave WAR. 68
 She Loved a Fireman WAR. 68
 Glamorous Night REP. 68
 When Were You Born? UNIV. 67
 Wives Under Suspicion UNIV. 67
 Men Are Such Fools UNIV. 67
 Swing Sister Swing UNIV. 66
 The Chaser MGM. 66
 Vacation From Love MGM. 66
 Personal Secretary UNIV. 66
 Road Demon FOX. 65
 Men With 100 Faces G.B. 62
 Sez O'Reilly to McNabb G. B. 61
 Three On A Weekend G. B. 61
 Strange Boarders G. B. 61

Dark Sands B. I. P. 58
 Crime Over London G. B. 58
 Little Orphan Annie PAR. 58
 To the Victor G. B. 56

Duke of Westpoint U.A. 80
 Newsboys Home UNIV. 88
 Hard To Get WAR. 88
 There's Always a Woman COL. 87
 Everybody Sing MGM. 87
 Going Places WAR. 86
 I'll Give A Million FOX. 84
 Yellow Jack MGM. 84
 White Banners WAR. 84
 Listen Darling MGM. 83
 Racket Busters WAR. 83
 Mother Carey's Chickens RKO. 83
 Penitentiary COL. 82
 Hold That Kiss MGM. 82
 Give Me A Saller PAR. 82
 Heart of the North FOX. 81
 Rascais of the Moon WAR. 81
 Garden of the Moon WAR. 80
 The Gladiator COL. 80
 Wide Open Faces COL. 80
 Checkers for Three FOX. 80
 Paradise for Three MGM. 80
 Gateway FOX. 80
 You and Me PAR. 80
 Woman Against Woman MGM. 80
 Say It in French PAR. 80
 Up the River FOX. 80
 Flirting With Fate MGM. 80

Ride A Crooked Mile PAR. 79
 Swing Your Lady WAR. 79
 Of Human Hearts MGM. 79
 Spring Madness MGM. 78
 Five Of A Kind FOX. 78
 Breaking The Ice RKO. 78
 The Road To Reno UNIV. 77
 Wise Girl RKO. 77
 The Storm UNIV. 77

Swiss Miss MGM. 76
 I Met My Love Again U. A. 76
 Army Girl REP. 76
 Blockheads MGM. 76
 Comet Over Broadway WAR. 76

Keep Smiling FOX. 75
 Arsene Lupin Returns MGM. 75
 First 100 Years MGM. 75
 Love Is a Headache MGM. 74
 Battle of Broadway FOX. 74
 Secrets Of An Actress WAR. 74

Service DeLuxe UNIV. 73
 Spring Madness MGM. 73
 Stolen Heaven PAR. 73
 Thanks For the Memory PAR. 73
 Rich Man, Poor Girl MGM. 72
 Hawaii Calls RKO. 72
 Goodbye Broadway UNIV. 72
 Start Cheering COL. 72

My Bill WAR. 71
 Women Are Like That WAR. 71

Sailing Along G. B. 70

Action For Slander U. A. 64
 Gaiety Girls U. A. 62
 The Rat RKO. 61
 Romance in the Dark PAR. 60

Storm In A Teacup U.A. 54
 Look Out For Love G. B. 52

The Girl Was Young G. B. 46
 Return of Scarlet Pimpernel U. A. 44

Professor Beware PAR. 84
 Kidnapped FOX. 84
 Radio City Revels RKO. 83
 Dramatic School MGM. 83

The Toy Wife MGM. 81
 Gold Diggers in Paris WAR. 81

Cocoanut Grove PAR. 79

We're Going to Be Rich FOX. 69

Fools for Scandal WAR. 72
 Divorce of Lady X U. A. 72

Sixty Glorious Years RKO. 71

● THE HONOR BOX WINNER ●



Claudette Colbert

A PARAMOUNT
PRODUCTION

● ZAZA ●

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



Herbert Marshall

ZAZA

A PARAMOUNT
PRODUCTION

Albert Lewin
Producer
of
"Zaza"

In Preparation:
"KNIGHTS OF
THE ROUND TABLE"

PARAMOUNT

PRODUCTIONS

ZAZA

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HOLLYWOOD - CALIFORNIA

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 7. No. 25

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 24, 1939

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$10

"JESSE JAMES" OFF TO RECORD MARKS AS NEW YEAR STARTS

*Of Four New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%
and One Came Thru Okay, in Week of Many Holdovers.*

By **NORMAN WEBB**

Fox—1 New Release

Due to many holdover attractions, the past week has given us only four new releases, with two of them being very outstanding box office attractions. Darryl Zanuck's latest big special, "JESSE JAMES," has been released in a number of first run situations and is setting top 1939 box office records. With the exception of "ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND" and "SNOW WHITE," it is topping all 1938 marks. So it certainly looks like 20th Century-Fox will again have one of the year's biggest box office sensations.

Tyrone Power and Henry Fonda are co-starred as the James Brothers in this picture dealing with the life of America's most famous outlaw, which has been filmed entirely in Technicolor, with very striking results. Supporting Ty and Fonda is a well balanced cast, with Randolph Scott and Nancy Kelly heavily featured. Among other supporting players are Henry Hull, Slim Summerville, Brian Donlevy, John Carradine, and Jane Darwell.

Nunnally Johnson, who has had no screen credits for the past year, acted as associate producer on this outstanding version of "JESSE JAMES," and wrote the original screenplay as well. 20th Century-Fox's ace director, Henry King, who directed "ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND" and "IN OLD CHICAGO," also handled the megaphone on this one.

This very outstanding picture was in preparation for over two years, with the actual shooting time taking almost five months. Naturally, the picture was a very costly one, running in excess of a million and a half dollars; but undoubtedly Zanuck's investment in "JESSE JAMES" will be well re-

paid to Fox stockholders, as the first exhibitor reports are very, very strong, with the picture running 87% above normal business—and this, in many places, in spite of very bad weather conditions.

M-G-M—2 New Releases

MGM has two new releases this week, one an outstanding box office hit and the second a program picture.

"STAND UP AND FIGHT," co-starring Robert Taylor and Wally Beery, has opened up very well at a 134% average, indicating that these two stars are still very potent at the box office. Supporting Taylor and Beery is an excellent cast of featured players, including Florence Rice, Helen Broderick, Charles Bickford, and Barton MacLane.

This is Producer Mervyn LeRoy's second picture for MGM, since joining up with that studio some seven or eight months ago, and incidentally, it is the first box office smash that Merv has had for some time. The old reliable Woody Van Dyke directed "STAND UP AND FIGHT" from Jane Murfin, Harvey Ferguson, and James M. Cain's screenplay, which was based on an original by Forbes Parkhill.

MGM's second release this week is "THE GIRL DOWNSTAIRS," which is a much better than average programmer co-starring Franchot Tone and Franciska Gaal, of "BUCCANEER" fame. Others in the supporting cast include Walter Connolly, Reginald Gardiner, Rita Johnson, and Reginald Owen.

While this picture is only averaging around 91% on its first bookings, this is very good, considering that there are no real marquee names in the cast. Previously, Miss Gaal has only had two American releases, while Franchot Tone has never been considered an out-

4 New Releases Not in Last Issue 3 Over 100%.....1 O. K.

		%	We Est.
1. Jesse James	FOX	187	165
2. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	134	135
3. Devil's Island	WAR	104	85
4. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	91	90

(Continued on Page 10)

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ "Honor Box" ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY-FOX** Wins With

"JESSE JAMES" - 187%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production
DARRYL ZANUCK



Assoc. Producer & Original Screenplay
NUNNALLY JOHNSON



Director
HENRY KING

Historical data assembled by
ROSALIND SHAFFER
JO FRANCES JAMES

Photographer
GEORGE BARNES

Technicolor Photographer
W. H. GREENE

Technicolor Director
NATALIE KALMUS

Musical Director
LOUIS SILVERS

Film Editor
BARBARA McLEAN



TYRONE POWER

Featured:
HENRY HULL
SLIM SUMMERVILLE
J. EDWARD BROMBERG
BRIAN DONLEVY
JOHN CARRADINE
DONALD MEEK
JOHN RUSSELL
JANE DARWELL
CLAIRE DU BREY
CDAIRE DU BREY
WILLARD ROBERTSON



HENRY FONDA



NANCY KELLY



RANDOLPH SCOTT

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

THE WRITER'S VIEWPOINT

We are in receipt of an interesting letter from a writer, commenting in general agreement with our recent remarks that screen creation has not kept pace with screen technical advances, but offering some pertinent thoughts on the causes therefor.

For reasons that will later be apparent, the writer is not desirous that his name be used.

To get to the meat of his letter:

"As far as you go," he says, "You are probably right. But why not go on further, and place the blame for the comparatively static position of writing for the screen, as compared with the industry's marvelous progress in photographic and other mechanics, where it belongs.

"I won't even question your thought that the majority of four-figure-a-week writers are vastly overpaid, as it is possible that my name may be in your mind for that list, and then I would be merely taking up a personal issue.

"But let's take up this fact that so many of the successful pictures are merely re-hashes and re-doings of the old and the tried and the true. Which brings in also the point that present day production puts so much of the burden on the director."

* * * *

Then he names his target:

"You have yourself sat close enough to enough picture making jobs to know where the fault lies. Why not name it?"

"Under present picture-making conditions, with the executives of one title or another—associate producer or what-ever the designation doesn't count, it's the amount of authority that does—under these conditions, what encouragement is given to original thinking? After you have answered that one, try this: "What encouragement IS given to trite and tripe work? The last is just what my teacher used to call a rhetorical question.

"A writer is only human. Some may be willing, but few are able, to starve for their convictions. And you know as well as I do that when a writer bucks up against the greater number

of our individuals who have for some reason or other acquired some form of decision-making authority, he bucks up against ignorance and indecisiveness in so many cases that he is licked.

"At first he may be inclined to irritation, and the vain struggles of some minute mammal in a trap. Eventually if he wants to continue getting assignments, he becomes resigned. And looks forward hopefully to that day when he can retire to a hidden valley and write real stuff, with the butcher, the baker and the tax gatherer paid from his present nefarious activities."

* * * *

We may as well let our friend continue on. He will probably fill the page all by his own, but he is saying several words of truth. He concludes:

"No man should be in so important a position in reference to the making of a picture as to have authority on fundamental story values and the incident of screenplay development, unless he has CONFIDENCE in his own judgment.

"Yet you know that the chief problem a writer faces is that he can never find out definitely what is wanted by the man under whose direct authority he is working. That man frequently doesn't know himself, until he contacts with the front office or with the relative at home who reads his scripts for him.

"You wonder why so many writing jobs call for the service of so many men—with so little resulting from the mountain's groaning? It is because, bedevilled with this lack of confidence in his own knowledge or judgment, it is so easy, as you said, for this type of executive to seek refuge in calling in the Grand Army.

"If he gets enough writers in piecemeal, no one can ever blame him for the result. Can't he always point to the list of credits and say, 'Gee I certainly did my best. Looka that bunch of cracks I got to work on the story.'

"And if the result is a flop—see all the people he can blame. It's a racket, I tell you—but you know it."

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

		Releases	%
1.	M. G. M.	45	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	51	92
3.	United Artists	17	92
4.	Paramount	40	88
5.	Warner Brothers	53	87
6.	R. K. O.	39	83
7.	Columbia	33	80
8.	Universal	39	77
9.	Republic	25	73
10.	Monogram	14	69
11.	Grand National	5	66
12.	Gaumont British	10	59
		371	

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

The News at a Glance

The verdict in the Loew's stockholder suit in New York, which is a vindication of the operating management, came as no surprise to us when we consider the opinions we have expressed all along regarding the case. But it does come with a slight air of reassuring surprise when we consider—with all due reverence to the dignity of courts—some of the decisions that history has recorded in business squabbles.

Before the case started with all its ballyhoo, your Highlighter stated that the case as presented offered no more than a dispute between accountants on accounting methods. We even repeated the thought a few times during the period when the headline writers were trying to get some red meat out of the case. The learned justice in his verdict almost hit some of our phrases.

But don't mistake us in our animadversions. Take us two ways: First of all, if anyone wants to sue Louis Mayer, Leo, or some of the latter's aborted cubs—or John D. Rockefeller, or Henry Ford, or Jock Whitney, or Midas—for a million or two, we are constitutionally with them. That's the Sinn Fein in us.

And, secondly, if anybody wants to tell us that MGM knows more ways to waste money, and proves its knowledge in more than Sam Goldwyn would hope his press agent could imagine, we would probably jump aboard his bandwagon with some helpful evidence.

But—Mayer-Schenck, or Schenck-Mayer, whichever you prefer—by their methods have made money for stockholders and all, have built a Gibraltar of an institution. You can't get away from that.

The exhibitor can irk about the unyielding terms that Al Lichtman sets on the sales. But the factory continues to create and to hold on to the box office assets that his customer want. So the exhibitor can't let go, and doesn't care to. The studio may do things that the sideliners in Hollywood can pick to pieces—but we have just told what the studio continues to do in performance.

So whatinell? People go through life unconsciously looking for targets at which to throw bricks or wispy darts of envy. MGM, and those who make it, happen to be the biggest target in sight for film folks. It's just human nature to pick on the biggest target.

But maybe the clean cut conclusion of this legal holiday will convince us that we would all be a lot better off picking on big targets OUTSIDE our own industry—and building a protective fence around the family homestead in which we all live.

Man of the Hour— Murray Silverstone

Make no mistake about it—the Man of the Hour, and the Year, probably, in the picture business is apt to be this gentleman Murray Silverstone. The fellow who went to London to learn his picture business away from the

7 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was	Now
1.	Out West With Hardys MGM	143	147
2.	Trade Winds U.A.	114	117
3.	Shining Hour MGM	100	103
4.	Dramatic School MGM	81	83
5.	Up The River FOX	76	80
6.	Say It In French PAR	78	80
7.	Tarnished Angel RKO	70	73

maddening crowds, and the fellow who has been the aspirin tablet for United Artist's recent headaches.

He has earned all the honors now—on paper. It remains to be seen whether he can continue to keep that bull-headed UA group on the trail. Past performers cast their shadows before them. He probably will.

Only one who is in close touch with our leading producer-directors, directors, and stars, and their current mental attitude can appreciate the strength of the move Silverstone has made. The new deal, cutting UA distribution charges to picture producers to the bone, giving an over-riding share in distribution's profits to the consistently delivering producers who make that profit possible, is one of the most tempting steaks that could ever be hung before a big shot picture factor with mouth watering for individual recognition.

Of course, Mr. Silverstone has his problems. He must first golikell to make his volume of sales in the world market justify these generous terms to the producer. Before that, though, he will have needed enough producers to make volume. But then, oh gosh, there was something else he needed. Enough of the product of those producers would have to be the million dollar grossing kind.

In our callow years we sat occasionally at the elbow of George Kleine—first presenter of a two-dollar motion picture, "Quo Vadis"—and the former mathematics teacher could prove to us that no distributor could operate on less than fifty per cent of the gross. Then forty per cent became the accepted industry figure. Then thirty-five per cent. With creators squawking all the years that it should cost such an outrageous percentage to go out and sell, and deliver, their works of art.

And new Murray Silverstone is offering a graduation from fifteen per cent to twenty-five per cent—plus a bonus share of distribution profits.

He can tie this business up and upset every

4 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

		Was	Now
1.	The Duke of West Point U.A.	95	89
2.	While New York Sleeps FOX	80	78
3.	Nancy Drew, Reporter WAR	74	72
4.	Swing, Sister, Swing UNIV	68	65

apple cart in our alleys if he proves his case. More power to him.

George Raft Goes His Way

Most interesting item of news of the week is the final decision by which George Raft and Paramount reach a parting of the ways for once and for all. Not so much because of considerations regarding the effect on the Paramount roster, because it has been some time, with one thing and another, since George was calculated in any figuring about Paramount. But because of what it might mean elsewhere. There could be a spot for the Raft name growing out of some unit for the new United Artists deal. And a choice spot for all concerned in Harry Eddington's new set-up as a contributor to the Universal schedule. All that either proposition needs is the right vehicle, and the results of this week's split might mean real industry news . . . RKO's reorganization is finally signed by the courts. Which will clear away a lot of fog, and help considerably this year, and more next. As we scamper to press we are within an hour of the premiere of "Gunga Din." Which may mean even more. . . . Irving Berlin for the melodies, Sonja Henie and Don Ameche for the top roles, Rudy Valee for the added flavor—that's the dish Darryl Zanuck is cooking up for a special. That's also the recipe for a big money show. Which is the way Zanuck cooks 'em up . . . Incidentally, we have seen the title publicised as "When Winter Comes." We'll bet our shares of stock in Rudolph Valentino's independent picture company against anything you mention that Zanuck never lets that dull reminder of "If Winter Comes" reach mar-quees for a modern zippy icy musical frolic. . . . Joe Pasternack has set Charles Boyer for a future lead opposite Deanna Durbin. Should make quite a team—and is indication that the Pasternack mind is functioning for his pet star.

Rounding Round The Studios

So we learn from the papers that there are a number of multi-degreed professors in Hollywood backed by the money of the Carnegie Foundation for a long range study of the hows and whys of motion picture people as people. Hell, at least they admit we are people . . . Bela Lugosi, from all we hear, is getting himself plenty of renewed popularity from "Frankenstein." The "U" should get busy in a hurry to cash in . . . Jo Swerling hanging his hat close to that of Bob Riskin at the Sam Goldwyn plant. Doesn't come under the head of "news" as news, but it can be called "good news" for Sam . . . Radio renews Leigh Jason's directorial contract. This Jason fellow is one of our Digest bets for the coming year. He did a bang-up job with "The Mad Miss Manton." . . . Also glad to hear that Radio finally set its Joe Penner deal. Now let's try that Penner ability in a real vehicle.

THE HONOR
BOX WINNER
FOR THIS WEEK

Henry King

DIRECTED

'JESSE JAMES'

A TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRODUCTION

THE HONOR
BOX WINNER
FOR THIS WEEK

Randolph Scott

Played
United States Marshall

'JESSE JAMES'

A TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRODUCTION

THE HONOR
BOX WINNER
FOR THIS WEEK

Nancy Kelly

Played
Mrs. Jesse James

'JESSE JAMES'

A TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRODUCTION

WHAT ABOUT OUR RADIO GIFTS?

By Bob Welsh

What has become of all those radio and stage "names" who were heralded as future "greats" in motion pictures?

That 90 per cent of them have fallen by the wayside isn't surprising, because it is seldom that an artist, no matter how clever in his or her original field, can be outstanding in another. But,—what have we done with our normal expectancy in new star talent?

The answer is . . . "very little"; and the blame is ours.

We have never gone overboard as a great shouter for "new faces and new personalities" because we believe that motion pictures would get along all right if we were always certain we were getting full advantage of what we already have. But, since Hollywood did inherit some really great talent when the big radio broadcasting companies moved out here bag and baggage, why not cash in with the golden eggs left on our doorstep?

Today we can think of few outstanding radio names who are being developed as big screen personalities, in the right way. There are Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, Bob Burns, Burns and Allen who come to mind.

Of course these names sound like "naturals." But weren't there others that should have the same ring? Amos and Andy, Lum and Abner, to mention two perennial top air hits. And what about one of the greatest week-in-and-week-out showmen of them all, Rudy Valee? Can't the screen find his real spot?

It's the BRAINS back of the new stars that will make them or break them.

Star after star from the radio field has fallen by the wayside, either through studio failure to properly develop their talent in pictures, or, simply because they didn't fit in.

In the cases where we feel that the studios have failed to properly develop the new talent, we find that the radio stars were presented with little regard for picture technique. On their own, more or less, using their own technique, they were lost in the maze of motion picture production.

		%
1. Jesse James	FOX	187
2. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	134
3. Zaza	PAR	130
4. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	127
5. Topper Takes A Trip	U.A.	111
6. Devil's Island	WAR	104
7. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	91
8. Pacific Liner	RKO	84
9. King of the Underworld	WAR	84
10. Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	82

Of all the great radio names that have come to pictures over a period of time, Bing Crosby is the top survivor as a box office great. While this is partly due to the complete naturalness of the Crosby personality, the ease and nonchalance of his acting, it is also due to the fact that the "Crooner" has received some very superior direction from fellows like Wes Ruggles, Frank Tuttle and Norman Taurog.

A similar case in point is that of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Both from the musical comedy stage, Fred had no confidence in a picture career, while Ginger had gotten nowhere in particular on the screen. Fate cast their future, because it so happened that at the RKO-Radio studio there was a young director named Mark Sandrich, who had very definite, but new and novel ideas about the proper presentation of such personalities on the screen. His idea was very simple; make first a motion picture with the stars as natural actors, with their talents, singing and dancing, presented logically and naturally.

We all know the story of the amazing success scored by this triumvirate. Today, we find Sandrich at Paramount applying the same principles to Jack Benny.

This is why we include Jack Benny in the sure-fire box office class. Like Bing, his is an easy, nonchalant and natural personality, but somehow we have never felt that he has developed a sound picture technique, or, that the

full value of his talents has been realized in story or production.

Under the experienced picture guidance of Mark Sandrich the likeable Jack Benny should reach new importance in his screen career.

Of Bob Burns, who has long played the Crosby right hand bower, everybody who saw his star debut in "The Arkansas Traveler" realizes that he has definite picture greatness if his career is properly guided. Robin is a pretty handsome fellow, you know, and that counts on the screen. Audiences find it much easier to gaze on a noble countenance, even if the owner is a comic. Incidentally, Jack Benny and Edgar Bergen are good-lookers, too.

Which brings to mind that we have been tipped off to watch for Edgar Bergen and his redoubtable Charlie McCarthy in "You Can't Cheat An Honest Man" with Bill Fields. The master ventriloquist and his wooden pal have the greatest opportunity of their respective screen careers, and again we find a proven director at the helm. George Marshall is a veteran of screen comedy. It was Marshall who re-established the late Will Rogers as a great picture asset several years ago by virtue of his brilliant and understanding direction in "Life Begins At Forty" and "In Old Kentucky."

But, what of the other really able radio and stage personalities who have been languishing around Hollywood for the past year or so?

**Please
Make
Reservations**

- THE BOX OFFICE ANNUAL published by National Box Office Digest involves so much statistical labor and printing expense that no surplus copies are printed—
- And after last year's issue, publishing the only authentic nationwide box office ratings in the industry, we were forced to turn down many requests for extra copies—
- So — please make reservations now.
- If you are a subscriber to National Box Office Digest you will receive your copy of the 1939 BOX OFFICE ANNUAL gratis; if you are not a subscriber, or extra copies are desired, the price is \$5.

1939 BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

"St. Louis Blues" Plenty Entertaining

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 95%)

Producer Jeff Lazarus
 Director Raoul Walsh
 Screenplay John C. Moffitt,
 Malcolm Stuart Boylan
 Additional Dialog Virginia Van Upp
 Adaptation Frederick Hazlitt Brennan
 Original Eleanore Griffith, William Rankin
 Stars Dorothy Lamour, Lloyd Nolan
 Featured: Tito Guizar, Jesse Ralph, Jerome Cowan, William Frawley, Mary Parker, Maxine Sullivan, Cliff Nazarro, The King's Men, Victor Kilian, Walter Soderling, Virginia Howell, Matty Malneck and his orchestra, Hall Johnson Choir.
 Photographer Theodor Sparkuhl
 Special Photographic Effects Gordon Jennings
 Songs Matty Malneck, Raoul Walsh, Burton Lane, Frank Loesser, Hoagy Carmichael, Leo Robin, Sam Coslow.
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Dance Director LeRoy Prinz
 Musical Advisor Arthur Franklin
 Film Editor William Shea
 Time 85 Minutes

There is a surplus of entertainment in "St. Louis Blues," directed with the experienced hand of Raoul Walsh, that will undoubtedly ride it to good grosses, and that certainly make it an evening's money's worth for mass audiences.

It is an audience picture, owing its strength to the never-failing Mississippi River background, to its direction, and to a number of fine performances, but it will not be a critic's

picture. Because the critics will never forgive a story structure that balances so much really fine work with so much that is slow, and which never ends any place because it never had any destination in mind.

But the cash customers will want to know how much entertainment they are going to get for their money, and it can be reported that Associate Producer Jeff Lazarus and Director Raoul Walsh have packed their carton to the brimming point. In addition to the title song, at least five other songs are introduced with such show-stoppers as Dorothy Lamour and Maxine Sullivan rendering them. There is a star-clinching performance by Lloyd Nolan, a couple of spot comedy roles grandly handled by Jessie Ralph and Cliff Nazarro, there are orchestras and choristers galore, and for most of the way there is a clean-cut interest-maintaining dialogue job. Over it all is the shadow of Ol' Man River.

Such a total of values is bound to add up to entertainment. Chief point of interest in the picture to the industry will be the fact that it definitely places Lloyd Nolan for top rating. His assured and nonchalant performance gives humanness to the character he portrays, and is definitely audience-winning. Miss Lamour is offered moments for effective trouping, and comes through neatly. It need scarcely be reported that she is right on hand for song numbers—especially when plot brings a sarong sequence before our eyes.

Pleasant young surprise of the picture is a

blonde bundle Mary (Punkins) Parker. She will be heard from. Tito Guizar is personable in a light romantic role, the intention probably being to spot him for more musical numbers in the Latin-American version.

The story? Well, Nolan is the master mind of a struggling Show Boat, Jessie Ralph a "Tugboat Annie" power behind the scenes. Dorothy Lamour is a Broadway star seeking "to escape from it all." She stows away on the show boat, later becomes its star. But there is a nasty old villain with injunctions and all that who is always in the background and arrives at the climax. He may still be there "waiting on the dock" for all we know or for all the writers did to get out of the situation.

The sure Walsh audience touch packed the intervening moments of this story with entertainment flashes and sustained interest, missing only when the darn plot started wobbling. Picture's first half is definitely fine, and, equally definitely, makes it tough to keep up the pace.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Blessed with a title which lugs a money-bag punch, 'St. Louis Blues' should be a sure-thing for big grosses, if given plenty of exploitation support."

VARIETY: " 'St. Louis Blues' combines music, romance and comedy into a presentation containing all the ingredients needed by exhibitors to sell their patrons entertainment."

"Can't Get Away With Murder" Weak

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 70%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
 Associate Producer Sam Bischoff
 Director Lewis Seiler
 Screenplay Robert Buckner,
 Don Ryan, Kenneth Gamet
 Based on 'Chalked Out' by
 Warden Lewis E. Lawes, Jonathan Finn
 Featured: Humphrey Bogart, Gale Page, Billy Halop, John Litel, Henry Travers, Harvey Stephens, Harold Huber, Joe Sawyer, Joe Downing, George E. Stone, Joseph King, Joseph Crehan, John Ridgely, Herbert Rawlinson.
 Photographer Sol Polito
 Art Director Hugh Reticker
 Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
 Film Editor James Gibbon
 Time 78 Minutes

Someone at Warners bestowed a title on this one in a moment of wishful humor—"You Can't Get Away With Murder." The wishful part was just faint hope, the humor part was just a sly belief that perhaps Warners can get away with anything in this type of picture.

The credit title makes Hal Wallis suffer as executive producer, and Sam Bischoff as associate producer. Sam is at present in Europe, and Hal recently had a vacation. So, knowing the past year's records of these individuals, we

just don't believe a word of what we read on every credit sheet.

It would seem that Warners had a lot of odds and ends from various scripts cluttering up the files. There were stray bits for which writers had been paid in money on "Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing," "Angels With Mussy Faces," and Sam remembered "The Last Mile" and anything else that makes for chowder.

Also they had some darn good troupers on their hands—Humphrey Bogart, Billy Halop—from the "Dead End" kids—John Litel, Henry Travers, Harold Huber, George E. Stone, etc. The way these troupers struggle with their material is a highnote cue for "The Show Must Go On" theme song.

Young Billy admires with dumb adoration a gangster named Bogart. He doesn't give a damn what happens to his sister, Gale Page, or the man she is to marry, Harry Stephens. A gasoline station robbery, and a later murder, result by Chinese puzzle plot logic in Stephens being within four hours of the electric chair, and his only hope a last minute statement of the truth by Billy.

The dirty little rat doesn't say a darned word until, in a frustrated escape, he is punctuated by Bogart's poisonous "forty-five" pellets. About that time the authors haven't left enough sympathy for the kid for anyone to be willing to wipe his nose. And it needed it.

The kid, Billy Halop, does a heart-breaking job as a trouper in a part that should never have been wished on anybody. Gale Page struggles, and can't be blamed for just barely staying above water. A trouper like George E. Stone plays one of the most illy-conceived parts—for a number of reasons—the screen has seen this year. (With all our Hollywood honesty in the cause of Jewish persecution—they had to pick out George E. Stone for a character who MAKES BOOK on when other unfortunates will go to the chair!)

But George is living in a synthetic Sing Sing, anyway. If Warden Lawes can let his name stand on this country club version of Sing Sing, we imagine your humble reviewer should be willing to swallow the celluloid.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Laid against the familiar Warners background of bleak prison walls and shadowy city alleys, 'You Can't Get Away With Murder' plods methodically and stolidly through its thesis that a man's guilt dogs him to his deathbed."

VARIETY: "Run of the mill prison melodrama which gives the impression of having been told in formula and incident many times before, although the material is certified by Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Sing Sing and Jonathan Finn, from whose play, 'Chalked Out,' the screen play is concocted."

"Idiot's Delight" Triumph for M-G-M

M. G. M.
(EST. 160%)

Producer Hunt Stromberg
 Director Clarence Brown
 Screenplay Robert E. Sherwood
 Original Play Robert E. Sherwood
 Stars Norma Shearer, Clark Gable
 Featured: Edward Arnold, Charles Coburn,
 Joseph Schildkraut, Burgess Meredith,
 Laura Hope Crews, Skeets Gallagher, Peter
 Willes, Pat Paterson, William Edmunds,
 Fritz Feld, Virginia Grey, Paula Stone,
 Joan Marsh, Virginia Dale, Barnadene
 Hayes, Lorraine Krueger.
 Photographer William Daniels
 Recording Director Douglas Shearer
 Musical Score Herbert Stothart
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Set Decorations Edwin B. Willis
 Gowns Adrian
 Montage Slavko Vorkapich, John Hoffman
 Dance Director George King
 Film Editor Robert J. Kern
 Time 100 Minutes

CURRENT REVIEWS

		%
1 Over 100%.....4 OKay.....6 Weak		
1. Idiot's Delight	MGM	160
2. St. Louis Blues.....	PAR	95
3. Off The Record	WAR	90
4. Four Girls in White	MGM	80
5. Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	80
6. Pride of the Navy.....	REP	75
7. Nancy Drew, Reporter.....	WAR	75
8. Code of the Streets	UNIV	75
9. Persons in Hiding	PAR	75
10. Beauty for the Asking	RKO	70
11. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	70
12. You Can't Get Away With Murder.....	WAR	70

"Idiot's Delight" is a rare achievement. There is nothing of news in telling that the Clarke Gable-Norma Shearer box office combination will spell record-making box office figures; there can be little surprise in stating that a play hit with the background of "Idiot's Delight" has a wide and appreciative market ready for it.

But "Idiot's Delight" is that rare achievement—a picture that will live up to the prestige of its stage parentage, and adds on the tremendous money and audience values of its screen elements.

Thus, "Idiot's Delight" is a triumph for a combination of individuals—Hunt Stromberg as producer, Clarence Brown as director, Robert Sherwood for the effective merging of his own stage opus into screen form, for Gable and Shearer for living up to the best their followers could hope for or their admirers wish for.

It is a delightfully encouraging evening of adult entertainment. We are compelled to use that phrase "adult entertainment" because it is the one the exhibitor will want to know most about. But in this case we will hasten to add a qualifying addition: The limiting implications of the phrase are, in this reviewer's sincere opinion, overbalanced by the mass appeal elements.

If they follow Clark Gable, they will find him giving the top performance of his career, but of greater mass interest, they will giggle new ga-ga's over his bubbling forth as a song and dance man. If they are the Norma Shearer group, they will get new pleasure from a fine performance, more popularly appealing than many of her recent ones.

And if all of them—adults and those whose numbers spell more money—want an evening of masterful motion picture creation, this is it. The skill with which producer, director and writer have combined to give the flow of motion picture to what was essentially a stage structure; the adroitness with which screen elements sugar-coat loss of stage punchiness through censorship; the manner in which an outstanding group of players are allowed to step forth for their moments, clinch those moments most effectively, and all the while

leave an audience with the feeling that Fate is marching relentlessly on—these are things that spell the word achievement.

The story of a hooper on the vaudeville merry-go-round who one night in Omaha meets a gal acrobat with calculating visions of her future is tempting enough in its characterizations for audience interest—when this moves on to the stage elements of a powerful preaching against war when the long separated pair once more cross paths in the midst of a European inferno, it becomes big. The screen creators, in each department, get the value of the humanness, lose but little—for mass appeal—of the bigness.

Gable and Shearer naturally share acting honors, but all other members of the cast get their moments. Edward Arnold is powerful in repression, as the munitions lord; Joseph Schildkraut, also in repressed key, as the officer to whom war is a duty, not a pleasure. Burgess Meredith has a meaty part as the pacifist, and sells it. As an English honey-

moon couple in the midst of impending war, Peter Willes and Pat Paterson are refreshing breaths of Albion. Charles Coburn makes his role stand out.

Herbert Stothart's musical score is that unusual accomplishment—a score so good and effective that you don't realize there has been any music until you are trying to analyze the picture's spell after that viewing.

Leo needn't worry about the happy ending that veers from the stage play. It is cleverly contrived—and a million dollars extra for the grosses.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Perfectly grand adult performance that has the added advantage of two particularly bright stars to assure a draw and go on from there to bigger and better box office."

VARIETY: "Much better than the derivative play, 'Idiot's Delight' is an excellent show from the purely entertainment standpoint. Performances not alone of the co-stars but of the featured support add up to highly satisfactory 100-minute show."

RELEASES OF THE WEEK

(Continued from Page 1)

standing box office name, and incidently, this is his latest picture for MGM, as he has returned to his first love—the legitimate stage, in New York.

One of the year's most outstanding directors, Norman Taurog, very capably handled the direction. While this picture is running con-

siderably below Norman's previous pictures, ("BOYS TOWN" and "MAD ABOUT MUSIC") still he was very limited with his story and cast, and therefore 91% can be considered an exceptional figure. Harry Rapf acted as associate producer.

W. B.—1 NEW RELEASE

Warner Brothers' much discussed production, "DEVIL'S ISLAND," has finally been released in the key cities and is doing a "knock-out" business, at an average of 104%. This picture about the famous French prison, was produced by Warner Brothers last summer, but because of serious objections on the part of the French Government to the Will Hays office, the release on the picture has been held up until now.

Warner Brothers' "keeper of the B's," Brynne Foy, produced this picture, with Bill Clemens directing. Kenneth Gamet and Don Ryan wrote the screenplay from Anthony Coldeway and Raymond L. Shrock's original. Boris Karloff heads the cast.

The Digest

publishes the only
AUTHENTIC
box office figures

"Off the Record" Routine Warner 'B'

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 90%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
 Associate Producer Sam Bischoff
 Director James Flood
 Screenplay Niven Busch,
 Lawrence Kimble, Earl Baldwin
 Original Saul Elkins, Sally Sandlin
 Stars Pat O'Brien, Joan Blondell
 Featured: Bobby Jordan, Alan Baxter, William Davidson, Morgan Conway, Clay Clement, Selmer Jackson, Addison Richards, Pierre Watkins, Joe King, Douglas Wood, Armand Kaliz.
 Photographer Charles Rosher
 Art Director Robert Haas
 Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
 Music Adolph Deutsch
 Film Editor Thomas Richards
 Time 70 Minutes

"Off the Record" could just as well have been kept off the record in so far as the story presents any reasons for its existence, but thanks to the Warner skill at this type of thing, as evidenced by James Flood's direction,

and a cast that can highlight snappily written scenes when called upon, it comes through as entertainment for the purpose for which it was made and for which it will be booked.

In other words: Flood, the cast, and the writers got together to make a succession of punch scenes and they succeeded. While all were probably saying, "Who cares if the story has any logic or reality to it—let's tackle this next scene."

The exhibitor needs little of our cueing on this type of picture, when it bears the Warner trade-mark. He knows it will stand up for a rattle-rattle, bang-bang, hour of entertainment on his program and he knows the number of his customers who like this sort of hypo.

This yarn threw several ingredients into the soup—the star reporter-gal columnist rivalry formula, heavy doses of the reform school type of kid star, plenteous injections of comedy at any cost. Pat O'Brien is the star reporter; Joan Blondell, the gal columnist; Bobby Jordan,

the juvenile tough problem; and the capable group of troupers on whom Warners call for "west of Tenth Avenue" yarns, the supporting cast.

It seems that Joan got herself in a spot where she had to practically adopt Bobby Jordan, then annex Pat O'Brien as a guardian for the reform school refugee, and then those dastardly old racketeers had to start shooting up plot and everything else, right and left. It is all good fun, and Flood manages to keep it so despite hell and highwater, the idea and the story.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAIR:

REPORTER: "Fair entertainment that can boast of better acting more than anything else. Bobby Jordan of the Dead End Kids is the life saver, and as a vehicle that has exploitation possibilities and displays his talents, it serves."

VARIETY: "Hokish, oft-times silly newspaper-underworld tale that motivates 'Off the Record' definitely relegates it to filler class."

"Nancy Drew, Reporter" Okay in Its Spot

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Bryan Foy
 Director William Clemens
 Original Screenplay Kenneth Gamet
 Based on Stories by Carolyn Keene
 Stars Bonita Granville, Frank Thomas, Jr.
 Featured: John Litel, Mary Lee, Sheila Bromley, Larry Williams, Sandra Kane, Thomas Jackson, Dickie Jones, Olin Howland, Frank Orth.
 Photographer Arthur Edeson
 Art Director Stanley Fleischer
 Film Editor Frank Dewar
 Time 67 Minutes

Nancy Drew is still appealing principally to the youngster trade, but the second in this new Warner series may be said to have sufficient of the safe entertainment elements—newspaper stuff, murder mystery, etc.,—put together

capably enough to hold a fair amount of adult interest.

Bonita Granville and Frankie Thomas, Jr., share the top spot honors, each trouping with complete assurance and zip under William Clemens' workmanlike direction. The picture introduces a new singing moppet in Mary Lee, who clicks nicely. Dickie Jones is again pleasantly present among the youngsters, while John Litel, as Nancy's father carries the adult interest along with Frank Orth, Olin Howland, Larry Williams, Thomas Jackson, Sheila Bromley, Sandra Kane, and other standard troupers.

A newspaper contest in which the youngsters are striving for the prize of a week's work on the local paper forms the basis for the yarn. It is the hard-boiled editor's plan to side-track the kids on harmless pursuits. But Bonita

crosses him up by getting herself entangled in the solving of a murder mystery.

All is paced for an effective blend of comedy and action in the true Brynie Foy school. It sums up as a picture well able to fill the niche for which it was made. You can't ask any more.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This one is really top notch entertainment and will do more than fulfill its part on the program. It carries a punch from start to finish and will provide any audience with 60 minutes of fun and excitement."

VARIETY: "Second in Warners series featuring Bonita Granville 'Nancy Drew, Reporter' makes a big stride forward to build a following among the high school trade. Ample able to fill lower half of the double bills, picture is not aimed for grown-up appeal but still offers entertainment for the older patrons."

"Code of the Streets" Good 'Tough Guy'

UNIVERSAL

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Burt Kelly
 Director Harold Young
 Original Screenplay Arthur T. Horman
 Featured: Harry Carey, Frankie Thomas, James McCaillon, Juanita Quigley, Paul Fix, Leon Ames, Marc Lawrence, El Brendel, and the Little Tough Guys: Harris Berger, Hally Chester, David Gorcey, Charles Duncan, William Benedict.
 Photographer Elwood Bredell
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Maurice Wright
 Time 70 Minutes

Another evening out with the Little Tough Guys, and through the appeal of a melodramatic cops and robbers yarn and clean cut direction, an evening that will rate well in this Universal series.

It does not have to strain for its effects as did the Tough Guys' excursion into society, but gives the kids and adult actors who are involved a fairly safe structure on which to pursue their way. Harry Carey is seen as a police officer, demoted because of his belief in the innocence of a hoodlum on the way to conviction for a murder rap. Frankie Thomas is his son, out to avenge his father by catching the really guilty one.

This brings into the action Frankie's enlisting of the aid of the tough runts, headed by the suspect's brother, and from there on it is bang-bang, with comedy of the kid gang alternating with good melodramatic mechanics for thrilling moments.

The youngster Thomas, and Harry Carey and Paul Fix in the adult roles turn in top jobs, with the members of the Little Tough Guys group well at home in their setting and

missing no opportunities. If your audiences have not been over-fed on the hard-boiled youngster menu, this one will not hurt them any, and will give an hour of suspenseful entertainment.

Director Harold Young handles his assignment in stride, from a carefully knit original screenplay by Arthur Horman. It is a program job which associate producer Burt Kelly has turned into Universal with general satisfaction all around.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A neat little programmer that has plenty of entertainment value, and flows smoothly along its way as the best of the lot that the little Tough Guys have graced."

VARIETY: "Tailored for the family trade, 'Code of the Streets' fills its niche satisfactorily. Unpretentious and frankly of the dual program calibre, picture provides a romp for the featured Little Tough Guys."



Harlan Thompson

PRODUCED

'PARIS HONEYMOON'



A PARAMOUNT PRODUCTION

Frank Tuttle

DIRECTED

'PARIS HONEYMOON'

A PARAMOUNT PRODUCTION

"Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt" Could Be Better

COLUMBIA

(EST. 80%)

Associate Producer Joseph Sistrom
 Director Peter Godfrey
 Screenplay Jonathan Latimer
 Original Louis Joseph Vance
 Stars Warren Williams, Ida Lupino
 Featured: Rita Hayworth, Virginia Weidler,
 Ralph Morgan, Tom Dugan, Don Beddoe,
 Leonard Carey, Ben Welden, Brandon
 Tynan, Helen Lynd.
 Photographer Allen G. Siegler
 Art Director Lionel Banks
 Musical Director M. W. Stoloff
 Film Editor Otto Meyer
 Time 67 Minutes

"The Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt" is so entertaining in so many ways, and slows its punches in so many others, that it has to be given a two-way review for our exhibitor readers. First, we have to tell them that it is pretty good, slightly better than "run-of-the-mill" entertainment. Second, we are compelled to state that it is not quite "A grade," as that grade is presently figured. And then we must seem to cross ourselves up by stating that it will satisfy a lot of people on a lot of programs.

Chief virtues? The inherent strength in the Lone Wolf theme, an assured performance by Warren William, a great comedienne job by Ida Lupino, satisfying eye-filling production values, plenty of sparkle in script, and frequent flashes in direction.

Chief vices? The darned thing tries too hard. Someone decided somewhere in the story conferences that it could be another "Thin Man" with the result that it frequently forgets to be a "Lone Wolf" while trying vainly to be a "Thin Man."

You know what we mean—the copy books phrased it this way: "You can't carry water on both shoulders."

And for the summation: The virtues overcome the vices. It becomes an hour or so of entertainment. Plot elements consist of involving the famous Lone Wolf in a scheme to steal some ultra-necessary navy blue-prints, and tagging on to him Ida Lupino as the man-hungry girl always getting in his way. They then bring in Virginia Weidler as the Lone Wolf's daughter, for comedy interest, and a sub-B climax when the Lone Wolf must save the kiddie in order to save the evening—and

the plot. So much really intelligent trickery is involved in the working out of the screenplay that there is plenty of room for daisies, if not orchids.

Jonathan Latimer, credited with the screenplay, has a fair string of mystery successes to his credit in book form. It's just too bad that he carried over his pulp paper idea of sex injections into the screen medium. Because the resultant scenes are the dull moments of the picture. We have a lot of hope for this Latimer fellow, because we feel that he will some day grow up—and over the back fence.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Lone Wolf returns again. Not with a lot of fanfare this time, but in a pleasant comedy whodunit, which emerges no great shakes as dynamite entertainment, but average program stuff dished up with enough funny lines and situations to handle its niche without too much trouble."

VARIETY: "The Lone Wolf Spy Hunt, provides a good brand of the expected excitement in the maneuvers of the demi-hero ex-crook who prevents active and unmitigated crooks from stealing anti-aircraft gun plans from the war department."

"Persons in Hiding" Corking Para Meller

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Edward T. Lowe
 Director Louis King
 Screenplay, William R. Lipman, Horace McCoy
 Based on 'Persons in Hiding' by.....
 J. Edgar Hoover
 Featured: Lynne Overman, Patricia Morison,
 J. Carrol Naish, William Henry, Helen
 Twelvetrees, William Frawley, Judith Bar-
 rett, William Collier, Sr., May Boley, Rich-
 ard Stanley, Dorothy Howe, John Hartley,
 Janet Waldo, Richard Denning, Leona
 Roberts, Philip Warren, John Eldredge,
 Richard Carle, Roy Gordon, John Hart,
 Lillian Yarbo.
 Photographer Harry Fischbeck
 Art Directors Hans Dreier, W. Flannery
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Film Editor Hugh Bennett
 Time 69 Minutes

A rattling good show that will stand up in entertainment values for any exploitation you give it to overcome the lack of marquee name strength in the leads. It lifts itself above the

run of G-Men and crooks thrillers by its authentic note. And the authentic note extends beyond the mere use of J. Edgar Hoover's name on the credit sheet—it is present in the intelligently straight-forward, twin-barreled, treatment.

Associate producer Edward T. Lowe, Director Louis King, and scripters Lipman and McCoy, come out of this one with credit for a really capable job of picture making. The picture will be an especial bargain for the exhibitors who have caught it in the low-budget Paramount group.

The ostensible story concerns Patricia Morison as a girl of the poor who ends as a mastermind behind a powerful gang. Weaved in and around the story line—so as to help and never hinder—is a wealth of information on the workings of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. J. Carroll Naish turns in a great performance as the head crook behind whom the girl operates, Lynn Overman sank his

thespian-cut teeth into the role of a G-Man. William Frawley, William Henry, and the balance of the cast measure up.

It is straight, heavy melodrama, building to some corking emotional moments. Director Louis King has maintained fine pace without losing the highlight interest of the G-Men's workings.

All in all, a fine job by all concerned. Paramount is probably sorry now that it didn't spot some top-line names in what would well be one of the year's exploitation surprises.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Persons in Hiding' a production which will convince audiences that previous excursions into this field have been ordinary 'cops and robbers' stuff, whereas this is the real authenticated article. It is unquestionably top-of-the-bill quality."

VARIETY: "Stark drama, fast moving and thrilling for entire route, makes 'Persons in Hiding' one of most gripping and entertaining mellers to come forward in many a moon."

"Beauty for the Asking" Dull Effort

R. K. O.

(EST. 70%)

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
 Producer B. P. Fineman
 Director Glenn Tryon
 Screenplay Doris Anderson, Paul Jarrico
 Story Edmund L. Hartmann
 Original Grace Norton, Adele Buffington
 Featured: Lucille Ball, Patric Knowles, Donald
 Woods, Frieda Inescourt, Inez Courtney,
 Leona Maricle, Frances Mercer, Whitney
 Bourne, George Andre Beranger, Kay Sut-
 ton, Ann Evers.
 Photographer Frank Redman
 Film Editor George Crone
 Time 64 Minutes

"Beauty for the Asking" will rate as satisfactory dual fare, without coming up to the top standard recently set by Lee Marcus in this Radio group. Good production values,

an excellent cast, and capable direction by Glenn Tryon put it in the "satisfactory" class; a stodgy scripting job keeps it from rating higher.

The story has a novel and feminine-appealing background in that it concerns the cosmetic trade, giving opportunity for set and grown dressing that are enhanced by Frank Redman's photography. Theme and atmosphere can be used for exploitation in a mild way.

Lucille Ball, steadily progressing in her career, is seen as one corner of the triangle opposite that good actress, Frieda Inescourt. The latter is the wealthy woman whose millions steal Lucille's boy friend away. Lucille goes into the cosmetic business, backed by Frieda, and the plot plods along with the two girls who want one man "motif," until enough

things have happened to give Lucille to the right man.

The story holds the interest fairly well, missing chiefly through taking itself a bit too seriously.

In addition to the principals mentioned, Patric Knowles, Donald Woods and Inez Courtney are seen to advantage.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Beauty for the Asking,'—A picture with a number of possibilities and no realizations, you can put this one down as a minor mistake that won't bother the customers one way or another."

VARIETY: "Turned out for supporting position on dualers, 'Beauty for the Asking' more than meets requirements. With intriguing story of conflicting loves laid against beauty parlor background, it offers a potent bid for femme trade."

"Four Girls in White" Leo Programmer

M. G. M.
(EST. 80%)

Producer Nat Levine
 Director S. Sylvan Simon
 Screenplay Dorothy Yost
 Original Nathalie Bucknall, Endre Bohem
 Featured: Florence Rice, Una Merkel, Ann Rutherford, Mary Howard, Alan Marshal, Kent Taylor, Buddy Ebsen, Jessie Ralph, Sara Haden, Phillip Terry, Tom Neal.
 Photographer Leonard Smith
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Recording Director Douglas Shearer
 Film Editor George Boemler
 Time 70 Minutes

A neatly made MGM B offering that won't burn up any rivers—as it was not expected to, probably—but which will generally satisfy in its proper spot on the bills.

Director S. Sylvan Simon and Dorothy Yost are two capable screen workers, and with Leo the Lion's accepted production values and a

capable cast of Leo's "fair-name" players the result rounds into a well-executed picture-making chore.

As might be expected from the title, the story concerns nurses—and a hospital. Interest centers on Florence Rice, a gal with her hopes on a wealthy husband, more strongly than on the rigorous requirements of nursing service. Florence manages to get her calculating heart affairs mixed up to the point where she not only loses the prize catch but feels herself responsible for the death of a fellow nurse. This brings events to the opportunity for a satisfactory redemption ending in a dramatic railway crash climax.

Florence Rice has passed the point where it need be mentioned that she has arrived. She does her usual capable job in this assignment. Metro's other gals, Ann Rutherford, Una Merkel, and Mary Howard supply satisfactory sur-

roundings. Buddy Ebsen is in for the comedy stooge part, Jessie Ralph for some hardboiled laughs as the matron. Alan Marshal and Kent Taylor measure up to male leads.

Director Simon continues to show flashes of the stuff that graduated him from Universal B's, and should be ripe for a bigger opportunity. He is at his best here in the good color surrounding nurses' training; at his weakest when curbed by the formula elements on which producer Nat Levine probably insisted.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Really good entertainment for the lower half of the bill. It's well acted and well written in a number of scenes, and easily a bargain at the price."

VARIETY: "Creditable program offering which will satisfy in the support spot. Has to overcome lack of names, but supplies enough entertainment in subject matter and good direction and performances to put it well on the plus side."

"Pride of Navy" Surprise Republic

REPUBLIC
(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Herman Schlom
 Director Charles Lamont
 Screenplay Ben Markson, Saul Elkins
 Original James Webb, Joseph Hoffman
 Stars James Dunn, Rochelle Hudson
 Featured: Gordon Oliver, Horace MacMahon, Gordon Jones, Charlotte Wynters, Joseph Crehan, Charles Trowbridge.
 Photographer Jack Marta
 Art Director John Victor Mackay
 Musical Director Cy Feuer
 Film Editor Edward Mann
 Time 63 Minutes

Republic has a darn good piece of entertainment in "Pride of the Navy." It will satisfy any audience that you garner to view it; it will measure up to any efforts you put forth in special exploitation of its navy and national defense themes. Without being an epic—or even an attempt at one—the picture deserves a bit of extra pressure on your exploitation and some thought as to your play dates.

It has a light and lilting pace, the result of neat direction by Charles Lamont and personable performances by Jimmy Dunn and Rochelle Hudson. It has that startling surprise—a

really new and novel angle on national defense problems. And though the story may have a formula basis, we shouldn't ask too much of writers on service yarns, while we really can give this group credit for doing a better job than some recent super-supers stemming from the same formula.

James Dunn cannot be crossed off the list of players able to sell personality off the screen. He delivers in this one, with fine stooge aid on the part of Horace MacMahon, most frequently seen lately in saving some Warner scenes. Gordon Oliver is a likeable straight lead, only stymied occasionally by some momentary dialogue blabs.

Dunn plays the not unfamiliar lead who was bounced out of Annapolis for his playful spirit, has since become a marine engine expert. The Navy needs him because a "splinter boat" torpedo contraption has developed wrinkles. Involved is the formula wherein the swell-head Dunn and the serious young man, Oliver, vie for the honors of the Nation and Navy—two capital N's—and the girl, Rochelle Hudson. It is all presented very pleasantly—if naively—with agreeable troupers.

And it all works up to a corking physical climax which exhibitors will recognize as a speedboat thriller that is enhanced and stepped up to patriotic heights as a test for Navy acceptance of a new type of jingus.

Charles Lamont deserves a real credit on his record for direction, the players for entertainment, and the scripters for many neatly written scenes, together with Herman Schlom, as associate producer, for the compact presentation of production values. Somewhere along the line you can throw our brick at someone for not realizing that they had the basis of an even better picture. But that would have involved some fundamental story knowledge. And who can be bothered with story knowledge in these days of granulated scripts?

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Pride of the Navy' comes off the Republic production line with the usual effect. It is good enough effort to qualify under a scheduled title, and will hold its own in the program field.."

VARIETY: "A neat little entry in the parade of service pictures,—strictly for the dualers but packing plenty of action to entertain the give-and-take fans."

"Fighting Thoroughbreds" Good Action

REPUBLIC
(EST. 70%)

Associate Producer Armand Schaefer
 Director Sidney Salkow
 Screenplay Wellyn Totman
 Original Clarence E. Marks, Robert Wyler
 Featured: Ralph Byrd, Mary Carlisle, Robert Allen, George Hayes, Marvin Stephens, Charles Wilson, Kenne Duncan, Victor Killian, Eddie Brian, Robert Warwick.
 Photographer Jack Marta
 Musical Director Cy Feuer
 Art Director John Victor Mackay
 Film Editor Ernie Nims
 Time 63 Minutes

"Fighting Thoroughbreds" is capably made dualler entertainment that will live up to the promise in its title for your customers. It's the race track action yarn, stemming however from a premise with something of originality, and with the proper ingredients of action,

emotion and comedy well blended for its hour of running.

The touch of originality in the premise is that happenings in the usual "feud-between-two-families" race track formula depends this time on the errant courtship of a famous stallion who escaped one night and strayed into strange pastures. The result is a colt appropriately named Sweet Revenge because Mary Carlisle and George Hayes expect the youngster to give them that revenge on the owner of the baby equine's step-brother, the latter born under more legitimate auspices.

Sidney Salkow keeps his tale moving, and to help in odd moments he has George Hayes garnering laughs in the Walter Brennan type of role as the crotchety old Southerner. Mary Carlisle, Ralph Byrd, and Robert Allen share the top romantic interest in capable fashion.

Clarence Marks and Robert Wyler deserve a bow for the above mentioned touch of originality in the story's basis, with Wellyn Totman turning in a workmanlike scripting job. Production values are thoroughly adequate, but it is the second Republic previewed in a week in which photography suffered—either through poor preview prints or hurried shooting schedules.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "While undistinguished in its budget class, 'Fighting Thoroughbreds' is sufficiently diverting to hold up its end of the bill, and should satisfy in those additional spots for which it is aimed."

VARIETY: "Capable Republic offering that while making no pretense at being other than a modestly budgeted number, will furnish plenty of entertainment for customers on its half of the bill."



HERE THEY COME!...

**The reckless, lusty,
swaggering sons of
the thundering guns!**



GUNGA DIN



starring

CARY GRANT • VICTOR McLAGLEN
and
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, JR.

with

SAM JAFFE • EDUARDO CIANNELLI • JOAN FONTAINE
PANDRO S. BERMAN IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY GEORGE STEVENS

From a Story by BEN HECHT and CHARLES MacARTHUR

Inspired by RUDYARD KIPLING'S Poem

Screen Play by Joel Sayre and Fred Guiot

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Alexander's Ragtime Band.....	FOX.....	227
Snow White.....	RKO.....	219
Test Pilot.....	MGM.....	187
In Old Chicago.....	FOX.....	181
Boys Town.....	MGM.....	174
Adventures of Robin Hood.....	WAR.....	170
You Can't Take It With You.....	COL.....	164
Sweethearts.....	MGM.....	163
Marie Antoinette.....	MGM.....	153
Happy Landings.....	FOX.....	152
Too Hot To Handle.....	MGM.....	146
That Certain Age.....	UNIV.....	146
Angels With Dirty Faces.....	WAR.....	146
Mad About Music.....	UNIV.....	140
Girl of the Golden West.....	MGM.....	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife.....	PAR.....	137
The Buccaneer.....	PAR.....	137
Kentucky.....	FOX.....	137
Dawn Patrol.....	WAR.....	135
Suez.....	FOX.....	133
The Crowd Roars.....	MGM.....	132
A Yank at Oxford.....	MGM.....	130

The Cowboy and the Lady.....	U.A.....	128
Jezebel.....	WAR.....	126
My Lucky Star.....	FOX.....	125
If I Were King.....	PAR.....	123
Men With Wings.....	PAR.....	122
Carefree.....	RKO.....	122
Three Loves Has Nancy.....	MGM.....	120
Sing You Sinners.....	PAR.....	119
Adventures Of Tom Sawyer.....	PAR.....	119
Mannequin.....	MGM.....	119
Adventures of Marco Polo.....	U. A.....	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook.....	FOX.....	118
Algiers.....	U.A.....	118
The Goldwyn Follies.....	U. A.....	118
Trade Winds.....	U.A.....	117
Artists and Models Abroad.....	PAR.....	117
The Citadel.....	MGM.....	117
Vivacious Lady.....	RKO.....	117
Bringing Up Baby.....	RKO.....	117
Spawn of the North.....	PAR.....	115
Three Comrades.....	MGM.....	115
The Sisters.....	WAR.....	112
Little Miss Broadway.....	FOX.....	111
The Sisters.....	WAR.....	111

Hollywood Hotel.....	WAR.....	109
Room Service.....	RKO.....	108
Kentucky Moonshine.....	FOX.....	108
Joy of Living.....	RKO.....	108
Sally, Irene and Mary.....	FOX.....	105
Tropic Holiday.....	PAR.....	105
Three Blind Mice.....	FOX.....	103
The Shining Hour.....	MGM.....	103
Dr. Rhythm.....	PAR.....	103
Gold Is Where You Find It.....	WAR.....	103
Letter Of Introduction.....	UNIV.....	102
Having Wonderful Time.....	RKO.....	102
Baroness and the Butler.....	FOX.....	101
The Rage of Paris.....	UNIV.....	101
The Young In Heart.....	U.A.....	101
There Goes My Heart.....	U.A.....	100
Drums.....	U.A.....	100
Submarine Patrol.....	FOX.....	100
The Great Waltz.....	MGM.....	100

Big Broadcast of 1938.....	PAR.....	99
Four's A Crowd.....	WAR.....	98
Just Around The Corner.....	FOX.....	98
Arkansas Traveler.....	PAR.....	97
Thanks for Everything.....	FOX.....	96
Boy Meets Girl.....	WAR.....	96
Every Day's a Holiday.....	PAR.....	96
Merrily We Live.....	MGM.....	95
Holiday.....	COL.....	94
Her Jungle Love.....	PAR.....	94
The Texans.....	PAR.....	94
College Swing.....	PAR.....	93
Josette.....	FOX.....	93
Blockade.....	U. FOX.....	93
Always Goodbye.....	U. FOX.....	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Out West With the Hardys.....	MGM.....	147
Stabmates.....	MGM.....	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy.....	MGM.....	131
Bad Man of Brimstone.....	MGM.....	130

Brother Rat.....	WAR.....	122
Four Daughters.....	WAR.....	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse.....	WAR.....	113
A Silly Case of Murder.....	WAR.....	112

I Am The Law.....	COL.....	103
Straight, Place and Show.....	FOX.....	98
Port of Seven Seas.....	MGM.....	95
Judge Hardy's Children.....	MGM.....	95
Valley Of The Giants.....	WAR.....	94
Four Men and a Prayer.....	FOX.....	93
Shopworn Angel.....	MGM.....	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn.....	MGM.....	93
Lord Jeff.....	MGM.....	92
There's That Woman Again.....	COL.....	91
Hold That Co-Ed.....	FOX.....	90

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

The Birth Of A Baby.....	IND.....	167
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Crime School.....	WAR.....	105
Blondie.....	COL.....	104

Little Tough Guy.....	UNIV.....	86
King Of Alcatraz.....	PAR.....	83
The Young Dr. Kildare.....	MGM.....	82
Saint in New York.....	RKO.....	81
Girls on Probation.....	WAR.....	80
Tom Sawyer, Detective.....	PAR.....	80
Smashing the Spy Ring.....	COL.....	80
Christmas Carol.....	MGM.....	80
Sky Giant.....	RKO.....	80
Law of the Underworld.....	RKO.....	79
While New York Sleeps.....	FOX.....	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond.....	PAR.....	78
Tarzan's Revenge.....	FOX.....	78

Gangster's Boy	MONO	82
Strange Case of Dr. Mead	COL	82
Gangs of New York	REF	81
Crime Takes a Holiday		
Tenth Avenue Kid	REP	78
Call of the Yukon	REP	78
Making of the Headlines	COL	78
Reformatory	COL	78
Juvenile Court	COL	78
Down in Arkansas	REP	78
Mr. Wong, Detective	MONO	78
King of the Newsboys	REP	77
Flight Into Nowhere	COL	77
City Streets		
The Wrong Road	COL	76
Sergeant Murphy	REP	76
The Spy Ring	WAR	76
Prison Nurse	UNIV	76
Storm Over Bengal	REP	76
Outside of Paradise	REP	75
Lady Recharve	REP	75
Mamma Runs Wild	REP	74
The Higgins Family	REP	74
Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	74
Adventure in Sahara	COL	73
Penrod's Twin Brother	WAR	73
Little Miss Thoroughbred	WAR	73
Escape by Night	REP	72
Juvenile Courts	COL	72
Flight to Fame		
Crime Ring	COL	72
Hollywood Stadium Mystery	RKO	72
Romance of the Limberlost	REP	72
Little Adventuress	MONO	72
Mr. Moto's Chance	COL	72
Mr. Moto's Dilemma	MONO	72
A Man To Remember	MONO	71
The Missing Guest	REP	71
Blonde Cheat	UNIV	71
Marriage Forbidden	RKO	71
The Duke Comes Back	G.N.	71
Exiled to Shanghai	REP	71
When G-Men Slip in	REP	71
Arson Gang Busters	COL	71
Come On Leathernecks	REP	71
Delinquent Parents	REP	71
Delinquent Parents	IND.	70
Telephone Operator	MONO	69
Invisible Enemy	REP	69
Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
Last Express	UNIV	68
Rose Of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
Last Warning	UNIV	68
Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
Woman Against the World	COL	68
Numbered Women	MONO	67
Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
Under the Big Top	MONO	66
Mr. Champ	WAR	66
Fugitives For A Night	RKO	66
Saleslady	MONO	66
Ladies in Distress	REP	65
Convicted	COL	65
Reckless Living	UNIV	65
Romance on the Run	REP	65
The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
Mystery Horse	WAR	64
Lady in the Morning	UNIV	64
My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	63
Maid's Night Out	RKO	63
This Marriage Business	RKO	63
Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
Main Event	COL	63
Highway Patrol	REP	61
Cipher Bureau	G.N.	61
International Crime	G.N.	60
Born to Be Wild	REP	59

City Girl	FOX	78
Condemned Woman	RKO	78
Change of Heart	FOX	78
Little Tough Guys in Society	UNIV	78
Touchdown Army	PAR	78
Tune Out For Murder	FOX	77
No Time to Marry	COL	77
Girl's School	COL	77
Always in Trouble	FOX	77
Scandal Street	PAR	77
Double Danger	RKO	77
Crashing Hollywood	RKO	77
Sharpshooters	FOX	77
Torchy Blane Gets Her Man	WAR	77
Blondes at Work	WAR	76
He Couldn't Say No	WAR	76
Affairs of Annabelle	RKO	76
Campus Confessions	PAR	76
Women in Prison	COL	76
Bulldog Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
Illegal Traffic	PAR	75
Youth Takes A Fling	UNIV	75
Speed to Burn	FOX	75
Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
Blind Alibi	RKO	74
Over the Wall	WAR	74
Dancers to Know	PAR	74
Island in the Sky	FOX	74
Beloved Brat	WAR	74
Broadway Musketeers	WAR	74
Prison Farm	PAR	74
Annabelle Takes a Tour	RKO	74
Prison Break	UNIV	73
One Wild Night	FOX	73
Mr. Moto's Gamble	G.N.	73
Tarnished Angel	RKO	73
Love on a Budget	FOX	73
Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
Prescription for Romance	UNIV	73
Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	72
Swing That Cheer	UNIV	72
Down On The Farm	FOX	72
The Lady Objects	COL	72
Boo-oo	PAR	72
Torchy Blane in Panama	WAR	72
Little Miss Roughneck	COL	72
Midnight Intruder	UNIV	72
International Settlement	FOX	72
Passport Husband	FOX	72
Next Time I Marry	RKO	71
The Kid Comes Back	WAR	71
Go Chase Yourself	RKO	71
The Patient in Room 18	WAR	71
Everybody's Doing It	FOX	71
Mr. Moto's Chance	FOX	71
Bulldog Drummond in Africa	PAR	71
Fast Company	MGM	71
Strange Faces	UNIV	71
The Black Doll	UNIV	71
His Exciting Night	UNIV	70
Exposed	UNIV	70
I'm From the City	RKO	70
Sons Of the Legion	PAR	70
Dare Devil Drivers	WAR	70
Hunted Men	PAR	70
Nurse From Brooklyn	UNIV	70
Young Fugitives	UNIV	70
Night Spot	RKO	70
Secrets of A Nurse	UNIV	70
Shiners in Paradise	UNIV	70
Safety in Numbers	FOX	70
Mr. Dooodle Kicks Off	RKO	70
Freshman Year		
Lone Wolf in Paris	UNIV	69
Meet the Girls	COL	69
The Devils Party	FOX	68
Peck's Bad Boy at Circus	UNIV	68
The Crime of Dr. Hallett	RKO	68
The Jury's Secret	UNIV	68
Love, Honor and Behave	UNIV	68
She Loved a Fireman	WAR	68
Glamorous Night	REP	68
When Were You Born?	WAR	67
Wives Under Suspicion	UNIV	67
Men Are Such Fools	WAR	67
Swing Sister Swing	UNIV	66
The Chaser	UNIV	66
Vacation From Love	MGM	66
Personal Secretary	MGM	66
Road Demon	UNIV	66
Men With 100 Faces	FOX	65
Sez O'Reilly to McNabb	G.B.	62
Three On A Weekend	G.B.	61
Strange Boarders	G.B.	61
Dark Sands	B. I. P.	58
Crime Over London	G.B.	58
Little Orphan Annie	PAR	58
To the Victor	G.B.	56

Newsboys Home	UNIV	88
Hard To Get	WAR	88
There's Always a Woman	COL	87
Everybody Sing	MGM	87
Going Places	WAR	86
Yip! Give A Million	FOX	81
Yellow Jack	MGM	81
White Banners	WAR	81
Lisben Darling	MGM	81
Racket Busters	WAR	83
Mother Carey's Chickens	RKO	83
Fenitentiary	MGM	82
Hold That Kiss	COL	82
Give Me A Sailor	PAR	82
Heart of the North	WAR	81
Rascals	FOX	81
Garden of the Moon	WAR	80
The Gladiator	COL	80
Wide Open Faces	COL	80
Checkers	FOX	80
Paradise for Three	MGM	80
Gateway	FOX	80
You and Me	PAR	80
Woman Against Woman	MGM	80
Say It in French	PAR	80
Up the River	FOX	80
Flirting With Fate	MGM	80
Ride A Crooked Mile		
Swing Your Lady	PAR	79
Of Human Hearts	WAR	79
Spring Madness	MGM	79
Five Of A Kind	MGM	78
Breaking The Ice	FOX	78
The Road To Reno	RKO	78
Wise Girl	UNIV	77
The Storm	RKO	77
Swiss Miss		
I Met My Love Again	MGM	76
Army Girl	U. A.	76
Blockheads	REP	76
Comet Over Broadway	MGM	76
Keep Smiling		
Arsene Lupin Returns	FOX	75
First 100 Years	MGM	75
Love Is a Headache	MGM	75
Battle of Broadway	MGM	74
Secrets Of An Actress	FOX	74
Service Deluxe		
Spring Madness	UNIV	73
Stolen Heaven	MGM	73
Thanks For the Memory	PAR	73
Rich Man, Poor Girl	PAR	73
Hawaii Calls	MGM	72
Goodbye Broadway	RKO	72
Start Cheering	UNIV	72
My Bill		
Women Are Like That	WAR	71
Women Are Like That	WAR	71
Sailing Along		
Sailing Along	G. B.	70

Professor Beware	PAR	81
Kidnaped	FOX	84
Radio City Revels	RKO	84
Dramatic School	MGM	83
The Toy Wife		
Gold Diggers in Paris	MGM	81
Gold Diggers in Paris	WAR	81
Cocoanut Grove		
Cocoanut Grove	PAR	79
Fools for Scandal		
Divorcee of Lady X	WAR	72
Divorcee of Lady X	U. A.	72
Sixty Glorious Years		
Sixty Glorious Years	RKO	71
We're Going to Be Rich		
We're Going to Be Rich	FOX	69

You can read
all the Polls---
but don't get
excited-----

•

You won't know
the truth until
you read-----

•

**National Box Office
Digest's 1939**



BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

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NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 7. No. 26

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 1, 1939

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$10

UNIVERSAL TOPS FOR WEEK WITH "SON OF FRANKENSTEIN" SCORING

*Of Five New Releases in the Past Week Only One Rated Over 100%
Two Came Thru Okay, and Two Were Very Weak.*

By NORMAN WEBB

Universal—1 New Release

Universal has the top box office attraction this week in their latest horror-thriller, "THE SON OF FRANKENSTEIN." A few months ago, several exhibitors revived two old Universal pictures ("DRACULA" and "FRANKENSTEIN") on a double header. This bill with Lugosi and Karloff was so well received that Universal re-issued the two pictures and sold them on a double bill to the leading theaters throughout the nation.

This double bill was received very well, and grossed a great deal of money for Universal, and "strange as it may seem," this double header even did more business than Universal's new "SON OF FRANKENSTEIN" has done in certain spots. The fact that the reissue beat the new picture in many instances may be due to the exhibitor showmen who sold Lugosi and Karloff, while the standard advertising on the new production is trying to sell Rathbone—a fine actor, but not a ticket-seller. Hollywood forgets that Rathbone is still a character actor as far as marquee names are concerned—and names like Ronald Colman and others have had to sell his past pictures.

Rowland V. Lee produced and directed the fine new "SON OF FRANKENSTEIN" for Universal, which is doing 116%, very good under current conditions.

Warners—1 New Release

Warner Brothers have a fairly good newspaper picture in "OFF THE RECORD," which doesn't seem to be getting any place on its first runs, as it is only averaging 83%, in spite of the fact that Pat O'Brien and Joan Blondell are co-starred. So evidently Pat

and Joan are slipping at the box office or else the public is "fed up" on newspaper stories.

Sam Bischoff produced and Jimmie Flood directed. Niven Busch, Larry Kimble, and Earl Baldwin wrote the screenplay from Saul Elkins and Sally Sandlin's original.

R.K.O.—1 New Release

RKO has a much better than average program picture in "THE GREAT MAN VOTES," 80%, which is definitely a fine critic's picture, and would probably also be an outstanding box office picture, were it not for John Barrymore, but the public seems to steer away from his pictures in a big way. Other than Barrymore, the balance of the cast are little known; Peter Holden and Virginia Weidler are featured.

Garson Kanin directed. John Twist wrote this very outstanding screenplay from Gordon Hillman's original.

Exhibitors should spot this picture in with a much stronger box office attraction, as "THE GREAT MAN VOTES" is really well worth running, but because of Barrymore's weakness, will bring little money in "on its own." It is not so much Barrymore weakness, as the lack of a top youthful name to sell the younger generation.

Republic—1 New Release

Republic has a new horse racing yarn this week entitled "FIGHTING THOROUGHBREDS," which is just getting by at a 69% average. Mary Carlisle and Ralph Byrd are co-starred;

(Continued on Page 5)

5 New Releases Not in Last Issue

1 Over 100% 2 O. K. 2 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Son of Frankenstein	UNIV.	116	130
2. Off The Record	WAR	83	90
3. The Great Man Votes	RKO	80	85
4. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69	70
5. I Am A Criminal	MONO	66	70

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ *"Honor Box"* ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **UNIVERSAL** Wins With

"SON OF FRANKENSTEIN" - 116%



Producer-Director
ROWLAND V. LEE



Original Screenplay
WILLIS COOPER

Featured
LIONEL ATWILL
DONNIE DUNCAN



BORIS KARLOFF

Film Editor
TED KENT

Photography
GEORGE ROBINSON



BELA LUGOSI



JOSEPHINE HUTCHINSON



BASIL RATHBONE

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

IT'S THE SHOW BUSINESS

What are the elements that with sudden explosive strength will lift one picture sky-high in box office results? Not merely those standard differences in elements of appeal that will separate even top pictures by five, ten, or fifteen points in the ratings—but the spontaneous combustion that lifts a particular picture and starts it soaring?

The question is brought to mind by events of the opening weeks of 1939, combined with some reflections on 1938.

Darryl Zanuck hit the sky in 1938 with "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and its sensational grosses at box offices and for producer had the business running around in circles—and many still at it—trying to figure what made "Alexander" tick.

Darryl Zanuck smashed off the tee for 1939 with "Jesse James"—and by all the signs of all the oracles he will again in coming months have many of our production minds taking one of his pictures apart in an effort to find where the wheels are.

On Zanuck's heels, Radio comes with "Gunga Din"—and what a pretty neck and neck race the two pictures will make for many months. Or, until the next show miracle comes along.

What makes one or two picture skyrocket like this—to stratosphere levels?

* * * *

It cannot be SOLELY because of star value, because if that were the case every picture of every star group would hit certain levels—within margins dictated by the weather.

But look at a top-liner—Clark Gable—and see the difference between his "Test Pilot" and other hit pictures.

It cannot be merely a difference in quality—if by "quality" we use a general word to indicate story strength, competence of production and direction. Because there are many hit pictures appearing in The Digest's 100% to 120% ratings that need bow to no others in competence of motion picture creation.

It must be a "something else."

And that "something else"

is this plain fact: WE ARE IN THE SHOW BUSINESS.

And well-conceived, well-produced, and well exploited SHOWS always have within themselves that element of TNT that may explode in dollar signs.

* * * *

"Jesse James" and "Gunga Din" are two pictures that from the moments of their conception have been SHOWS.

We could give either basic story in typewritten form to a half dozen production executives and an assortment of directors, tomorrow, and we can guarantee that when you read the reviews a month from now you would read:

"Pretty good action stuff that will go over well with the Saturday matinee kid audience. Players names will draw some other business but not much entertainment for adults."

You know that's what you would read.

So what's the answer?

Darryl Zanuck and Pandro Berman didn't set out to make that sort of picture; they set out to make SHOWS. They got showmen directors like Henry King and George Stevens at the helm, combined the assisting talents of associates like Harry Joe Brown on "Alexander"; and WENT TO TOWN.

But even while the product was being made, their DISTRIBUTION and EXPLOITATION departments were running ahead of them towards that same goal BIG-TOWN.

Sidney Kent, Charlie McCarthy, Harry Brand, in the one group, KNEW that Zanuck was girded up for a SHOW—and they limbered up the artillery with confidence. Ned Depinet, Barrett McCormick, and Howard Benedict KNEW that Berman was shooting the works. They shot the works at their end.

The results? You can read them in the figures already on "Jesse James," and all early release signs are unanimous on what "Gunga Din" will record.

The reason?

Just a naive admission once in a while that THIS IS THE SHOW BUSINESS.

Just a little less associa-
(Continued on Page 9)

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

1.	M. G. M.	45	Releases	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	51	Releases	92
3.	United Artists	17	Releases	92
4.	Paramount	40	Releases	88
5.	Warner Brothers	53	Releases	87
6.	R. K. O.	39	Releases	83
7.	Columbia	33	Releases	80
8.	Universal	39	Releases	77
9.	Republic	25	Releases	73
10.	Monogram	14	Releases	69
11.	Grand National	5	Releases	66
12.	Gaumont British	10	Releases	59

371

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

The News at a Glance

Well, there may never be enough news in a week of this industry to make a man enervatingly nappy, but there are always enough things to talk about. And this is one of the weeks. For example: For sentimental reasons we'd like to talk about a regular fellow named W. Ray Johnston, who is celebrating his umpty-umph anniversary in this vale of tears known as the picture industry. . . . Then for purposes of getting a grouch off our systems we'd like to take up the daily paper headlines that keep telling the public about the "intolerable working conditions" of our writers, as evidenced by the fact that Washington, with all its worries about Hitler, WPA, fortification of Guam, and the straying of a stray judge or two, has time to issue reams of statements. . . . And then, if we were really using our space for any reason of value to the reader we would consider the subject of Harry Cohn—because there is more news between the lines of some things that irritating personality is doing than in many of the alleged news headlines. So why not start at random?

Capra -- Ruggles -- Hawks -- Who Else?

Let's take up Harry Cohn first. I'm not doing it through choice, because those quills Harry has sticking out all over him irritate me as much as they do you. But, as we said a few weeks ago, it seems that Harry is maneuvering somewhere. This week brings news that the deal for Wesley Ruggles exclusive producer-director services has been settled. If all rumors we hear are true, we feel certain that Harry will buy another insurance policy by closing a future deal with Howard Hawks—whose submarine picture now in work is getting some considerable advance rumbling. Cohn has Frank Capra under the tent.

You could start a new United Artists tomorrow with those three guarantees of product in your set-up. . . . All right, suppose you tell us that there are always rumors about Frank Capra departing for other pastures. So isn't it stronger evidence of canny Harry Cohn planning that he is setting himself for even that eventuality. . . . Not that we think it will happen. Because Capra's present set-up gives him backing and a free hand—and gets Academy results as well as box office results. What more can be asked? While, on the other hand, Frank Capra is a shrewd citizen, and must from the side-lines have opinions about what other directors are frequently up against on supposedly ideal set-ups at other plants. . . . So we come to this: Harry Cohn, seeing the size of that vast gap between program tripe and top money makers, and having learned there is no way of chiseling in the in-between brackets, is laying the foundation for his real picture future. A foundation based on the men who deliver. Producer-directors. We'd like nothing better to

7 FEATURES "GOING UP"

	Was	Now
1. Ange's With Dirty Faces WAR	146	148
2. Topper Takes A Trip U.A.	111	116
3. Thanks For Everything FOX	96	100
4. Gangster's Boy MONO	82	86
5. Thanks For The Memory PAR	73	77
6. Illegal Traffic PAR	75	77
7. Secrets Of A Nurse UNIV	70	74

sell or to buy tomorrow than a line-up that said: "Capra—Ruggles—Hawks."

Those Intolerable Working Conditions

With the milk of human kindness in our heart, and approaching our subject with the sympathy of twenty years of tenderized typewriter fingers, we touch on the subject of those nuisance wrangles between writers and producers that have resulted in the continual stream of headlines: "COMPLAINTS TO NLRB" — "INTOLERABLE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR SCREEN WRITERS" — "GOVERNMENT BUREAU CRACKS DOWN ON PICTURE MAKERS FOR TREATMENT OF WRITERS." — Rats! If you want to know who is suffering from intolerable working conditions take a vote among the screen reviewers who must night after night view the puerile efforts at story creation and screen construction which have been infesting screens for the past year or so—and which are paying off in decreased business. Intolerable working conditions? Just picture yourself the reviewer who day after day should say, "The story was a piece of cheese," and then must work hard to dig up phrases like "The story is just formula, but the directors and the players make it interesting." Or who should say: "Six writers are listed on the credits. All of them are fugitives from chain-store clerkships." And who, out of the age-old faith of one key-pounder to another, phrases it: "There are many clever lines of dialogue in the script which is the work of Thaddeus Jones, Simon Smith, Barnaby Brown, Henry Hunkoiji, F. Hyphen-Hyphen Hypo, and Tom Stooze." . . . Intolerable working conditions? Sympathize with the poor struggling associate producers, half of whom don't know what time it is anyway, as they hopefully drop nickles in a slot marked "WRITERS" and wonder why nothing ever comes forth. Sympathize with the bookmakers who are sometimes delayed 10 or 15 minutes

8 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was	Now
1. Stand Up And Fight MGM	134	131
2. Trade Winds U.A.	117	114
3. Blondie COL	104	101
4. Devil's Island WAR	104	94
5. There's That Woman Again COL	91	88
6. The Girl Downstairs MGM	91	86
7. Pacific Liners RKO	84	82
8. His Exciting Night UNIV	70	68

until some four figure a week writer checks his Racing Form. And then finally, sympathize with the poor exhibitor who is playing the story junk he is compelled to take, and then has our Hollywood wiseacre editorial writers declaring that the only trouble with the business is the dumb, stupid, criminal lack of showmanship on the part of the poor guy owning a mortgage on a theatre in Cedar Falls. . . . Sympathize with the poor writers, who scarcely out of high school mentally are asked to descend the collieries each day, thousands of miles beneath the earth, where the fish of the sea are met, where a man can't count his next breath, and struggle and toil for the motion picture. Sympathize with the writers whose wives don't know where their next hunk of caviar is coming from, as the children, gaunt and worn, call up from the polo field and plead, "Where is my daddy?" Sympathize, boys, while the sympathizing is good. Because after us the deluge.

Let's Talk

About Happy Things

That is enough of telling the picture business how to run itself—maybe the fellows in power don't want to be told how it could run. There are cheertful thoughts. Let's grab hold of one. . . . W. Ray Johnston. Monogram's prexy. Driving straight ahead through the years Ray Johnston has consistently sold his firm belief in the picture business as a show business—and therefore always a spot for a live-wire independent. Plenty of times he had nothing else but his faith—except a fellow named Trem Carr, quietly working at this crazy end, to keep the same independent torch alive. . . . Plenty of times he could have folded up, and said, "Oh, whatinell, I'll go take a job." . . . This fellow Ray Johnston kept the fires aburning. His contribution to the cause of independence for exhibitors and for Hollywood creators will never be fully placed on the records. We don't blame the boys for giving him a party—even if they didn't invite us. Neither did they invite that mortgage holder in Cedar Rapids, whom we have mentioned.

Rambling Here and There in the Studios

Gosh there was one item of news. Milton Bren is leaving Hal Roach. Bren darned near put Roach back on the map as a production factor. What could have happened? Maybe some of the same stuff that chased Leo McCarey, George Stevens, Harold Lloyd (You've heard of him,) Fred Guiol (he scripted "Gunga Din,") from the Roach precincts. Maybe the old rule that the boys used to tell us in 1929 still holds good—Roach can't stand having a good picture or two. Let that happen and he has to take conditions into his own hands. . . . Our betting goes this way—since all Hollywood must talk now in racing or polo terms—Milton Bren to win his next time out, Roach studios to continue to "knock at the door" for show money.

RKO's "Gunga Din" Will Smash All Marks in Current Box Office Race

R. K. O.
(EST. 170%)

Executive Producer Pandro S. Berman
 Producer-Director George Stevens
 Screenplay Joel Sayre, Fred Guiol
 Story Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur
 Poem 'Gunga Din' Rudyard Kipling
 Featured: Cary Grant, Victor MacLaglen,
 Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Sam Jaffe, Eduar-
 do Ciannelli, Joan Fontaine, Montagu
 Love, Robert Coote, Abner Biberman,
 Lumsden Hare.
 Photographer Joseph H. August
 Music Alfred Newman
 Art Director Van Nest Polglase
 Special Effects Vernon L. Walker
 Film Editors Henry Berman, John Lockert
 Time 115 Minutes

Give three cheers—rousing ones—for a slam bang exposition of the elements that made the motion picture industry. That is "Gunga Din."

Here is straight-shooting, one hundred per cent "moving pitcher." It will smash box office records for regular runs, it will mop up for all the extra days you can give it. And don't forget those extra days. It has been a long time since you have had a feature that will get so much mass word of mouth.

It was just built to that end. The original story, for which Hecht and MacArthur are credited, can be dismissed by saying that a couple of fellows must have got together on a street corner and decided: "Let's make another 'Three Musketeers' and put it in India this time. Three rootin'-tootin'-sons o' guns in a picture never misses."

But the development of that speech, the directorial skill, and the production company's courageous backing—ah, those are the things that make "Gunga Din."

It is just plain rip-snorting blood thrilling adventure staged against as big a canvas as the screen has ever used—and that's taking in everything from Griffith to DeMille—but handled with such finesse that it is ultra 1939 in intelligence and appeal.

Kipling gives it the inspiration and the pseudo-epic note that will carry it to tremendous grosses in the British market; Gunga Din, the ever faithful, and three "regular guys" in uniform give it the universal appeal that will sell it even where they don't understand the dialogue.

George Stevens, serving under Pandro Berman as producer-director, sets himself firmly on the top crust with this production. Scene by scene it is evident that the picture is a work of whole-hearted and intelligent collaboration by director and screenplay writers, then translated into human action by players who not only knew their metier, but enjoyed their jobs.

Judged on their performances here, no better trio for a yarn of this sort could be imagined than Cary Grant, Victor MacLaglen, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., The proof is have a vote from dicerent members of the the fact that all are so good that each will

		%
1. Jesse James	FOX	184
2. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	128
3. Son Of Frankenstein	UNIV	116
4. Topper Takes A Trip	U.A.	116
5. Zaza	PAR	112
6. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	108
7. Devil's Island	WAR	90
8. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	86
9. King Of The Underworld	WAR	86
10. Off The Record	WAR	83
11. Charlie Chan In Honolulu	FOX	82
12. The Great Man Votes	RKO	80
13. Pacific Liner	RKO	80
14. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
15. I Am A Criminal	MONO	66

audience as the outstanding one. When that happens, you know you have a hit.

Support is of equally high standard. That grand trouper of the stage, Sam Jaffe, waits for his big moment in the sacrificial sequences, and then wrings the heart. Joan Fontaine, like a true soldier, accepts the off-part of the girl in a man's yarn, and registers in clean cut fashion. Eduardo Cianelli, Montague Love, Robert Coote, are seen to advantage.

The experience of George Stevens and the skill of Joseph August are blended on a photographic contribution that is actually a succession of the sort of photographs you see labelled "prizewinner" in the magazines. It is sweeping and inspiring—again a reminder that there is nothing to beat "the motion picture."

The story? Well, it seems that at a time when the British in India were having their chief trouble with a particularly vicious rebellion, there were three soldiers. Victor, hard-boiled sergeant with a one-track mind; Carey, devil-may-care scrapper who can't, however, resist tales of fabulous treasure; and Doug, Jr., the boy who is going to get

married as soon as his enlistment period is up.

As you probably suspect, the three are bickering pals, who would go through hell together and come out offering one another fresh matches. Grant gets himself captured by the dastardly Thugs, a fanatic sect, and Gunga Din brings McLaglen and Fairbanks to the rescue. Which results in all four becoming prisoners, with death within arm's reach, and finally the marines come to the rescue in the form of British Tommies.

That's it, essentially. But all this is scripted by the picture-wise skill of Fred Guiol and Joel Sayre, paced with such adroitness by George Stevens, played with such winning assurance, that no plot outline can give more than a hint of the moment by moment enjoyment and suspense. The picture opens on a reel or two of high key, wild, man-to-man battle so breath-catching that it would seem impossible to top it later. But it is topped later for the climax—by the substitution of suspense for action.

Pan Berman's judgment and courage in the making of "Gunga Din" have been rewarded with a box office target for 1939 to shoot at. George Stevens' accomplishment will be best appreciated by picture craftsmen, who will sense the delicate "foot by foot" handling of his celluloid; never a scene without its topper, never a sequence not aimed at topping any preceding sequence of its kind.

That's picture-making.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Action! Drama! Comedy! Action! Drama! Thrills! What a picnic for those who made, those who play it and those who see it. It's box office plus and a whale of a good picture that makes Cary Grant and Victor MacLaglen into tops in team work, and gives them their best vehicle in months. It's a knockout for a world-wide audience and believe the ads when they tell you it's big."

VARIETY: "A magnificent narrative poem spun into vigorous ecstatic action. In writing, direction, performance and production lavishness it comes close to perfection in the kind of entertainment tailored for men and kids in any land or language. An army of men who know Gunga Din better than almost any celebrity of flesh and blood will lay it on the line at the b. o."

Releases of Week (Continued from Page 1)

neither of whom have very much marquee strength. However, this picture can be booked very satisfactorily in place of the usual western or action picture, and is particularly suited for Friday-Saturday booking.

Armand Schaefer produced and Sidney Sal-kov directed.

MONOGRAM—1 NEW RELEASE

Monogram has a new underworld melo-drama in "I AM A CRIMINAL," 66%, which would undoubtedly do much better in the present cycle of crime pictures, if it had some definite marquee value.

E. B. Derr produced "I AM A CRIMINAL" for Monogram and Bill Nigh directed from John Kraft's screenplay.

Air Thrills Must Sell "Tail Spin."

20th CENTURY-FOX
(EST. 130%)

Associate Producer Harry Joe Brown
Director Roy Del Ruth
Original Screenplay Frank Wead
Stars Alice Faye,
Constance Bennett, Nancy Kelly
Featured: Joan Davis, Charles Farrell, Jane
Wyman, Kane Richmond, Wally Vernon,
Joan Valerie, Edward Norris, J. Anthony
Hughes, Harry Davenport, Mary Gordon,
Harry Rosenthal, Irving Bacon, Sam
Hayes.
Photographer Karl Freund
Musical Director Louis Silver
Music and Lyrics Mark Gordon, Harry Revel
Art Directors Bernard Herzbrun,
Rudolph Sternau
Film Editor Allan McNeil
Time 83 Minutes

Remarkable airplane sequences, capitalizing the gasps and thrills of a national air meet, with emphasis on the woman's side of the story, will give "Tail Spin" selling value and some audience appeal. But Director Roy Del Ruth, with all his skill in handling the broad air panorama, and the individual scenes for intermittent sparking values, could not overcome the material that was probably called "story" when the picture was started.

"Tail Spin" is a picture irritating in the feeling that its subject apparently had so much in possibilities. The three girl leads, each with a different attitude toward their life in the air seem to offer tempting possibilities. Del Ruth handles them so as to give flashes of characterization of real strength.

But the whole structure provided by Frank Wead started nowhere, travels only in circles, and ends in a yawning, "So what?" Directorial treatment is saving most pictures these

CURRENT REVIEWS

3 Over 100% 3 U. K.

		%
1. Gunga Din	RKO	170
2. Tail Spin	FOX	130
3. Honolulu	MGM	150
4. Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	85
5. Women In The Wind	WAK	80
6. Boy Trouble	PAK	75

days; one of our best picture-savers couldn't make this one jell.

Alice Faye, Constance Bennett and Nancy Kelly share the top spots. All three turn in good performances with Nancy getting the best break because at least her brief episode of tragedy had some point to it. Alice and Connie do their best, with it never quite clear as to who is the rat and who is the regular, so you know what the gals were up against.

It all concerns an approach to the National Air Races at Cleveland through the viewpoint of Alice Faye, who has saved up enough from her earnings as a hatcheck girl to enter the woman's derby with her own machine. She crashes within sight of victory, and here the scene changes to Cleveland, where Alice and the other "working girl" flyers are disturbed by the arrival of Miss Bennett as a dilettante daughter of wealth who seems out to cop all the valuable prize money. Charlie Farrell enters the plot as a mechanic, disappears after one hundred and fifty feet and makes his re-appearance in the tag scene to help wrap the darn thing up. Kane Richmond is a navy lieutenant supposedly in love with Alice so that the latter can warble one ditty. Nothing

ever comes of the romantic scene, in fact nothing ever comes of anything in the story except to Edward Norris. He is the speed flyer who crashes to his death, thus building up for Nancy Kelly, his loving wife, who on the next day goes aloft as high as she can go and then crashes with malice aforethought so that she can join him in death.

Joan Davis is present for comedy stooge purposes as Alice's pal, and manages to get her share of laughs from the lines. The story offered her no situation laughs to play with—unless it is funny to see a girl in the women's locker room of a national air meet slugging the rye straight from a bottle neck.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Tail Spin" has plenty of those qualities which mark a picture for top entertainment. In addition it has a plus value of a powerful leverage on feminine fans without serious, if any, impairment of its pull on the male. Figure in with these the appeal of planes and speed to the youngsters and the whole adds up to heavy boxoffice."

VARIETY: "Packed with thrills and excitements and exploiting for the first time in film dramatics the rivalry of femme pilots in the so-called Powder Puff Air Derby, 'Tail Spin' has the entertainment novelty to do business if vigorously sold on these angles."

"Women in the Wind" Will Entertain

WARNER BROTHERS
(EST. 80%)

Producer Bryan Foy
Associate Producer Mark Hellinger
Director John Farrow
Screenplay Lee Katz, Albert DeMond
Stars Kay Francis, William Gargan
Featured: Victor Jory, Maxie Rosenbloom,
Eddie Foy, Jr., Sheila Bromley, Eve Arden,
Charles Anthony Hughes, Frankie
Burke, John Dilson, Spencer Charters,
Vera Lewis, William Gould, Gordon Hart,
Ila Rhodes, Rosella Towne.
Photographer Sid Hickox
Art Director Carl Jules Weyl
Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
Film Editor Thomas Pratt
Time 63 Minutes

"Women in the Wind" is a slap-happy conglomeration of audience values, concocted by men who know their audiences and their headlines, produced by men who know their screen. It may be in the Brynie Foy budget group, and it may be the picture in which Kay Francis was finally delivered on her sale down the river—but there will be exhibitors who know how to make it one of their prize

bargain buys.

Incidentally, the picture at last gives the break that has been coming to Eddie Foy, Jr., as a screen comedian. He has been knocking at the door in the Warner shorts and in spot roles in feature lengths. The door opens for him with this part, where he is an exaggerated Douglas Corrigan hindway flyer, the role dialogued and played to the limit of good burlesque.

It's a story about women flyers, and their men. Plot doesn't aim high, being satisfied with a "weenie" that concerns the winning of prize money to pay for an operation on the heroine's brother. Of course it has been heard before, but who cares? Production elements in the form of Warners' plentiful supply of superb air shots, "show" skill in the form of suspenseful direction, workmanlike screen treatment and highly gagged characterizations make it straight low-down audience. Who can ask more?

Timely elements abound, not the least of which is the fact that Twentieth Century-

Fox will soon be spending umpty-thousands telling potential customers about women with wings. These angles of the picture, and some fine characterization slants on people in the news by virtue of flying accomplishments, probably spell "Mark Hellinger."

John Farrow's direction took the pot-boiling ingredients, beet along with spice, and turned out a job that once more registers him as a director who really has his workaday schooling and is now ready for the bigger things his background should warrant. Al Demond's comedy touch is evident in much of the incident and dialogue.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Better than average programmer by far, with a really fun twist on the flying racket inspired by Corrigan that lifts it into sure-fire audience stuff with exploitation possibilities galore."

VARIETY: "Warner delivers a well thought out drama with 'Women in the Wind,' a picture that steps measurably beyond its budget in entertainment values offered the paying public."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Rowland V. Lee

PRODUCER--DIRECTOR

A New Universal Picture

"SON OF FRANKENSTEIN"

"Honolulu" Snappy Musical Entertainment

M. G. M.

(EST. 130%)

Producer Jack Cummings
 Director Edward Buzzell
 Original and Screenplay Herbert Fields,
 Frank Partos
 Stars Eleanor Powell, Robert Young
 Featured: George Burns, Gracie Allen, Rita
 Johnson, Clarence Kolb, Jo Ann Sayers,
 Ann Morris, Willie Fung, Cliff Clark, Ed-
 ward Gargan, Eddie Anderson, Sig Ru-
 mann, Ruth Hussey Kealoha Holt, Edgar
 Dearing, Hona's Islanders, The King's Men.
 Photographer Ray June
 Songs Harry Warren, Gus Kahn
 Musical Director Georgie Stoll
 Dance Directors, Bobby Connelly, Sammy Lee
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor Conrad A. Nervig
 Time 85 Minutes

MGM has a good piece of entertainment in "Honolulu," a capably balanced blend of comedy, songs, and dancing. All topped off with the ultra touch of MGM production.

The picture's marquee value must depend on the draw that can be expected from a combination of factors, none of them sure-fire top rankers, but a group measuring up to good strength. It's a three way draw—Eleanor Powell, Robert Young, and Burns and Allen. Or, you can reverse it—Burns and Allen, Eleanor Powell, and Robert Young. You know your own box office.

After you get them into the theater they will have a thoroughly enjoyable evening, without having been oversold on expectations of some million dollar opus. The wealth of laughs will be the factor most welcomed, the highnote toe routine of the Powell gal at her best will provide the showy moments, and a consistently pleasing flow of melody will round all out as a pleasant evening.

"Fisherman's Wharf" Okay Bobby Breen

R. K. O.

(EST. 85%)

Producer Sol Lesser
 Director Bernard Vorhaus
 Screenplay Bernard Schubert,
 Ian Hunter, H. Clyde Lewis
 Star Bobby Breen
 Featured: Leo Carrillo, Henry Armetta, Lee
 Patrick, Rosina Galli, Tommy Bupp, Leon
 Belasco, George Humbert, Slicker.
 Photographer Charles Schoenbaum
 Musical Director Victor Young
 Songs, Victor Young, Charles Newman,
 Frank Churchill, Paul Webster, Farlan
 Myers, William Howe.
 Film Editor Arthur Hilton
 Time 71 Minutes

"Fisherman's Wharf" will hold its own in the Bobby Breen series, with the touch of unusual atmosphere and the introduction of an extra large number of songs, probably lifting it above average for audience entertainment.

Bobby is growing older, not too handy for his playing, but resulting in what seems to be

It's a concoction for musical comedy purposes, rather than a story basis with which the producer, director and principals set out to work. A neat premise is found for a dual identity theme in which Robert Young, as the fanatically worshipped screen star seeking peace and quiet exchanges places with Robert Young, as a dull plantation owner from Hawaii, visiting the States to learn more of the glamor side of life.

Adroit screen treatment gets this matter-of-fact plot basis under way entertainingly. From there on we need merely Robert Young, the screen idol, now masquerading in his traded identity, falling in love with Eleanor Powell on a trip to Hawaii, to give reason for our Pacific moon melodies, our terpsichorean moments, and the rapid fire of farce moments to be expected from such a premise.

Eleanor Powell's is a tailored role, and she comes through delightfully, hitting tops for dancing enjoyment in a Bill Robinson number and a streamlined hula novelty. Surprise of the picture is Gracie Allen, who all but wraps it up as her own possession. Gracie not only delivers for every laugh her lines allow, but she is as decorative as a million dollars. George Burns modestly subordinates himself to Gracie and plot, but hits the target when the opportunity comes. Robert Young is his usual capable, and personable self. Young may not be able to get the parts that crash him over into that top cream marquee strength, but for our money he can "make 'em happy" through any hour or so of celluloid.

Corcking comedy spot parts are handled by Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, who is fast becoming a standard scene-saver, and the perennial Willie Fung.

The song numbers have not been handled

with the usual musical comedy formula of smashing one or two over so that none stands out. They are an unusually satisfying group as a whole, however, and when radio orchestras take up the ballyhoo, you will hear them aplenty. Harry Warren's ability to give that intangible "quality" touch to the lyrics is evident in every song, and Gus Kahn's settings are pleasing to the ear.

Most of the songs are presented in connection with dance routines handled by Bobby Connolly. The latter, working within limited figures as dance budgets go, shows how good taste and imagination can be combined effectively. Connolly, with his stage record as evidence, in our opinion will get his real picture break some day and show them all something. We base it on that phrase "taste and imagination." Connolly doesn't gorge your throat with 90,000 mirrors, more cranes than Franco has tanks, and then leave you saying, "I'm stuffed with food, but whatinell did I eat? I can't taste anything."

Eddie Buzzell has done an effective job of direction for pictorial and stage values, with the dialogue satisfactory, without being anything to rave about. Picture misses even higher classification by a certain lack of pace that probably could not be avoided when telling a dual identity farce plot with necessary "slight pauses for musical identifications."

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "An hour and a half of fun with swell songs and dances interspersing the laughs. Safe old hands at the game like Buzzell, Harry Warren and Gus Kahn get together to turn out the best show in town for entertainment with music, no matter what week you play it. It's a treat."

VARIETY: "Light, wacky comedy which will not create any extraordinary box office hullabaloo, but is amusing enough to serve entertainingly in combination."

improvement in his voice. At least in this one, either the voice, the numbers, or the handling of them seems to register to better effect.

The writers laid down a bit on providing a story for "Fisherman's Wharf," the yarn being content to wander along rather familiar lines, and aimed to provide cross-play between Leo Carrillo and the young star. Carrillo turns in his usual punchy performance, but it is becoming a bit too stereotyped to run the gamut of all the pictures in which he flings his dialect. Slicker, the seal, who last shared starring honors with George Raft in "Spawn of the North," is present for some good laughs. Henry Armetta, that solid standby for laughs and sympathy, turns in a fine job.

The story finds Bobby and Leo, his foster father, presented with a family situation when Lee Patrick, scheming type, enters their home along with her son Tommy Bupp. Miss

Patrick is the widowed sister of Carrillo's dead wife, and entitled to the family's charity, but she manages to scheme and scheme until happiness is chased, and Bobby also departs from his home. All is wound up for a happy ending.

Bernard Vorhaus has directed capably from his material, helping proceedings along considerably by his use of the authentic San Francisco Fisherman's Wharf locations.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The picture has a spontaneous feel, has a lilt, and garrulous quality to balance its sentimentality, which all add up to good entertainment in its designated sphere."

VARIETY: "Written to formula, 'Fisherman's Wharf' comes through as standard Bobby Breen. Juve's voice shows improvement over previous starts, and picture as a whole, will satisfy those who have followed his screen efforts."

"Boy Trouble" Great for Family Audiences

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer William Wright
 Director George Archainbaud
 Screenplay Laura and S. J. Perelman
 Original Lloyd Corrigan, Monte Brice
 Stars Charlie Ruggles, Mary Boland
 Featured: Joyce Mathews, Donald O'Connor,
 Billy Lee, John Hartley, Andrew Tombes,
 Dick Elliott, Zefie Tilbury, Sarah Edwards,
 Harlan Briggs, Josephine Whittell, Sonny
 Bupp, Georgia Caine, Russell Hicks, Grace
 Hayle, Charles Trowbridge.
 Photographer Henry Sharp
 Art Directors Hans Dreier, Robert Odell
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Film Editor Alma Ruth Macrorie
 Time 70 Minutes

This writing team of Laura and S. J. Perelman recently turned in a surprise hit in Paramount's budget group with "Ambush," the picture which closed the Gladys Swartout incident for that company. We now encounter their names on this one, just above the budget group and once again a cleverly constructed, brightly dialogued, piece of entertainment.

Director George Archainbaud, with Charles Ruggles and Mary Boland—plus a couple of good youngsters—took the material provided, dressed it with accomplishment in their own

contributions. As an entry in the family picture stakes, or as just a good evening of motion picture standing on its own feet, it will rate okay.

It seems that hubby won't be satisfied until he has a man child, a lusty boy to warm his heart. Wifey proceeds with the adoption of Billy Lee, then events bring an older boy, Donall O'Connor, into the family group. It is almost too much of a good thing.

That's the blunt basis. The entertainment comes in the treatment by all concerned. There is a heart touch of "Skippy," more than a bit of Mark Twainish kid psychology. Director and playing milk all for the utmost. Comedy and drama are balanced neatly, the latter reaching a really memorable note in a scene where Ruggles and O'Connor are initiating Billy into an imaginary secret society and Ruggles must recite the 23rd Psalm in his frantic efforts to get ritual words impressive enough. The scene brought a preview audience out of preview lethargy.

A corking picture for small town and rural trade, a good bet for city houses wanting a "family" picture to balance the bill, a credit to all concerned anywhere it will be shown.

The fine original was by Lloyd Corrigan and Monte Brice.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: "Strictly for the family trade is 'Boy Trouble,' first of Paramount's new series with Charles Ruggles and Mary Boland. And it amply fits this spot."

VARIETY: "'Boy Trouble' steps out of the modest production groove to surprise in its class. It will find welcome on any neighborhood program and may even travel in faster company where homespun amusement is relished."

It's The Show Business

(Continued from Page 3)

tion and conversation with the "social significance" boys, a little less lazy reliance on long term contracts, just a little less of the feeling, "oh, what the hell, a picture is a picture—we've made all the formulas—and a hit is just an ACCIDENT."

The oldtime showman was ALWAYS on his toes, every day. Because neither weather nor social significance alibis would pay the troupe's board bills.

There's gold in these here picture diggings, boys. All we have to remember is that THIS IS THE SHOW BUSINESS.

DON'T GET SO EXCITED !

- Those fancy Polls, those Contests, those Awards for this and that—
- Don't let them get you flustered!
- They don't mean a thing in your cash value at the box office—until you hear what the box office itself has to say.
- And you won't hear the voice of the box office until you receive National Box Office Digest's authentic annual tabulation in the forthcoming —

1939 BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Alexander's Ragtime Band	FOX	237
Snow White	RKO	219
Test Pilot	MGM	187
In Old Chicago	FOX	181
Boys Town	MGM	174
Adventures of Robin Hood	WAR	170
You Can't Take It With You	GOL	164
Sweethearts	MGM	163
Marie Antoinette	MGM	153
Happy Landing	FOX	152
Angels With Dirty Faces	WAR	148
Too Hot To Handle	MGM	146
That Certain Age	UNIV	146
Mad About Music	UNIV	140
Girl of the Golden West	MGM	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife	PAR	137
The Buccaneer	PAR	137
Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
Suez	FOX	133
Kentucky	FOX	132
The Crowd Roars	MGM	132
The Cowboy And The Lady	U.A.	130
A Yank at Oxford	MGM	130
Jezebel	WAR	126
My Lucky Star	FOX	125
If I Were King	PAR	123
Men With Wings	PAR	122
Carefree	RKO	122
Three Loves Has Nancy	MGM	120
Sing You Sinners	PAR	119
Adventures Of Tom Sawyer	PAR	119
Mannquin	MGM	119
Adventures of Marco Polo	U.A.	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook	FOX	118
Alfiers	U.A.	118
The Goldwyn Follies	U.A.	118
The Gladiol	MGM	117
Vivacious Lady	RKO	117
Bringin' Up Babs	RKO	117
Spawn of the North	PAR	115
Three Comrades	MGM	115
Trade Winds	U.A.	114
The Sisters	WAR	112
Little Miss Broadway	FOX	111
The Sisters	WAR	111
Hollywood Hotel	WAR	109
Room Service	RKO	108
Kentucky Moonshine	FOX	108
Joy of Living	RKO	108
Sally, Irene and Mary	FOX	105
Tropic Holiday	PAR	105
Three Blind Mice	FOX	103
Artists and Models Abroad	PAR	103
The Shining Hour	MGM	103
Dr. Rhythm	PAR	103
Gold Is Where You Find It	WAR	103
Letter Of Introduction	UNIV	102
Having Wonderful Time	RKO	102
Baroness and the Butler	FOX	101
The Rage of Paris	UNIV	101
The Young In Heart	U.A.	100
Thanks Goes My Heart	U.A.	100
Drums	FOX	100
Submarine Patrol	FOX	100
The Great Waltz	MGM	100
Big Broadcast of 1938	PAR	99
Four's A Crowd	WAR	98
Just Around The Corner	FOX	98
Arkansas Traveler	PAR	97
Boy Meets Girl	WAR	96
Every Day's a Holiday	PAR	96
Merrily We Live	MGM	95
Holiday	COL	94
Her Jungle Love	PAR	94
The Texans	PAR	94
College Swing	PAR	93
Josette	FOX	93
Blockade	U.A.	93
Always Goodbye	FOX	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Out West With the Hardys	MGM	147
Stablemates	MGM	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy	MGM	131
Bad Man of Brimstone	MGM	130
Brother Rat	WAR	122
Four Daughters	WAR	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse	WAR	113
A Slight Case of Murder	WAR	112
I Am The Law	COL	103
Straight, Place And Show	FOX	98
Port of Seven Seas	MGM	95
Judge Hardy's Children	MGM	95
Valley Of The Giants	WAR	94
Four Men and a Prayer	FOX	93
Shopworn Angel	MGM	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn	WAR	93
Lord Jeff	MGM	92
Hold That Co-Ed	FOX	90

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Title	Distributor	%
The Birth Of A Baby	IND	167
Crime School	WAR	105
Blondie	COL	101
Little Tough Guy	UNIV	86
King Of Alcatraz	PAR	83
The Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	82
Saint In New York	RKO	81
Girls on Probation	WAR	80
Tom Sawyer, Detective	PAR	80
Smashing the Spy Ring	COL	80
Christmas Carol	MGM	80
Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
While New York Sleeps	FOX	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	78
Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78

Strange Case of Dr. Mead	COL	82
Gangs of New York	REP	81
Crime Takes a Holiday	COL	80
Dark Rapture	UNIV	80
Tenth Avenue Kid	REP	78
Call of the Yukon	REP	78
Making the Headlines	COL	78
Reformatory	COL	78
Juvenile Court	COL	78
Down In Arkansas	REP	78
Mr. Wong, Detective	MONO	78
King of the Newsboys	REP	77
Flight Into Nowhere	COL	77
City Streets	COL	76
The Wrong Road	REP	76
Sereneat Murphy	WAR	74
The Spy Ring	UNIV	74
Prison Nurse	REP	74
Storm Over Bengal	REP	74
Outside of Paradise	REP	75
Lady Rebeave	REP	74
Mama Runs Wild	REP	74
The Higgins Family	REP	74
Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	74
Adventure in Sahara	COL	73
Penrod's Twin Brother	WAR	73
Penrod's Double Trouble	WAR	73
Little Miss Thoroughbred	WAR	73
Escape by Night	REP	73
Juvenile Courts	COL	72
Flight to Fame	COL	72
Crime Ring	RKO	72
Hollywood Stadium Mystery	REP	72
Romance of the Lumberlost	MONO	72
Little Adventurers	COL	72
Gang Bullets	MONO	72
A Man To Remember	RKO	71
I Stand Accused	REP	71
The Missing Guest	UNIV	71
Blonde Cheat	RKO	71
Marriage Forbidden	G-N	71
The Duke Comes Back	REP	71
Exiled to Shanghai	REP	71
When G-Men Stop in	COL	71
Arson Gang Busters	REP	71
Come On Leathernecks	REP	71
Delinquent Parents	IND	76
Telephone Operator	MONO	69
Invisible Enemy	REP	69
Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
Last Express	UNIV	68
Rose Of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
Last Warning	UNIV	68
Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
Woman Against the World	COL	68
Numbered Women	MONO	67
Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
Under the Big Top	MONO	66
Mr. Chump	WAR	66
Fugitives For A Night	RKO	66
Saleslady	MONO	66
Ladies in Distress	REP	65
Convicted	COL	65
Reckless Living	UNIV	65
Romance on the Run	REP	65
The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
Mystery House	WAR	64
Lady in the Morgue	UNIV	64
My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	64
Maid's Night Out	MONO	63
This Marriage Business	RKO	63
Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
Main Event	MONO	63
Highway Patrol	COL	63
Cipher Bureau	G.N.	61
International Crime	G.N.	60
Born to Be Wild	REP	56

City Girl	FOX	74
Condemned Woman	REP	78
Chance of Heart	FOX	78
Little Tough Guys in Society	UNIV	78
Touchdown Army	PAR	78
Time Out For Murder	FOX	77
No Time to Marry	COL	77
Girl's School	COL	77
Always In Trouble	FOX	77
Scandal Street	PAR	77
Double Dancer	RKO	77
Crashing Hollywood	RKO	77
Sharpshooters	FOX	77
Illegal Traffic	PAR	77
Torchy Blane Gets Her Man	WAR	77
Blondes at Work	WAR	76
He Couldn't Say No	WAR	76
Affairs of Annabelle	RKO	76
Campus Confessions	PAR	76
Women in Prison	COL	76
Bulldog Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
Youth Takes A Fling	UNIV	74
Speed to Burn	FOX	74
Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
Secrets Of A Nurse	UNIV	74
Blind Alibi	RKO	74
Over the Wall	WAR	74
Dangerous to Know	PAR	74
Island in the Sky	FOX	74
Beloved Brat	WAR	74
Broadway Muskeeters	WAR	74
Prison Farm	PAR	74
Annabelle Takes a Tour	RKO	74
Prison Break	UNIV	73
Mr. Moto's Gamble	FOX	73
Tarnished Angel	RKO	73
Love on a Budget	FOX	73
Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
Prescription for Romance	UNIV	73
Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	72
Swing That Cheer	UNIV	72
Down On The Farm	FOX	72
The Lady Objects	COL	72
Boo-Boo	PAR	72
Torchy Blane in Panama	WAR	72
Little Miss Roughneck	COL	72
Midnight Intruder	UNIV	72
International Settlement	FOX	72
Passport Husband	FOX	72
Next Time I Marry	RKO	71
The Kid Comes Back	WAR	71
Go Chase Yourself	RKO	71
The Patient in Room 18	WAR	71
Everybody's Doing It	FOX	71
Mr. Moto's Chance	FOX	71
Building Drummond In Africa	PAR	71
Fast Company	MGM	71
Strange Faces	UNIV	71
The Black Doll	UNIV	71
Exposed	UNIV	71
I'm From the City	RKO	70
Sons Of The Legion	PAR	70
Dare Devil Drivers	WAR	70
Hunted Men	PAR	70
Nurse From Brooklyn	UNIV	70
Young Fugitives	UNIV	70
Night Spot	RKO	70
Sinners in Paradise	UNIV	70
Safety In Numbers	FOX	70
Mr. Doodle Kicks Off	RKO	70
Freshman Year	UNIV	69
Lone Wolf in Paris	COL	69
His Exciting Night	UNIV	68
Meet the Girls	FOX	68
The Devils Party	UNIV	68
Peck's Bad Boy at Circus	RKO	68
The Crime of Dr. Hallett	UNIV	68
The Jury's Secret	UNIV	68
Love, Honor and Behave	WAR	68
She Loved a Fireman	WAR	68
Glamorous Night	REP	67
When Were You Born?	WAR	67
Wives Under Suspicion	UNIV	67
Men Are Such Fools	WAR	67
Swing Sister Swing	UNIV	66
The Chaser	MGM	66
Vacation From Love	MGM	66
Personal Secretary	UNIV	66
Road Demon	FOX	65
Men With 100 Faces	G.B.	62
Sez O'Reilly to McNabb	G.B.	61
Three On A Weekend	G.B.	61
Strange Boarders	G.B.	61
Dark Sands	B. I. P.	58
Crime Over London	G.B.	58
Little Orphan Annie	PAR	58
To the Victor	G.B.	56

There's That Woman Again	COL	88
Hard To Get	WAR	88
There's Always a Woman	COL	87
Everybody Sing	MGM	87
Newsboys Home	UNIV	86
Going Places	WAR	85
I'll Give A Million	FOX	84
Yellow Jack	MGM	81
White Fencers	WAR	81
Listen Darling	MGM	83
Racket Busters	WAR	83
Mother Carey's Chickens	RKO	83
Penitentiary	COL	82
Hold That Kiss	MGM	82
Give Me A Sailor	PAR	82
Heart of the North	WAR	81
Rascals	FOX	81
Garden of the Moon	WAR	80
The Gladiator	COL	80
Wide Open Faces	COL	80
Checkers	FOX	80
Paradise for Three	MGM	80
Gateway	FOX	80
You and Me	PAR	80
Woman Against Woman	MGM	80
Say It in French	PAR	80
Up the River	FOX	80
Flirting With Fate	MGM	80
Ride A Crooked Mile	PAR	79
Swing Your Lady	WAR	79
Of Human Hearts	MGM	79
Spring Madness	MGM	78
Five Of A Kind	FOX	78
Breaking The Ice	RKO	78
The Road To Reno	UNIV	77
Wise Girl	RKO	77
The Storm	UNIV	77
Thanks For The Memory	PAR	77
Swiss Miss	MGM	76
Met My Love Again	U. A.	76
Army Girl	REP	76
Blockheads	MGM	76
Comet Over Broadway	WAR	76
Keep Smiling	FOX	75
Arsene Lupin Returns	MGM	75
First 100 Years	MGM	75
Love Is a Headache	MGM	74
Battle of Broadway	FOX	74
Secrets Of An Actress	WAR	74
Service DeLuxe	UNIV	73
Spring Madness	MGM	73
Stolen Heaven	PAR	73
Rich Man, Poor Girl	MGM	72
Hawaii Calls	RKO	72
Goodbye Broadway	UNIV	72
Start Cheering	COL	72
My Bill	WAR	71
Women Are Like That	WAR	71
Sailing Along	G. B.	70
Action For Slander	U. A.	64
Gaiety Girls	U. A.	62
The Rat	RKO	61
Romance In the Dark	PAR	60
Storm In A Teacup	U. A.	54
Look Out For Love	G. B.	52
The Girl Was Young	G. B.	46
Return of Scarlet Pimpernel	U. A.	44

Professor Beware	PAR	84
Kidnapped	FOX	84
Radle City Rebels	RKO	83
Dramatic School	MGM	83
The Toy Wife	MGM	81
Gold Diggers in Paris	WAR	81
Cocoanut Grove	PAR	79
Fools for Scandal	WAR	72
Divorce of Lady X	U. A.	72
Sixty Glorious Years	RKO	71
We're Going to Be Rich	FOX	69



1914

1939

W. RAY JOHNSTON

Celebrates 25 Years of Service to the Showmen of America

SILVER JUBILEE YEAR

YEAR BY YEAR DISTRIBUTION ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS PRODUCER-DISTRIBUTOR

1914	MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY <i>JAMES CRUZE</i>	1922	TEN NIGHTS IN A BARROOM <i>JOHN LOWELL</i>	1930	WORLDLY GOODS <i>LILA LEE</i>
1915	BEATING BACK <i>AL JENNINGS</i>	1923	MAN AND WIFE <i>NORMA SHEARER</i>	1931	MOTHER AND SON <i>CLARA KIMBALL YOUNG</i>
1916	SILAS MARNER <i>JEANNE EAGELS</i>	1924	EASY MONEY <i>MARY CARR</i>	1932	THE THIRTEENTH GUEST <i>GINGER ROGERS</i>
1917	THE DEEMSTER <i>DERWENT HALL CAINE</i>	1925	FLAME FIGHTER <i>HERBERT RAWLINSON</i>	1933	SWEETHEART OF SIGMA CHI <i>MARY CARLISLE</i>
1918	THE MASKED RIDER <i>HARRY MYERS</i>	1926	SCOTTY OF THE SCOUTS <i>BEN ALEXANDER</i>	1934	JANE EYRE <i>VIRGINIA BRUCE</i>
1919	LIGHTNING BRYCE <i>JACK HOXIE</i>	1927	SHANGHAI ROSE <i>IRENE RICH</i>	1935	THE HEALER <i>RALPH BELLAMY</i>
1920	BEFORE THE WHITE MAN CAME <i>ALL INDIAN CAST</i>	1928	CASEY JONES <i>RALPH LEWIS</i>	1936	THE HARVESTER <i>ANN RUTHERFORD</i>
1921	THE GOLDEN TRAIL <i>JANE NOVAK</i>	1929	PHANTOM IN THE HOUSE <i>RICARDO CORTEZ</i>	1937	HOOSIER SCHOOLBOY <i>MICKEY ROONEY</i>
		1938	GANGSTER'S BOY <i>JACKIE COOPER</i>		

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HOLLYWOOD, - CALIFORNIA

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Vol. 8. No. 1

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 8, 1939

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$10

"IDIOT'S DELIGHT" COPS HONORS FOR WEEK WITH STRONG FIGURES

*Of Seven New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%:
One Came Thru Okay, and Three Were Very Weak.*

BY NORMAN WEBB

M-G-M—2 New Releases

M-G-M has two releases this week, one an outstanding box office attraction and the other an out-and-out flop.

"IDIOT'S DELIGHT" re-unites Clark Gable and Norma Shearer for the first time in several years, in an excellent box office production. This picture has broken in a number of key city first-run engagements and is averaging quite satisfactory at a 153% average. "IDIOT'S DELIGHT" was adapted for the screen by Robert Sherwood from his own original play, which was one of last year's most outstanding stage successes. Supporting Miss Shearer and Gable is an excellent cast, headlined by Edward Arnold, Joe Schildkraut, Burgess Meredith, Charles Coburn and many others.

M-G-M's ace producer, Hunt Stromberg, handled this production while Clarence Brown directed. Judging from present box office receipts, "IDIOT'S DELIGHT" will be one of M-G-M's most outstanding pictures of the present year.

M-G-M's second release is another weak programmer, "BURN 'EM UP O'CONNOR," 66%. While this auto racing story is good entertainment, with plenty of thrills, still it is entirely lacking in marquee strength. Accordingly, it will make an excellent "filler" but cannot be counted on to sell many tickets. Therefore it should be booked with a much stronger "A" picture, or else on a Saturday kiddies' matinee.

Dennis O'Keefe and Cecilia Parker are co-starred, and Nat Pendleton and Harry Carey are featured. Harry Rapf produced and Ed Sedgewick directed. Incidentally, this picture should be satisfactory entertainment for small town theaters where western and action pictures are preferred.

Paramount—3 New Releases

Paramount has three new releases this week, one an outstanding English release while the other two are fair program pictures. "THE BEACHCOMBER," produced and directed in England by Erich Pommer, has been released in several big key city houses and is holding much higher than we had anticipated, at a 114% average. Charles Laughton, who is starred along with his wife, Elsa Lanchester, is the only name in the entire cast, that is familiar to American audiences. So we are completely puzzled as to why this picture is doing such outstanding business, unless it is the usual box office interest in the South Sea Island type of story. In several instances this picture has been held over for a second and third week, probably indicating that word-of-mouth advertising is helping it considerably.

Bartlett Cormack wrote the screenplay from W. Somerset Maugham's novel, "Vessels Of Wrath." It is interesting to note that "THE BEACHCOMBER" is running about 30% higher than Charles Laughton's last American release, "REMBRANDT" (Korda-U.A.).

Paramount's other two releases are Harold Hurley program pictures. "AMBUSH," 76%, co-stars Gladys Swarthout with Lloyd Nolan in a heavy melodrama. William Wright supervised and Kurt Neuman directed.

"DISBARRED," 74%, is another attorney story, co-starring Gail Patrick and Robert Preston, with Otto

Kruger prominently featured. Stuart Walker supervised and Robert Florey directed. "AMBUSH" and "DISBARRED" will probably both fit in satisfactory as the lower half of the average double bill program, but

7 New Releases Not in Last Issue		
3 Over 100% 1 O. K. 3 Weak		
		% We Est.
1. Idiot's Delight	MGM	153... 160
2. The Beachcomber	PAR	114... 80
3. They Made Me A Criminal.....	WAR	105... 90
4. Arizona Wildcat	FOX	81... 80
5. Ambush	PAR	76... 80
6. Disbarred	PAR	74... 75
7. Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	66... 80

(Continued on Page 13)

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ "Honor Box" ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **METRO GOLDWYN MAYER** Wins With

"IDIOT'S DELIGHT" - 153%



★
Producer
HUNT STROMBERG



★
Director
CLARENCE BROWN



NORMA SHEARER



CLARK GABLE

Featured
CHARLES COBURN
BURGESS MEREDITH
LAURA HOPE CREWS
SKEETS GALLAGHER
PETER WILLES
PAT PATTERSON
WILLIAM EDMUNDS
FRITZ FELD
VIRGINIA GREY
PAULA STONE
JOAN MARSH



EDWARD ARNOLD

Screenplay and Original Play
ROBERT E. SHERWOOD

Photographer
WILLIAM DANIELS

Musical Score
HERBERT STOTHART

Dance Director
GEORGE KING

Film Editor
ROBERT J. KERN

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

LET'S CLEAR THE AIR

Darryl Zanuck's action in banning Tyrone Power from radio appearances is receiving deserved praise for its help in removing Sunday evening competition from exhibitor worries. But that is the least important of the aspects of his action.

Whether or not Tyrone Power appears on the air Sunday exhibitors are not going to be saved from heavy competition by the ether waves. If it is not Tyrone Power, it will be someone else. If it is not a picture personality—it will still be most likely a big personality.

Radio is not without showmanship—and it starts with the jump on most other entertainment purveyors: motion pictures, sports events, etc. It gives its product away free.

Radio is not going to fold up on Sunday nights for lack of a few movie personalities.

* * * *

The importance of Darryl Zanuck's action is in the fact that it is definitely a move to protect his investment, and the industry's investment, in Tyrone Power.

To protect—and this is also important—the investment that the country's theater owners have made in Tyrone Power.

Power is not alone among the screen stars whose radio acts are, to say the least, pretty terrible. Power is not alone among the screen stars current on the air who need be given only another six months or so of free air to wear out all appeal or individual fascination they hold for the millions.

In our own infrequent dial wanderings we are encountering many other such cases. There is, for example, a program listing Ronald Colman and a bushel basket of screen players now current which is the nearest thing to sophomore high school technique that could be imagined.

It can't be doing any good to Ronald Colman, whose box office appeal—and that means "whose reason for existence"—is a flair for the highly romantic, the land where heros are the meat of dreams. It can be doing him, and others on his program, considerable harm.

But that, too, is the least important of the factors.

It can be doing incalculable harm to thousands of exhibitors with staggering millions invested in real estate—investments that make studio investments look pale—and whose holdings are dependent on the willie-nillies of a Hollywood handful.

Too often we forget that back of every Hollywood big salary in any department of production, back of every big picture gross there is an army of men who made them possible.

Break down every dollar in the tremendous sum that pours into distributor and producer coffers—and you have to give the lion's share to some local individual with enterprise who took his savings, and what the local banker would loan him, and invested them in brick and mortar.

For every headache on the part of some Hollywood puppet upset about a fancied grievance, there are a thousand headaches on the part of exhibitors going to the local bank at ten A.M. for new help to weather a flood of flop pictures.

So why should we encourage any new means to create flops?

* * * *

It is not the competition of Sunday night, or any other night, that is the worry. It is the damage to the industry's investments when one of its products—the star—is trotted out and daubed with amateurishness.

There are stars like Don Ameche who know their radio metier, and whose every radio appearance is a TICKET SELLER for the industry. There are too many others who had better be kept in a chrysalis, except once or twice a year when the courage of some producer puts a million dollars behind their unveiling for a palpitating public.

There are radio-created bets like Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, who bring followings of their own creation to possible interest in their pictures.

And then there are—but, maybe we had better not bother with names. Unless it would be a good idea for

(Continued on Page 4)

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

			%
1. M. G. M.	45 Releases.....		103
2. 20th Century-Fox	51 Releases.....		92
3. United Artists	17 Releases.....		92
4. Paramount	40 Releases.....		88
5. Warner Brothers	53 Releases.....		87
6. R. K. O.	39 Releases.....		83
7. Columbia	33 Releases.....		80
8. Universal	39 Releases.....		77
9. Republic	25 Releases.....		73
10. Monogram	14 Releases.....		69
11. Grand National	5 Releases.....		66
12. Gaumont British	10 Releases.....		59

371

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

The News at a Glance

Chief pleasurable sensation in the week for your Highlights recorder is the business being done by "Idiot's Delight." Because if there ever was a picture on which the picture business could go out on a limb this one was it. Hunt Stromberg and Clarence Brown started "Idiot's Delight" with two strikes on them. Paradoxically, because it was such a Broadway hit—they had a great chance to flop. They could have made a critic's success, and a box office vacuum. They could have made a box office hit, and a critic's disappointment. O-oh! So you tell us they had Gable, and Shearer, and Arnold, etc., and MGM production and all that? All the more reasons the whole group—including players—could have nosedived. Each and every individual concerned was walking that same tight-rope—a fall either way being as easy as the law of gravity. And it is to the credit of all, and the cheering thought to your Highlighter, that they walked that slender wire—with the box office, as well as the critics, paying off. It is all to the glory of the motion picture.

Moving Pictures Are Also Getting Popular

A great virtue of "Idiot's Delight" is the skill with which Clarence Brown gave pace and motion picture feeling to what was and could only be a stage play fundamentally. And while we give Stromberg and Brown their orchids, it is equally cheering in a troubled industry, to notice that others have brought the motion picture back to the screen. We refer to "Gunga Din" and "Stagecoach." In the same breath. Because both are motion picture. Because both are fundamentally the things that put the nickles in the pockets of Marcus Loew, Adolph Zukor, Thomas Edison, Pop Lubin, and those millionaires of the 1912 period, that are still paying this industry off. Hell, if it hadn't been for those nickles there wouldn't be any piles of MGM-Loew concrete, and Balaban and Katz houses, and Walter Vincent chains, and Paramount inheritances, in which to play the spasms of our newer generation. So let's give a Highlight cheer for the return of the motion picture to the screen. And feel proud about it because we are doing it in the same week that shows Stromberg-Brown proving we can learn as we grow older. Ford and Stevens proving that we do not forget our parents.

The Ritz Brothers Take on the Ritz

Of course we suppose a headline hunter should really have listed the Ritz Brothers and their twenty-four hour blow-up with Darryl Zanuck as the news Highlight of the week. Frankly, we didn't get so excited. We have been through too many years of these player versus boss disputes. There is always so much that is right on both sides, so much that is wrong injected by the sidewalk commentators, that it is a wise man who lets the parties to a family quarrel handle their ruckus without his aid. . . . Our idea is that both Zanuck and the Ritz Brothers showed sense in settling all

7 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was	New
1. Cowboy and the Lady U.A.	130	127
2. Topper Takes A Trip U.A.	116	112
3. Zaza PAR	112	106
4. There's That Woman Again COL	88	84
5. Strange Case of Dr. Meade COL	82	80
6. Dramatic School MGM	83	79
7. Smashing the Spy Ring COL	80	78

arguments quickly and comparatively quietly. These things are really interoffice memos. . . . Of greater concern to us is the news that Roy Del Ruth and Darryl Zanuck have reached the cliché parting of the ways. Zanuck is too good a picture planner, and Del Ruth too good a picture maker for this to be anything but unpleasant news. They belong together. It is the combination of exceptional production chief and capable director that is making our outstanding pictures these days. Where this combination doesn't exist you will find it is the director alone who is the picture saver. Stories are in a rut, the greater number of our money players flash with something of brilliance only once in a blue moon. Showmanship inspiration at the top, and skillful execution by our directors are the factors keeping the wheels moving. And we repeat: Zanuck and Del Ruth is a nice sounding team name.

Rounding the Corners At the Studios

Our special operatives are tipping us off that the new Astaire-Rogers opus, "The Castles" is going to prove a real whiz-bang. Which adds point to the news that its director, H. C. Potter, has signed a contract with MGM. Evidently Leo the Lion has his operatives out also. Or perhaps Leo got something of the same reaction we got from Potter's "The Cowboy and the Lady." Any director who could take that flimsy skeleton and make it stand up as it did for delightful entertainment all the route, for successful entertainment at the box office, rates watching. When a fellow can make an omelette with eggs, he's a cook; when he can make an omelette without the eggs, he's a bet. . . . Russ Birdwell is now completely on his own in a publicity organization with international plans, and you can look for almost anything to crash headlines from now on as that effervescent Birdwell think-tank swings into action. Russ

Let's Clear the Air

(Continued from Page 3)

The Digest to start a Radio Department solely to tell some picture people how TERRIBLE they are—and how effectively they are PROVING HOW TERRIBLE THEY ARE before a free audience, in weekly appearances.

Maybe we could help protect the industry's investment in some pieces of clay.

leaves his Selznick International reins in the capable hands of Vic Shapiro. Vic, who dates his newspaper experience and contacts back to the days of the New York World immortals, knows both his publicity and his pictures. He's a major league guy in a major league spot. . . . Jerry Hoffman, former newspaper hound, who hit the ball pretty successfully during the past year at Fox as associate producer on some corking topical features, is making new connections within the next few weeks. Jerry has a lively, hop-skip-and-jump imagination that can serve some production outfit well.

Bren Moves Over to Leo's Den

As we chronicled a week or so ago, there could be little delay expected in hearing of a new production spot for Milton Bren. This week comes the definite news, and the spot is MGM. It must be like going home to Bren, though it goes back to Thalberg's days of glory, and many years of activity in other fields have intervened. Bren has what it takes in production imagination, and should come through with an MGM set-up. . . . At the same time that Milton Bren moves into the mansion in Culver City, Edward Knopf, story editor, moves out. Knopf is going to hazard a term as producer with Samuel Goldwyn. . . . Reports have it that Harry Edington will tackle that long-talked-of "Atlantic Cable" yarn for his first Universal production. It's a tough one, but shucks, if Darryl Zanuck could make romance out of a guy building a ditch, why not the cable? Harry probably also has his eyes on good values for the British market. . . . George O'Brien renews his contract with RKO Radio. Encouraging, to think of the loyal mass audience that keeps George O'Brien, Jack Holt and their fellows, up there year in and year out as MONEY-MAKERS. While the columnists and the night clubbers do frantic nip-ups over Hedy LaMarr's hair-do, or a Simone Simone pout, or an Annabella lisp. Oh, well, we live—so why learn? . . . They are wishing on Bob Sisk the production of that "talent hunt" picture at RKO. That's being sold down the river for a fellow who could make anything like "A Man to Remember." No matter what you do with those contest pics you never get out in the clear because they start the game with two eight balls in the rack. . . . Strange how the story search circles in this business. For five or ten years the famous Street and Smith "Nick Carter" yarns were being peddled from door to door in Hollywood with no takers. Then someone at MGM got a film angle on the subject, the stories were bought. Now Warners have grabbed the "Old King Brady" title, but will modernize it for the screen as "Old and Young King Brady." Shucks, why not give the old king four daughters, too? Any moment now we may expect to hear of some producer joining the Americanization parade by making "The Liberty Boys of '76." Only there will be no British villains, only Hessians.

"Stagecoach" Triumph for John Ford

UNITED ARTISTS

(EST. 120%)

Producer Walter Wanger
 Producer-Director John Ford
 Story Ernest Haycox
 Screenplay Dudley Nichols
 Stars Claire Trevor, John Wayne
 Featured: Andy Devine, John Carradine, Thomas Mitchell, George Bancroft, Louise Platt, Donald Meek, Berton Churchill, Tim Holt, Chris Martin, Elvira Rios, Francis Ford, Marga Ann Deighton, Florence Lake, Walter McGrail, Paul McVey, Brenda Fowler, Chief Big Tree, Yakima Canutt, Chief White Horse, Bryant Washburn, Duke Lee, Tom Tyler, Joe Rickson, Cornelius Keefe, Harry Tenbrook, Nora Cecil, Jack Pennock, Lou Mason, Mary Kathleen Walker, Kent Odell, William Hopper, Ed Brady, Vester Pegg.
 Photographer Bert Glennon
 Special Photographer Ray Binger
 Art Director Alexander Toluboff
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Musical Score Richard Hageman, Frank Harling, John Leopold, Leo Shuken
 Film Editors Dorothy Spencer, Walter Reynolds
 Time 92 Minutes

RELEASES OF 1939			%
1. Jesse James	FOX	184	
2. Idiot's Delight	MGM	153	
3. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	128	
4. Son of Frankenstein	UNIV.	116	
5. Beachcomber	PAR	114	
6. Topper Takes A Trip	U.A.	112	
7. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	108	
8. Zaza	PAR	106	
9. They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	105	
10. Devil's Island	WAR	90	
11. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	86	
12. King of the Underworld	WAR	86	
13. Off the Record	WAR	83	
14. Charlie Chan In Honolulu	FOX	82	
15. Arizona Wildcat	FOX	81	
16. The Great Man Votes	RKO	80	
17. Pacific Liner	RKO	80	
18. Ambush	PAR	76	
19. Disbarred	PAR	74	
20. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69	
21. I Am A Criminal	MONO	66	
22. Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	66	

If this picture were called "Droshky to Leningrad," and the director's name ended in a group of unpronounceable consonants, New York's literati would be urging you to go to the local foreign picture theater and sit raptly before the wonders of untrammelled art.

They would tell you of the genius of Johannes Fordsky by which a group of characters is established as clean cut as a collection of cameos, of the acceleration he gives his events at a certain point that builds on and on until he is ready to catch your breath with tension, of the social significance of a woman of the bagnios and a man of the soil not to forget a renegade capitalist.

In other words, they'd have a helluva good time with themselves.

All we can report, since it is an American picture, made by an American, on an American theme—is that it is a rattling good picture, a sure-fire audience picture in Tucson, New York or even Moscow.

John Ford takes a slender horse opera thread and dresses it. A certain group of characters are aboard a stagecoach to Lordsburg—between them and their goal are mountain passes and Apaches; riding with them is the drama begot of their own problems—a woman about to become a mother, a girl of the night who has just been forcibly expelled from the town, a hero who has escaped from prison and is on his way to Lordsburg to pay a lethal debt to those who put him there, an absconding banker, a hard bitten sheriff, a lumbering coach driver, and a guzzling but

lovable medico of the frontier. Ahead of our principal characters—boy and girl—is apparently nothing but tragedy even if they escape the Apaches.

There it is. We make the trip to Lordsburg with this motley crew, we sympathize with some, pity others, love and hate with their major and minor loves and hates, and we even start bang-banging away with them at the Injuns. What's more, we are just as relieved and breathless when the good old U. S. Cavalry rides to the rescue.

Direction makes it an evening of rare enjoyment. Which is only saying also, of course, that scripting, playing, photography and other production essentials all measure up to the genius of the direction. Nor should we neglect mention of an unusually effective musical score, a score that becomes part of the picture.

John Wayne, who once ranked as number one Western star before the crooning cowhands took the play away, comes through with laurels; while that capable little girl, Claire Trevor, proves what many have contended, that she only needs her spots to crash in big. On the strictly acting side, the picture is a free for all duel between a group of masters. Thomas Mitchel's besotted doctor reaches even greater heights than his similar performance in "Hurricane." George Bancroft's sheriff is as real as an Albuquerque dateline; Andy Devine and Donald Meek deliver as one might expect from those laugh-getters. Louise Platt, as the Puritanic Easterner whose imminent blessed event gives underlying tension to events, registers with restrained skill. John Carradine and Berton

Churchill may be taken for granted. Chris Martin contributes a fine bit part.

Ford has supplied every thrill that was ever seen in a Western, and dressed them up. His work made a field day for Yakima Canutt and all the other bow-legged boys who have kept the Western banner flying high through the years.

All in all, a happy day for Walter Wanger and United Artists. Like all John Ford pictures, the marquee strength is not automatic. But you can bank your case dollar now that—again like all John Ford pictures, from "Lost Patrol," through to "The Informer," "Hurricane," and down to "Submarine Patrol"—word of mouth will get to work in exact proportion to the enthusiasm you show in selling. You can't go wrong if you go the limit—you can go wrong if you don't unlimber the enthusiasm.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "One swellegant Western that even the carriage trade will go for. A whale of a good story that has brilliant direction, writing and acting. No stars for come-ons, but an all-star cast of players that does itself proud. Play it and play it heavily, and give a good western a chance to pay through the box office."

VARIETY: "Occasionally, at long intervals, the screen manages to turn out a splendid western melodrama which is able to match the best in western literature—to give audiences similar impression of fateful reality in a raw and dangerous environment, minus all the cheap claptrap of the film or literature potboiler. Walter Wanger's 'Stagecoach' is such an exemplary picture. It is a show piece of screen craftsmanship, a tense, exciting drama and a money maker of top ranking."

The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

—NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



A Metro Goldwyn
Mayer Production

'IDIOT'S DELIGHT'

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



'IDIOT'S DELIGHT'

A Metro Goldwyn
Mayer Production

● THE HONOR BOX WINNER ○



A Metro Goldwyn
Mayer Production

'IDIOT'S DELIGHT'

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



'IDIOT'S DELIGHT'

A Metro Goldwyn
Mayer Production

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



Edward Arnold
As "ACHILLE WEBBER"

Under Exclusive Contract to
B. P. SCHULBERG PRODUCTIONS, Inc.

Exclusive Management
PHIL BERG-BERT ALLENBERG, Inc.

'IDIOT'S DELIGHT'

A Metro Goldwyn
Mayer Production

"Three Musketeers" Okay as Hokum

20th CENTURY-FOX
(EST. 115%)

Associate Producer.....Raymond Griffith
 Director.....Allan Dwan
 Screenplay.....M. M. Musselman,
 William Drake, Sam Hellman
 Special Material.....Sid Kuller, Ray Golden
 Stars.....Don Ameche, Ritz Brothers
 Featured: Binnie Barnes, Lionel Atwill, Gloria
 Stuart, Pauline Moore, Joseph Schild-
 kraut, John Carradine, Miles Mander,
 Douglas Dumbrille, John King, Russell
 Hicks, Gregory Gaye, Lester Matthews,
 Egon Brecher, Moroni Olsen, Georges
 Renavent, Montague Shaw, Jean Perry,
 Fredrik Vogeding.
 Photographer.....Peverell Marley
 Art Directors.....Bernard Herzbrun, David Hall
 Musical Director.....David Buttolph
 Music and Lyrics.....Samuel Pokrass,
 Walter Bullock
 Film Editor.....Jack Dennis
 Time.....72 Minutes

Darryl Zanuck combines the personable qualities and audience following of Don Ameche, with the inanities and laugh-guarantees of the Ritz Brothers for "Three Musketeers," and comes up with a picture that will give general satisfaction. Both for audiences and for box office.

Music, romance of the musical comedy type, and laughs are blended for the hour or so of celluloid. In the hands of Don Ameche the music and the romance fare much better than the dialogue writers deserved, in the maws of the Ritz Brothers the comedy is safe at all times.

So the whole measures up as satisfactory, while leaving a feeling of irritation as one wonders why it shouldn't have been better.

CURRENT REVIEWS

4 Over 100%.....1 O. K.....2 Weak

1. Made For Each Other	U.A.	120
2. Stagecoach	U.A.	120
3. Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	115
4. Three Musketeers	FOX	115
5. Cafe Society	PAR	95
6. Forged Passport	REP	75
7. Convicts Code	MONO	65

Perhaps the reason is that, while the main title announces it as a "musical comedy" version of the Three Musketeers, neither producer Raymond Griffith nor his writing crew had it within them to get nearer to a true musical comedy than Hurlig and Seaman or the Columbia wheel impresarios would. There's a shade of difference between "class" and—well, what we have here.

But taken as a succession of scenes woven together to give a rich production background for the antics of the Ritzes and the ingratiating personality of Don Ameche, "Three Musketeers," will meander along in stride.

Sam Pokrass and Walter Bullock have done excellently by the musical chore, the entire score having a lilting quality, and some numbers will probably duplicate the success of Pokrass's remembered "Gypsy" number.

There is little need to retell the story of "Three Musketeers," so let's use the space to record that supporting the stars are Gloria Stuart, as the Queen, Binnie Barnes, the nasty Countess of Something-or-Other, a youngster, Pauline Moore, struggling valiantly with

her stilted lines, as the light of Ameche's heart, Joseph Schildkraut, an actor even in olio surroundings in his impersonation of the King, Miles Mander as Cardinal Richelieu repeating the incisive hit he made in a bit as Disraili in "Suez."

Allan Dwan's direction gives evidence of his versatility in the wide range from operatic staginess to horseplay comedy and the result is to this veteran's credit—even if he couldn't overcome the pauses between "changes of scenery."

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Like an old master given a thorough and skillful cleaning, then touched up with a few well-chosen, capricious strokes, 'The Three Musketeers' caroms back to the screen with a real kick. It's sure-fire entertainment of the kind that breeds word-of-mouth ticket selling. These qualities, coupled with the exploitation possibilities the well-known story already possesses, predict heavy grosses in any territory."

VARIETY: "Parading Don Ameche and Ritz Brothers, in musical comedy dress, 'The Three Musketeers' contains all the ingredients needed to point picture toward box-office success."

"Yes, My Darling Daughter" Human Yarn

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 115%)

Executive Producer.....Hal B. Wallis
 Associate Producer.....Benjamin Glazer
 Director.....William Keighly
 Screenplay.....Casey Robinson
 Play.....Mark Reed
 Stars.....Priscilla Lane, Jeffrey Lynn
 Featured: Roland Young, Fay Bainter, May
 Robson, Genevieve Tobin, Ian Hunter,
 Robert Homans, Edward Gargan, Spencer
 Charters, Lottie Williams.
 Photographer.....Charles Rosher,
 Art Director.....Carl Jules Weyl
 Musical Director.....Leo F. Forbstein
 Film Editor.....Ralph Dawson
 Time.....85 Minutes

"Yes, My Darling Daughter," is delightful entertainment, scripted from a stage success with screen skill, directed for all the values of the material, played with oodles of ability and charm.

Unfortunately, it must be classified as a "limited appeal" picture on a couple of counts. First, the stage play and the screen version has its moments of sex, and while a brave attempt has been made to give those moments an air of off-hand sophistication, they are not a great deal more subtle than the back-fence writings of a backward high school freshman.

Second, despite the best efforts of Director Keighly and Scriptor Robinson, the piece DOES get talky. We—meaning your review-

er—enjoyed the talk. So did most of the pre-view audience. But we—meaning your reporter—must state that there are audiences and audiences who won't forgive the talkiness because of the vehicle's stage pedigree.

Barring the elements inherent in the play that was purchased, it is more pleasant to consider the fine work that has been turned in by all concerned merely as a job of picture making. We have made our bow to director and scriptor, we need only add the list of cast names that Hal Wallis supplied to tell you of the delights the picture affords.

It's a major league cast. And in a cast of major leaguers no one player runs away with it because all are so perfectly set for their niches. For the adult point of view on the story presented we have May Robson, Fay Bainter, Roland Young, Ian Hunter. For a bridge between elders and youngsters there is Genevieve Tobin in a neat characterization as a perennial divorcee. For youth—Priscilla Lane and Jeffrey Lynn. It is unfair to any to single out names, and a credit to the director that all rate so evenly in effectiveness.

The story gets under way with the arrival of Roland Young as a week-end guest at Fay Bainter's home, and the undercurrent suggestion that he represents a daring romantic page in her past life before her marriage to staid banker Ian Hunter. Then it presents its problem: Priscilla Lane, passionately in love

with Jeffrey Lynn who can't marry her yet, seeks a hideaway week-end—with the possible implications of what might happen on such a week-end. The adults are drawn into the affair, May Robson popping off with saltry satire, Fay Bainter torn between memories of her youth and the worries of a mother, with physical complications of a farce nature providing some corking fun, and all ending happily.

There's a big audience for this picture, an audience from high school age and well on up, that will enjoy it thoroughly. There's an audience that will be shocked. Maybe it's a story that shouldn't have been made.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A slightly rough idea of what has happened to the younger generation. When it's good, it's very, good indeed, but when it's bad, it's embarrassing. A sweet cast of players and as much exploitation as you can think of will bring a rushing business, and after that it's just up to the cast to carry through."

VARIETY: "Picture has considerable dash and movement and a freshness of statement while it dwells on the comparative merits of modern youth's frankness and the tread-carefully sex philosophy of the older generation. All is keyed to laughter, with only a few more sober moments—and all ends well from the censor standpoint as well as the theatrically romantic."

"Cafe Society" Good Entertainment

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 95%)

Producer Jeff Lazarus
 Director E. H. Griffith
 Original Story and Screenplay
 Virginia Van Upp
 Stars Madeleine Carroll,
 Fred MacMurray, Shirley Ross
 Featured: Claude Gillingwater, Jesse Ralph,
 Allyn Joslyn, Paul Hurst, Don Alvarado,
 Cupid Ainsworth, Mary Parker, Robert
 Emmett Keane, Hilda Plowright.
 Photographer Ted Tezloff
 Song Burton Lane, Frank Loesser
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Time 83 Minutes

"Cafe Society" has highlights of sophistication that will make it a good bet in most key city spots; and it has sufficient of the good old picture entertainment values to ride it through successfully in most mass situations.

The fact that the picture doesn't click both ways for better rating can only be due to the

handicaps imposed by the first mentioned virtue: Cafe Society. That title and that theme involves a story and a picture which will get frequent choruses of intelligent glee from the folks around the country who read the stray left hand column of the paper. The folks so busy with the columns that they haven't got the time to go to the movies.

It is to the credit of Producer Jeff Lazarus, Director E. H. Griffith, and probably even more to the cast, that the picture picks up so well in so many spots that it will override the title and the theme to general audience satisfaction.

Because it has plenty very entertaining moments, and some very nice people. Madeleine Carroll, playing a once popular deb who must now call her shots, is delightful. She places the marriage yoke on Fred MacMurray, who gets more opportunity than in many of his pictures, and comes through ef-

fectively. To highlight the comedy and handle the plot there are Claude Gillingwater, Jessie Ralph, and Allyn Joslyn. No one needs to talk about those good veterans, Gillingwater and Ralph, but it might help the cause of better entertainment to give an extra mention to the name of a scene helper, Allyn Joslyn.

Production elements are gorgeous. Music is fine. All in all, a picture that will give general satisfaction.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount has a swell picture in 'Cafe Society,' the best this studio has sent out for release in many a moon, and the most entertaining of this type that Hollywood has ever turned out."

VARIETY: "Light, frothy comedy, marked by sophisticated dialog, 'Cafe Society' offers a biting satire on its namesake in a pretentious production that should fare well in the key spots."

"Forged Passport" Just Gets By

REPUBLIC

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer-Director John H. Auer
 Screenplay Franklin Ooen, Lee Loeb
 Original Story James Webb, Lee Loeb
 Featured: Paul Kelly, June Lang, Lyle Talbot,
 Billy Gilbert, Cliff Nazarro, Maurice
 Murphy, Christian Rub, John Hamilton,
 Dewey Robinson, Bruce MacFarlane, Ivan
 Miller, Frank Puglia.
 Photographer Jack Marta
 Art Director John Victor Mackay
 Musical Director Cy Feuer
 Film Editor Edward Mann
 Time 64 Minutes

"Forged Passport" is definitely not the sort of picture that the new Republic is starting to ballyhoo, but on the other hand, it is just the sort of hot foot action melodrama that a number of Republic customers will have a good time with. So perhaps it should be reported as a "sustaining program."

This time the eternal problem of chasing

the crooks is placed against a Mexican border locale, with Paul Kelly playing an immigration officer, temporarily under a cloud, but out to avenge a dead buddy and restore his own reputation.

You know the story if you know the one they use in the horse operas where the hero, a Texas Ranger, is temporarily under a cloud—same cloud—but out to avenge dead buddy and restore his own reputation.

Frankly, since they are probably selling it above the horse operas, and since it has the services of Paul Kelly, Billy Gilbert, Lyle Talbot, Cliff Nazarro, and others of the same trouping standard, it should have been merged into a better picture, or it shouldn't have been made at all. Despite the fact that it will satisfy those same customers who like the horse operas—on the same Saturday matinees.

We are going to try to tell you the story if it kills us: Paul Kelly is the immigration

officer, Billy Gilbert the comic relief cafe proprietor whose faith and assistance help Paul to his vengeance, June Lang, a singing and dancing jane, Lyle Talbot, the heavy-heavy. And then—but we are compelled to quit. Just get your last press book synopsis on one of the westerns.

June Lang, whom the cafe society columnists almost kidded producers into making a star, is present as the girl. She will be much happier back in columnist society circulation. Producer-director John Auer hasn't added or subtracted anything from the formula.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Forged Passport' is a so-so cops and robbers story that will get by with audiences that definitely go for action pictures."

VARIETY: "Constructed on unconvincing tale that goes overboard on hokish side 'Forged Passport' deserves nothing better than secondary spot in smaller houses."

"Convict's Code" Mono Budgeteer

MONOGRAM

(EST. 65%)

Producer E. B. Derr
 Associate Producer Frank Melford
 Director Lambert Hillyer
 Original Screenplay John W. Krafft
 Featured: Robert Kent, Anne Nagel, Sidney
 Blackmer, Victor Kilian, Norman Willis,
 Maude Eburne, Ben Alexander, Pat
 Flaherty, Carleton Young, Howard Hick-
 man, Joan Barclay, Harry Strang.
 Photographer Arthur Martinelli
 Art Director Frank Dexter, Sr.
 Musical Director Abe Meyer
 Film Editor Russell Schoengarth
 Time 63 Minutes

"Convict's Code" is too apparently "made for a budget to fit its spots," for any too serious consideration from a reviewing standpoint. But from a reporting standpoint it can be said that the title and an excellent casting job on the whole will rate it a satis-

factory buy with most exhibitors who have lined it up.

The trouble is that while the story derives from formula, it acquires more plotty barnacles, which prevent an acceleration of pace and heightening of the real dramatic moments. Production budget limitations are to blame to some extent for this, since it makes necessary too many occasions when the characters must talk about something that has happened, rather than let the audience see it.

Selection of a lead was not so hot. This Robert Kent can't seem to untrack himself and get into professional competition. Sidney Blackmer and Norman Willis, in the heavy roles, give the reason for mentioning good casting. They stand up as solid troupers. Victor Kilian and Maude Eburne are other welcome character safeties. Ann Nagle hasn't much opportunity in her role, but gives

a performance that can be labelled satisfactory.

The story concerns Robert Kent, a former football hero, who has been framed to prison and on his parole is out to unmask those behind his conviction. You will not be surprised to learn that fate causes him to fall in love with the sister of the man he is after.

The part and the plot are worked out with logical detail, but as a monotone dramatically—and directed in the same key.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Monogram will poll little applause from 'Convict's Code.' It is filler product and even the market which wants red meat will find it pallid."

VARIETY: "Tailored for the lesser situations, 'Convict's Code' falls short in speedy action and suspense but will account well enough for itself among the smaller houses. Slowness of tempo prevents it from jelling into top-notch small budgeted filmfare."

"Made for Each Other" Pleasing Fun

UNITED ARTISTS

(EST. 120%)

Producer David O. Selznick
 Director John Cromwell
 Screenplay Jo Swerling
 Stars.....Carole Lombard, James Stewart
 Featured: Charles Coburn, Lucile Watson,
 Eddie Quillan, Alma Kruger, Ruth Weston,
 Donald Briggs, Harry Davenport, Esther
 Dale, Renee Ossell, Louise Beavers, Ward
 Bond, Olin Howland, Fern Emmett, Jackie
 Taylor, Mickey Rentschler, Ivan Simpson.
 PhotographerLeon Shamroy
 Musical Director Lou Forbes
 Art Director Lyle Wheeler
 Special Effects Jack Cosgrove
 Film Editors...Hal C. Kern, James E. Newcom
 Time 85 Minutes

Directing and writing skill combine with a couple of stars at their peak of personal appeal and ability to make of "Made For Each Other," a thoroughly enjoyable evening of entertainment. The picture will do well at the box office because of the marquee names; it would do better with a title not so wishy washy as "Made For Each Other"—we can hear exhibitors growling.

Of course, the picture doesn't have much reason for existence. Beyond the fact that we know when a craftsman with the human touch of Jo Swerling starts playing with a

bride and bridegroom theme, and a director like John Cromwell toys with its interpretation, and troupers like Lombard and Stewart put it before your eyes in the flesh, there is bound to be a plentitude of enjoyment.

There will be many who don't quite see the connection between the main theme and the melodramatic ending, but shucks, even the melo is good in these hands, so why ask too much?

It seems that Lombard and Stewart got married one bright afternoon on the Boston Common, and then set out to live their lives in New York. Stewart is the dumb downtrodden worm hubby who will never get ahead of the next instalment payment, Lombard the ever-loving wifey. Flies in the ointment are, respectively, Charles Coburn, Stewart's boss, and Lucille Watson. Stewart's mother—and a mother-in-law as likeable and irritating simultaneously as any audience would want to chuckle over.

Then, to go on with the "seeming," things don't go so well, in fact they get worse. About the time Swerling and Cromwell have exhausted a steady succession of delightful scenes built on the young couple and mother-in-law theme, they decide the picture has to end. So the baby gets convenient—or inconvenient—pneumonia, and a guy named Eddie Quillan three thousand miles away,

enters the plot to be the hero of the picture. He flies the plane that brings the precious serum and saves baby's life. Somehow or other, out of this mess, Jimmy Stewart gets promoted to a partnership in his firm and takes on all the attributes of a completely turned worm in time for the tag scene. No one knows yet just what he did to earn these honors—except that he did "phone for the ambulance."

But by that time no one cares much. Swerling and Cromwell have played the gamut on the human type of things that audiences eat up—and they don't miss a bet. It is as earthy as your breakfast nook, but cleverly done. Lombard and Stewart have endeared themselves still further to their followers, Coburn and Miss Watson have turned in gems of character work. And everybody's happy.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A frank tear jerker that has its moments of inspiration that lift it above routine. It also has all the tried and true moments that usually spell box office, and it's got Carole Lombard and Jimmy Stewart to guarantee the marquee and to guarantee audience satisfaction."

VARIETY: "High comedy and high drama are elegantly blended in this fine love story of young people in their first married years."

RELEASES OF THE WEEK

By Norman Webb

(Continued from Page 1)

cannot be counted on to bring very much cash into the box office, due to the lack of marquee names.

WARNER BROTHERS— 1 NEW RELEASE

Warner Brothers have quite an outstanding release this week in "THEY MADE ME A CRIMINAL," which serves to introduce John Garfield to the star ranks. Exhibitors will remember that Garfield recently scored very heavily in "FOUR DAUGHTERS," and the critics gave this newcomer from the New York stage an excellent send off. Garfield fully proves his right to stardom in "THEY MADE ME A CRIMINAL," which, being backed by

a terrific exploitation campaign, has been averaging 105%, and even better on some of its first runs.

The Dead End Kids are heavily featured, and as they are very popular in "their own territory"—New York and Brooklyn—this picture has been doing about 30% above normal in that vicinity, although the average throughout the country is more like 105%.

Barney Glazer produced under Hal Wallis' supervision, and Busby Berkeley directed. Sig Herzig wrote the screenplay from Bertram Millhauser and Beulah Marie Dix's original. Besides Garfield and The Dead End Kids, there is a very outstanding cast of featured players, including Ann Sheridan, May Robson, Claude Rains, and Gloria Dickson.

FOX—1 NEW RELEASE

20th Century-Fox has a new programmer this week from the Sol Wurtzel unit, "ARIZONA WILDCAT," 81%, which is the latest in the Jane Withers starring series. Miss Withers is given very capable support in this entertaining western, with Leo Carrillo co-starred. Pauline Moore and Henry Wilcoxon are among the prominent featured players.

While Jane has never been considered a good first-run attraction, she is still as popular as ever in the "nabes," and exhibitors can certainly count on this one, as it is something different and considerably above her average picture.

John Stone supervised and Herbert Leeds directed.

You Are Only Worth What the
 BOX OFFICE Says You Are Worth!

«

—and the only service in the industry which gives you the authentic box office value of every individual associated with the making of motion pictures is the

»

DIGEST'S BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Alexander's Ragtime Band	FOX	297
Snow White	RKO	219
Test Pilot	MGM	187
In Old Chicago	FOX	181
Boys Town	MGM	174
Adventures of Robin Hood	WAR	170
You Can't Take It With You	COL	164
Sweethearts	MGM	160
Marie Antoinette	MGM	153
Happy Landings	FOX	152
Angels With Dirty Faces	WAR	148
Too Hot To Handle	MGM	146
That Certain Age	UNIV	146
Mad About Music	UNIV	140
Girl of the Golden West	MGM	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife	PAR	137
The Buccaneer	PAR	137
Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
Suez	FOX	133
Kentucky	FOX	132
The Crowd Roars	MGM	132
A Yank at Oxford	MGM	130
The Cowboy and the Lady	U.A.	127
Jezebel	WAR	126
My Lucky Star	FOX	125
If I Were King	PAR	123
Men With Wings	PAR	122
Carefree	RKO	122
Three Loves Has Nancy	MGM	120
Sing You Sinners	PAR	119
Adventures of Tom Sawyer	PAR	119
Mannquin	MGM	119
Adventures of Marco Polo	U. A.	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook	FOX	118
Algiers	U. A.	118
The Golfwyn Follies	U. A.	118
The Citadel	MGM	117
Trade Winds	U. A.	117
Vivacious Lady	RKO	117
Bringing Up Baby	RKO	117
Spawn of the North	RKO	117
Three Comrades	MGM	115
The Sisters	WAR	112
Little Miss Broadway	FOX	111
The Sisters	WAR	111
Hollywood Hotel	WAR	109
Room Service	RKO	108
Kentucky Moonshine	FOX	108
Joy of Living	RKO	108
Sally, Irene and Mary	FOX	105
Tropic Holiday	PAR	105
Three Blind Mice	FOX	103
Artists and Models Abroad	PAR	103
The Shining Hour	MGM	103
Thanks For Everything	FOX	103
Dr. Rhythm	PAR	103
Godd Is Where You Find It	WAR	103
Letter Of Introduction	UNIV	102
Having Wonderful Time	RKO	102
Baroness and the Butler	FOX	101
The Rage of Paris	UNIV	101
The Young In Heart	U. A.	100
There Goes My Heart	U. A.	100
Drums	U. A.	100
Submarine Patrol	U. A.	100
The Great Waltz	FOX	100
Big Broadcast of 1938	PAR	99
Four's A Crowd	WAR	98
Just Around The Corner	FOX	98
Arkansas Traveler	PAR	97
Boy Meets Girl	WAR	96
Every Day's a Holiday	PAR	96
Merrily We Live	MGM	95
Holiday	COL	94
Her Jungle Love	PAR	94
The Texans	PAR	94
College Swing	PAR	93
Josette	FOX	93
Blockade	U. A.	93
Always Goodbye	FOX	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Out West With the Hardys	MGM	147
Stablemates	MGM	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy	MGM	121
Bad Man of Brimstone	MGM	130
Brother Rat	WAR	122
Four Daughters	WAR	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse	WAR	113
A Slight Case of Murder	WAR	112
I Am The Law	COL	103
Straight, Place And Show	FOX	98
Port of Seven Seas	MGM	95
Judge Hardy's Children	MGM	95
Valley Of The Giants	WAR	94
Four Men and a Prayer	FOX	93
Showdown Angel	MGM	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn	WAR	93
Lord Jeff	MGM	92
Hold That Co-Ed	FOX	92

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

The Birth Of A Baby IND.....167 %

D. BELOW \$100,000

Crime School WAR.....103 %

Blondie COL.....100

Little Tough Guy	UNIV	86
King Of Alcatraz	PAR	83
The Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	82
Saint In New York	RKO	81
Girls on Probation	WAR	80
Tom Sawyer, Detective	PAR	80
Christmas Carol	MGM	80
Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
White New York Sleeps	FOX	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	78
Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Smashing the Spy Ring	COL	78

City Girl.....FOX..... 78
 Condemned Woman.....RKO..... 78
 Change of Heart.....FOX..... 78
 Little Tough Guys in Society.....UNIV..... 78
 Touchdown Army.....PAR..... 78
 No Time to Marry.....FOX..... 77
 Girl's School.....COL..... 77
 Always in Trouble.....FOX..... 77
 Scandal Street.....PAR..... 77
 Double Danger.....RKO..... 77
 Crashing Hollywood.....RKO..... 77
 Sharpshooters.....FOX..... 77
 Illegal Traffic.....PAR..... 77
 Torchy Blane Gets Her Man.....WAR..... 77
 Blondes at Work.....WAR..... 76
 He Couldn't Say No.....WAR..... 76
 Affairs of Annabelle.....RKO..... 76
 Campus Confessions.....PAR..... 76
 Women in Prison.....COL..... 76
 Bulldog Drummond's Peril.....PAR..... 76
 Youth Takes A Fling.....UNIV..... 74
 Speed to Burn.....FOX..... 74
 Mysterious Mr. Moto.....FOX..... 74
 Secrets Of A Nurse.....UNIV..... 74
 Blind Alibi.....RKO..... 74
 Over the Wall.....WAR..... 74
 Dangerous to Know.....PAR..... 74
 Island in the Sky.....FOX..... 74
 Beloved Brat.....WAR..... 74
 Broadway Musketeers.....WAR..... 74
 Prison Fanny.....PAR..... 74
 Annabelle Takes a Tour.....RKO..... 74
 Prison Break.....UNIV..... 73
 One Wild Night.....FOX..... 73
 Mr. Moto's Gamble.....RKO..... 73
 Tarnished Angel.....FOX..... 73
 Love on a Budget.....FOX..... 73
 Walking Down Broadway.....UNIV..... 73
 Prescription for Romance.....UNIV..... 73
 Nancy Drew, Detective.....WAR..... 72
 Swing That Cheer.....UNIV..... 72
 Down On The Farm.....FOX..... 72
 The Lady Objects.....COL..... 72
 Booboo.....PAR..... 72
 Torchy Blane in Panama.....WAR..... 72
 Little Miss Roughneck.....COL..... 72
 Midnight Intruder.....UNIV..... 72
 International Settlement.....FOX..... 72
 Passport Husband.....FOX..... 72
 Next Time I Marry.....RKO..... 71
 The Kid Comes Back.....WAR..... 71
 Go Chase Yourself.....RKO..... 71
 The Patient in Room 18.....WAR..... 71
 Everybody's Doing It.....FOX..... 71
 Mr. Moto's Chance.....FOX..... 71
 Bulldog Drummond In Africa.....PAR..... 71
 Fast Company.....MGM..... 71
 Strange Faces.....UNIV..... 71
 The Black Doll.....UNIV..... 70
 Exposed.....UNIV..... 70
 I'm From the City.....RKO..... 70
 Sons Of The Legion.....PAR..... 70
 Dare Devil Drivers.....WAR..... 70
 Hunted Men.....PAR..... 70
 Nurse From Brooklyn.....UNIV..... 70
 Young Fugitives.....UNIV..... 70
 Night Spot.....RKO..... 70
 Sinners in Paradise.....UNIV..... 70
 Safety in Numbers.....FOX..... 70
 Mr. Doodle Kicks Off.....RKO..... 70

Freshman Year.....UNIV..... 69
 Lone Wolf in Paris.....COL..... 69
 His Exciting Night.....UNIV..... 68
 Meet the Girls.....FOX..... 68
 The Devils Party.....UNIV..... 68
 Peck's Bad Boy at Circus.....RKO..... 68
 The Crime of Dr. Hallett.....UNIV..... 68
 The Jury's Secret.....UNIV..... 68
 Love, Honor and Behave.....WAR..... 68
 She Loved a Fireman.....WAR..... 68
 Glamorous Night.....REF..... 68
 When Were You Born?.....WAR..... 67
 Wives Under Suspicion.....UNIV..... 67
 Men Are Such Fools.....WAR..... 67
 Swing Sister Swing.....UNIV..... 66
 The Chaser.....MGM..... 66
 Vacation From Love.....MGM..... 66
 Personal Secretary.....UNIV..... 66
 Road Demon.....FOX..... 65
 Men With 100 Faces.....G.B..... 65
 Sez O'Reilly to McNabb.....G.B..... 64
 Three On A Weekend.....G.B..... 64
 Strance Boarders.....G.B..... 61
 Dark Sands.....E. I. P..... 68
 Crime Over London.....G.B..... 58
 Little Orphan Annie.....PAR..... 58
 To the Victor.....G.B..... 56

Ride A Crooked Mile.....PAR..... 79
 Swing Your Lady.....WAR..... 79
 Of Human Hearts.....MGM..... 79
 Spring Madness.....MGM..... 78
 Five Of A Kind.....FOX..... 78
 Breaking The Ice.....RKO..... 78
 The Road To Reno.....UNIV..... 77
 Wise Girl.....RKO..... 77
 The Storm.....UNIV..... 77
 Thanks For The Memory.....PAR..... 77
 Swiss Miss.....MGM..... 76
 I Met My Love Again.....U. A..... 76
 Army Girl.....REF..... 76
 Blockheads.....MGM..... 76
 Comet Over Broadway.....WAR..... 76

Keep Smiling.....FOX..... 75
 Arsene Lupin Returns.....MGM..... 75
 First 100 Years.....MGM..... 75
 Love Is a Headache.....MGM..... 74
 Battle of Broadway.....FOX..... 74
 Secrets Of An Actress.....WAR..... 74
 Service Deluxe.....UNIV..... 73
 Spring Madness.....MGM..... 73
 Stolen Heaven.....PAR..... 73
 Rich Man, Poor Girl.....MGM..... 72
 Hawaii Calls.....RKO..... 72
 Goodbye Broadway.....UNIV..... 72
 Start Cheering.....COL..... 72
 My Bill.....WAR..... 71
 Women Are Like That.....WAR..... 71
 Sadline Alone.....G. B..... 70

Strange Case of Dr. Meade.....COL..... 80
 Crime Takes a Holiday.....COL..... 80
 Dark Rapture.....UNIV..... 80

Over the Wall.....WAR..... 74
 Dangerous to Know.....PAR..... 74
 Island in the Sky.....FOX..... 74
 Beloved Brat.....WAR..... 74
 Broadway Musketeers.....WAR..... 74
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You can read
all the Polls----
but don't get
excited-----



You won't know
the truth until
you read-----



**National Box Office
Digest's 1939**



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NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 8. No. 3

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 17, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 10 CENTS

RADIO'S "GUNGA DIN" SMASHING ALL RECORDS IN KEY CITY RUNS

*Of Seven New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%;
One Came Thru Okay, and Three Were Very Weak.*

BY NORMAN WEBB

R-K-O—2 New Releases

R.K.O.-Radio Pictures is starting off the new year with a bang. In the past week RKO released its big super epic, "GUNGA-DIN," and also "FISHERMAN'S WHARF," which is a much better than average program picture.

"GUNGA DIN" opened up almost simultaneously in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and Hollywood, and in each and every case has proven itself a definite box office smash, being held for second and third weeks, and averaging around 174% on its first engagements. "GUNGA DIN" will undoubtedly prove to be the biggest box office hit to come out of RKO-Radio Studios since their famous "FLYING DOWN TO RIO," which was released some five years ago. And of course, "Snow White."

"GUNGA DIN" is the work of producer-director George Stevens. Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., ramble through this tale as the three English musketeers of East India, who are in constant trouble among themselves when they are not fighting the natives. Practically all the critics have agreed that Grant, McLaglen, and Fairbanks have delivered the best performances of their entire careers, which all goes to make "GUNGA DIN" a bigger and better box office picture.

Among the supporting players are Joan Fontaine as the leading lady, Sam Jaffe as Gunga Din, and Eduardo Ciannelli and Montague Love are also prominently featured. That famous writing team of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur based their original story on the character in Rudyard Kipling's famous poem of the same name.

Joel Sayre and Freddie Guiol wrote the outstanding screenplay.

RKO's second release this week is a new Sol Lesser production, "FISHERMAN'S WHARF," co-starring Bobby Breen with Leo Carillo. Mr. Lesser has put much more time and money into this latest Bobby Breen picture, and has evidently been well rewarded, as the first box office figures received are averaging around 84%, which is considerably higher than the other recent Breen pictures.

Bernard Vorhaus directed from Bernard Schubert, Ian Hunter, and Clyde Lewis' screenplay. Exhibitors who will go a little out of their way in giving this picture an extra exploitation campaign will probably be well rewarded.

M-G-M—2 New Releases

Leo the Lion roars again and MGM comes out this week with two new releases—a big musical hit in "HONOLULU" and another fair program picture entitled "FOUR GIRLS IN WHITE."

Eleanor Powell's first starring picture in over a year ("ROSALIE" was released late in 1937), "HONOLULU," has opened up in several test engagements and is doing quite satisfactorily at 126% average, considering that this picture was not made on such a pretentious scale as Miss Powell's former two releases.

Robert Young is seen opposite Miss Powell, with Burns and Allen as the featured comedians. Other prominent supporting players are Rita Johnson, Sig Rumann, and Edward Gargan. Jack Cummings produced and Eddie Buzzell directed from an original screenplay by Herbert Fields and Frank Partos. The musical numbers and dance ensembles add much to the en-

7 New Releases Not in Last Issue

3 Over 100%.....1 O. K.....3 Weak

		% We Est.	
1. Gunga Din	RKO	174	170
2. Honolulu	MGM	126	130
3. The Lady Vanishes	FOV	100	
4. Fisherman's Wharf	RKOO	84	85
5. Four Girls In White	MGM	76	80
6. Mysterious Miss X	REP	72	70
7. Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt	COL	70	80

(Continued on Page 7)

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ *"Honor Box"* ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **RKO** Wins With
"GUNGA DIN" - 174%



Executive Producer
PANDRO S. BERMAN



Producer-Director
GEORGE STEVENS



CARY GRANT



VICTOR McLAGLEN



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, JR.



JOAN FONTAINE

Screenplay
JOEL SAYRE
FRED GUIOL

Poem
RUDYARD KIPLING

Story
BEN HECHT
CHARLES MacARTHUR

Film Editors
HENRY BERMAN
JOHN LOCKERT



SAM JAFFE

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

"YES, MY DARLINGS—"

In our humble opinion the motion picture industry will be making a great mistake if it allows itself to be maneuvered into an industry fight against present forms of censorship because of the individual case of Warner's "Yes, My Darling Daughter."

We say this, with all due recognition of the right and justice in Warner Brothers fighting to protect their own investment, and their belief in their own production judgment.

But that is Warner's battle, and we believe the Warner freres will be the first to state so.

Already, however, some editorial and headline outgivings are attempting to make an issue of this particular case in a parade of phrases about "narrow censorship," "curbing the intelligence of the screen," etc. and even more so etcetera.

The "ism boys" are preparing to climb aboard the bandwagon; they'd like nothing better than this heaven-sent opportunity to have Warners provide the bankroll, and the front.

The industry will provide the goat. In person.

* * * *

Any opinions concerning "Yes, My Darling Daughter" are beside the point at present under discussion.

In our own review we stated emphatically our personal enjoyment of a clever job of picture making, our opinion that most audiences would also enjoy it, but we just as plainly ended our review with the words: "MAYBE IT'S A PICTURE THAT SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN MADE."

We foresaw—we say this with due humbleness—some of the things that have happened.

We said our thoughts as politely as a constructive picture writer should say such things if he wishes to have the folks concerned appreciate that his intentions are constructive.

But now the play is for the industry to let the darling daughters sink or swim by their own ability to swim or

inability to keep their heads above water, without blushing. Let's not be roped in by the "ism boys."

* * * *

The "ism boys" have been doing a very good job, as such jobs are rated. They haven't got to first base, but "ism boys" can be happy just standing up there at the plate swinging.

They got started about the time the Spanish civil fray got home to America to the point where one couldn't decide whether it was currently de rigeur to eat enchilados or chili beans. They got hot when "Blockade" met its fate.

Then the works started. Professors from here, there and everywhere, lecturers from nowhere in particular, began breaking the news columns with the doleful information that the screen was shackled and hog-tied.

They slipped in the thought for Hollywood consumption that this was probably the reason why the picture business isn't doing as well as Midas might have operated it.

They softpedaled the fact that much of this platitudinous expression of sympathy for trammelled art might have its inception in a particular ism. Any ism. Isms are isms—your ism of today may be mine tomorrow. Or maybe we will both get together in some sort of hate fever and concoct a new ism for the day after tomorrow.

But it's pretty tough on that lumbering but nevertheless sturdy elephant, the motion picture industry, to try and convince him that the reason he doesn't gambol like a gazelle is because he isn't loaded down with all the isms that the mind of man can concoct.

* * * *

Mind you—we have no quarrel with the ism boys, nor

with their methods, so long as they stay on their own side of the fence. They have just as much right to their ism—and the expression of it—as we have to ours. Though we happen to be personally out of isms just now—that's probably the good natured side of the Celt in us.

No, sir, the ism boys are sincere—which is item

(Continued on Page 8)

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

			%
1.	M. G. M.	45 Releases	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	51 Releases	92
3.	United Artists	17 Releases	92
4.	Paramount	40 Releases	88
5.	Warner Brothers	53 Releases	87
6.	R. K. O.	39 Releases	83
7.	Columbia	33 Releases	80
8.	Universal	39 Releases	77
9.	Republic	25 Releases	73
10.	Monogram	14 Releases	69
11.	Grand National	5 Releases	66
12.	Gaumont British	10 Releases	59

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

The News at a Glance

Bing—bang—biff—gosh, how the radio news popped through the week. Right on the heels of Darryl Zanuck's announcement that Tyrone Power would leave the air came Metro's announcement—later muddled—about abandoning the Good News show. And even though we are a weekly, The Digest isn't doing so badly at keeping ahead of the news—even if we have to anticipate it to do so. Modestly we point out: The Digest, February 8th: "There is a program listing Ronald Colman and a bushel basket of stars which is the nearest thing to sophomore high school technique that could be imagined." The daily press, February 11th: "Ronald Colman quits radio program. Carol Lombard quits." The same dailies, February 13th: "Cary Grant gives four weeks notice to radio program." . . . Then there's this: The Digest, February 8th: "There are stars like Don Ameche who know their radio metier and whose every appearance is a ticket seller for the industry." The dailies, February 13th: "Darryl Zanuck in announcing plans to withdraw Alice Faye from the air denies published rumors that he would seek the same deal from Don Ameche. 'Ameche,' he says, 'is in a different class.'"

Sunday Night Is Sunday Night

Of possibly greater reader interest than our own chronicle of events is a letter we received from Don Gilman, vice-president of National Broadcasting Company. Passing over the kind words he says about our editorial on the subject his letter contains a phrase worth posting in every production office. So we'll let you read it: "Dear Mr. Welsh: I think your editorial in this week's Digest is one of the most intelligent discussions of the radio-movie problem I have seen yet. The one ridiculous part of it all is the feeling that by taking moving picture stars off the air they are going to stop this large Sunday audience listening to the radio. I am pleased, nevertheless, to see such an intelligent discussion and congratulate you on it." . . . Our thanks to Mr. Gilman, and now apologies for paraphrasing the sentence to which we have referred. Let's post this in every producer's office: "You can't stop the large Sunday audience listening to the radio UNLESS—." And shoot the picture man who doesn't mentally finish that admonition by saying—"UNLESS—we can compete with a better product on those Sunday nights." . . . That's the whole story. Sunday night was the big night for show business long before picture folks began to feel it sacred to their pocket-books. If it wasn't a local prayer meeting it might be a cockfight in Espaniola or a bull dog brawl in Merrie England. When the allurements of a day's century run on the bicycle gave way to the thrills of flivver hopping, the fellow with something to sell show-wise still had his problem. Now it's radio. And rollerdromes. And dance halls. And ice rinks. And, what have you. But the motion picture leviathan has carried so many barnacles on its underside for lo, these many years, that there's always a shiver of

7 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was	New
1. Stand Up And Fight.....MGM	128	121
2. Paris Honeymoon.....PAR	108	104
3. Devil's Island.....WAR	90	86
4. The Girl Downstairs.....MGM	86	80
5. Charlie Chan in Honolulu FOX	82	78
6. Pacific Liner.....RKO	80	77
7. The Great Man Votes.....RKO	80	76

dumb panic at the thought that maybe we should step out in competition on the merits and attractions of our product. The plain fact is that the industry with all its gargantuan proportions isn't providing enough solid hit pictures a year now to handle itself fifty-two Sundays against intelligent competition. Good weather and the Sunday habit have been its best reliance.

Vic Fleming Takes on a Tough Job

We suppose we should have started the page off with a discussion concerning George Cukor's withdrawal from direction of "Gone With the Wind" after two years of preparation and three weeks of shooting. After enough tests have been made to pay the annual production budget for Republic or Monogram—and enough scripts written to have matched "Jezebel," "Stand Up And Fight," and a few others . . . We are just as snooty as the other fellow and could probably give this rumor and that. Or take a lot of space about something that might be a rumor. But as we see it: David Selznick is now the goat for several million dollars; George Cukor is one of his employees. When the picture is made the funny reviewers will run here, there and everywhere distributing their credits or their blame. (Just as a lot of funny columnists we have recently read give credit for "Stagecoach" to Dudley Nichols. Have you heard a funnier laugh lately? Why even the usually incisive Morton Thompson went for a third of a column before breaking down this much: "Dudley Nichols was in this case associated with John Ford") But that's all beside a couple of points. The point to us right now is the one on which Victor Fleming has set himself. Vic has the top box office money rating for the industry's directors right there in his palm this minute with "Test Pilot" and "Captains Courageous." He is just finishing the weighty problems that come with a problem child like "Wizard of Oz." And he steps into the wind. There's a game guy—he didn't choose a member of the cast, he will have to give a Main Street once-over shave to the script before starting to work. And with the millions who think this is their own pet picture and know that they could personally cast it and make it better than any other human—he will be the fellow whose name is up there on the credit sheet. One thing Fleming can count on, in addition to his own ability, and that is a helluva lot of rootin' tootin' good will from those who know him and his work, and who have an extra yen for game guys.

Gabbing Around Where Talk Is Heard

Let's see what the news of the week gives us. Gosh, there wasn't any. One of the dailies told us one day that 20th Century is going to make an epic "The Life of Charles Steinmetz." The only thing important about that announcement was our personal worry that Zanuck might have Tyrone Power playing the lovable, hunchbacked Steinmetz. Because then those poor school kids getting their history from the screen would get all balled up separating Mr. Lloyd of London, De Lesseps, Jesse James and the fellow who knew Marie Antoinette. . . . Ever since its earliest days the industry has known what it is to have worries about what players do on or off the screen. Looks as though radio is in for its baptism in the same line. We have our opinion—and one of them is that Jack Benny is showing more current sense, and living up better to what a public asks of its creatures, than anyone in the present radio jazz session with the Federals. We could say more, but who asked for our advice anyway? . . . RKO is going to remake "Hunchback of Notre Dame." They must have a star up their sleeve that means something. Because here is a subject that rings in memory only one way: "LON CHANEY in 'the hunchback of notre dame.'" With all due respects to the classic. But anything might happen, and we are apt to finish up with something like this: "John Handsom and Lotta Leggs in 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' with a cast including Hugh Herbert, Charles Butterworth, Eddie Rochester Anderson, and Bela Lugosi." Odds are only even money that Bela would be the hunchback.

Somebody Shows Some Good Sense

To a fellow who knows his picture onions—or, at the least, a fellow who thinks he can smell onions—there has been a fine bit of thinking in the move by which Roy Del Ruth moves in as director of the next Bing Crosby Universal feature. David Butler, currently directing "East Side of Heaven," had been slated to make the next. But when a director of top ranking like Butler and Del Ruth puts forth his all handling a star vehicle it is never exactly wise for him to step into another excursion with the same malleable qualities. Witness some Von Sternberg-Dietrich experience. On the other hand, Roy Del Ruth will be ra'ring to go with Bing Crosby. So—take the best of Butler, add the best of Del Ruth, and your total says that some good judgment has been shown. . . . Speaking of directors, we had the good fortune to catch a preview of a short last week—called "Somebody"—directed and produced by Dr. Meyers, former Agfa chief out here. Now we know where they grow those directors—after seeing another fellow with the "touch" handle his angles, his people, and his feeling. It's the same feeling we got the time we saw the first day's rushes that George Stevens had shot as a director.

"HONOLULU"



Eleanor Powell

as

Dorothy Marsh

Management:
WILLIAM MORRIS

A METRO GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURE

"Huckleberry Finn" Money Picture

M. G. M.

(EST. 145%)

Producer Joseph L. Mankiewicz
 Director Richard Thorpe
 Screenplay Hugo Butler
 Original Mark Twain
 Star Mickey Rooney
 Featured: Walter Connolly, William Frawley,
 Rex Ingram, Lynne Carver, Jo Ann Sayers,
 Minor Watson, Elisabeth Risdon, Victor
 Kilian, Clara Blandick.
 Photographer John Seitz
 Musical Score Franz Waxman
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor Frank E. Hull
 Time 85 Minutes

Take equal parts of Mark Twain and Mickey Rooney for your box office; take a sincere and intelligent adaptation to the screen of a beloved classic; and add the total up to a box office certainty and entertainment natural.

That's the "Huckleberry Finn" which Associate producer Joseph Mankiewicz and Director Richard Thorpe have given to MGM. With Mickey Rooney at his peak in drawing power, the money results are certain; the attitude with which the producers have approached Mark Twain is the clinching factor in audience approval.

What additions or subtractions, what enlarging or minimizing may have been done to the Huckleberry Finn of most spectators' memories, has all been done with this air of intelligent respect. In most details these efforts come off well, only one exception coming to mind especially. This is in the characters of the King and Duke, portrayed by Walter Connolly and William Frawley. It is no disparagement of these ace actors to record that their characterizations are the jarring note in the picture and the sequences in which their individual plot must be laboriously unwound are the ones that make the picture seem unduly long.

We say, "through no fault of the players," because there is a powerful reason. So strongly holding up to this point has been the atmosphere and the feeling of every scene that concerns Huck and Jim, that almost anything that could happen which did not keep Mickey

RELEASES OF 1939		%
1. Jesse James	FOX	182
2. Gunga Din	RKO	174
3. Idiot's Delight	MGM	153
4. Hono ulu	MGM	126
5. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	121
6. The Beachcomber	PAR	114
7. Topper Takes A Trip	U.A.	112
8. Son Of Frankenstein	UNIV	109
9. Zaza	PAR	106
10. They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	105
11. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	104
12. The Lady Vanishes	FOX	100
13. Devil's Island	WAR	86
14. King of the Underworld	WAR	86
15. Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	84
16. Off The Record	WAR	81
17. Arizona Wildcat	FOX	81
18. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	80
19. Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	78
20. Pacific Liner	RKO	77
21. Ambush	PAR	76
22. Four Girls in White	MGM	76
23. Disbarred	PAR	74
24. Mysterious Miss X	REP	72
25. Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt	COL	70
26. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
27. I Am A Criminal	MOND	66
28. Burn Em Up O'Connor	MGM	66

Rooney right center stage would suffer as an intrusion.

The picture holds with an uncanny grip every moment that Mickey is on the screen as the center of interest, to the extent that other moments, otherwise good in themselves, suffer by comparison. Which is probably nothing to complain about, since the story is "Huckleberry Finn," and the customers will be paying their money to see Mickey Rooney's "Huckleberry Finn."

Rex Ingram—you will remember "Green Pastures"—in his interpretation of the role of Jim, goes hand in hand with Mickey for effectiveness; Elizabeth Risdon and Clara Blandick are lovable guardian "aunts," with Miss Risdon particularly hitting this reviewer's emotional chords. Lynn Carver and Jo Ann Sayers play the girlish interest for the King and Duke episode satisfactorily, suffer-

ing only because everybody is slightly irritated whenever Huckleberry Finn's story has been interrupted.

Before concluding: An extra vote for Dick Thorpe's handling of Mickey Rooney. Mickey is as repressed as any of his most severe critics could ask, and as effective as his most enthusiastic fans could desire. So, give Thorpe a break, and a nod to a pretty clever thespian Mickey Rooney. Maybe Mickey reads the papers, too.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It's hard for this reviewer to believe that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced this picture . . . In the opinion of your reviewer, it is one of the worst missouts he has ever seen in pictures for quite a while."

VARIETY: "Mickey Rooney and Huckleberry Finn. Two of a kind, and a box office pair to draw to—a natural in most districts, in both the ace and deuce houses."

"One Third of a Nation" Dull Message

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 80%)

Producer Harold Orlob
 Director Dudley Murphy
 Screenplay Oliver H. P. Garnett
 Adaptation Dudley Murphy
 Original Arthur Arent
 Star Sylvia Sidney
 Featured: Leif Erikson, Myron McCormick,
 Hiram Sherman, Sidney Lumet, Muriel
 Hutchinson, Percy Waram, Otto Hulitt,
 Horace Sinclair, Iris Adrian, Charles
 Dingle, Edmonia Nolley, Hugh Cameron,
 Julia Fassett, Baruch Lumet, Byron Rus-
 sell, Robert George, Wayne Nunn, Max
 Hirsch, Miriam Goldina, Bea Hendricks,
 William Pote.
 Photographer William Miller
 Art Director Walter Keller
 Film Editor Duncan Mansfield
 Time 75 Minutes

One third of the nation doesn't possess the price to buy theater tickets, another third that might be engrossed by this picture's

heavy handed propaganda turns its nose up at the movies, and the final third that attends the theaters will yawn.

The producers make the mistake common to propagandists in any line, and the one that will always make the road of screen propaganda a rocky one. They are so impressed with their own message and the necessity of conveying it to others that they overplay the dole and direful tones with a complete loss of perspective on real life.

Barring this element, which definitely weakens the picture as entertainment for your theater, Director Dudley Murphy and his cast have turned in capable moments of picture making. Sylvia Sidney is seen in a role that with its surroundings gives reminders of "Dead End," and turns in a good performance. She is the sister of a boy of the tenements who has been crippled mentally and

physically as a result of the rat-trap construction of such slum dwellings. Opposite her is Lief Erickson, as the son of wealth—derived in large part from such tenements—and eventually converted to the cause of wholesale reconstruction.

Dramatic elements are built on a pathological study of the injured boy, with the tenement that marred his life plotted as the glowering menace. Eventually he sets the building on fire to bring about the climax.

Though direction and playing can be rated "capable," there is a lack of spark to the proceedings, probably because all are overwhelmed by the burden of getting their message over.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOW SAID:

VARIETY: "As propaganda aimed to convert from talk to action current campaign for slum clearance in metropolitan centers, 'One Third of a Nation' suffices. As entertainment, it is nil."

"You Can't Cheat---" Laugh Frolic

UNIVERSAL
(EST. 110%)

Producer Lester Cowan
 Director George Marshall
 Screenplay George Marion, Jr.,
 Richard Mack, Everett Freeman
 Story Charles Bogle
 Stars W. C. Fields,
 Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy
 Featured: Constance Moore, John Arledge,
 James Bush, Thurston Hall, Mary Forbes,
 Arthur Hohl, Princess Baba, Blacaman,
 Eddie Anderson, Edward Brophy.
 Photographer Milton Krasner
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Otto Ludwig
 Time 78 Minutes

CURRENT REVIEWS

4 Over 100%..... 4 O. K..... 2 Weak

1. Huckleberry Finn	MGM.....	145
2. Let Freedom Ring	MGM.....	130
3. Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX.....	110
4. You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV.....	110
5. King of the Turf	U.A.....	90
6. One Third of a Nation	PAR.....	80
7. Fast and Loose	MGM.....	80
8. The Saint Strikes Back	RKO.....	80
9. Silver on the Sage	PAR.....	75
10. Navy Secrets	MONO.....	75

George Marshall "saw his duty and he dun it." He had W. C. Fields and Bergen and McCarthy to give to audiences that will have paid their money to see W. C. Fields and Bergen and McCarthy—and expect to laugh. They'll see Fields and Bergen-McCarthy, and they'll LAUGH, Aplenty.

It must have been a tough directorial assignment to tackle. But Marshall packed it with all his experience at comedy delivery, and then some more. The result is more vaudeville than smooth running picture—but then vaudeville is good, too, when you keep the star acts on the bill almost continually, and allow only the briefest of pauses for the fillers. Mass audiences will go for it in a big way, and the intellegentsia have been known to forget their dignity over Fields-Bergen et al.

The producers borrowed a hint from "Poppy" as the ideal background setting for Fields, and this one takes place around a

circus. Fields is the sheriff-dodging owner, and the part is a field day for him. Bergen-McCarthy are an act in the side-show, and the feud between Fields and McCarthy is played up to good advantage. And, oh yes, Mortimer Snerd comes on for some of the best laughs of the picture.

Plot elements are slender, concerning Constance Moore's plans to marry wealth as a means of helping her father—W. C. Fields—and save his show from the sheriff, with a lightly surfaced romance with Edgar Bergen as the counter-element. Marshall gets his plot necessities over adequately, but wisely keeps them hopping so fast that they never get in the way. You see and hear W. C. Fields, then after a brief pause for some safe laugh-getter in minor key like Eddie Rochester Anderson, you see Bergen-McCarthy-Snerd. Then you repeat the cycle. And all is well.

Universal and exhibitors will make money out of "You Can't Cheat an Honest Man." If it had been staged as a musical comedy you would have suffered frequent pauses for blah blah pretty girl numbers. Here there are no pauses—only seconds taken out to let all concerned catch their breath. It is Flo Ziegfeld in sawdust, concentrated to the comedy numbers.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It's hilarious entertainment, which coupled with the Fields-McCarthy brands on the marquee promises a merry duet at the cash registers."

VARIETY: " 'You Can't Cheat An Honest Man' has two potent names to front for its entertainment wares, W. C. Fields and the Ed ar Bergen-Charlie McCarthy twinship, and can be counted on to do business wherever these amusement purveyors exert their draw."

RELEASES OF THE WEEK By Norman Webb

(Continued from Page 1)

tainment of this production, which will probably benefit by word-of-mouth advertising, although Eleanor Powell has developed a big following for the short time she has been on the screen.

MGM's second release, "FOUR GIRLS IN WHITE," 76%, is an excellent program picture, but is so lacking in marquee strength that not too much can be expected from this one, unless word-of-mouth advertising will build it over a period of time. It is reported that the MGM sales department is seriously considering taking this picture out of the "B" group and allocating it in the "A" division, which seems a bit foolish to us, considering that there isn't a single box office name in the cast. The featured players include Florence Rice, Una Merkel, Ann Rutherford, Alan Marshall, Kent Taylor and Buddy Ebsen.

"FOUR GIRLS IN WHITE" was produced by Nat Levine, directed by Sylvan Simon, and Dorothy Yost wrote the screenplay from Nathalie Bucknall and Endre Bohem's original.

FOX—1 NEW RELEASE

In the latter part of 1938, Alfred Hitchcock produced a picture in England entitled "THE LADY VANISHES," with distribution to be handled by Gaumont British. A print of the picture was brought to New York and booked into the Globe Theater where it

made an instant success and had seven weeks on Broadway as a first-run situation. This was brought to the attention of the 20th Century-Fox Distribution Department, who immediately made a deal with G.B. to handle the distribution of this picture in the U. S.

Following the New York run, "THE LADY VANISHES" was booked into several other key cities and in spite of a comparatively unknown cast, "THE LADY VANISHES" has gone over exceptionally well for an English made picture, and at present is averaging around 100% on its first bookings.

This entertaining melodrama of the British Intelligence Service deals with espionage with considerable action taking place on a train running through Central Europe. The only players known to American audiences are Paul Lukas and Dame May Whitty, although two English players, Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave are really starred.

Exhibitors who have previously contracted for this picture with G.B. will undoubtedly be protected on their runs; but in other instances, those exhibitors who purchase the '38-39 Fox product will receive the benefit of this outstanding picture.

REPUBLIC—1 RELEASE

Republic has a new mystery melodrama programmer this week, "THE MYSTERIOUS MISS X," 72%, which will probably be a satisfactory "filler" for the average double bill. Michael Whalen, who has been featured

in 20th Century-Fox "B" pictures for the past three years, is starred in this one, and the balance of the cast includes Regis Toomey, Mary Hart, Chick Chandler, and Mabel Todd. Herman Schlom produced and Gus Meins directed.

COLUMBIA— ALSO 1 NEW RELEASE

Columbia has a new programmer this week entitled "THE LONE WOLF'S SPY HUNT," which is doing rather poorly at a 70% average, in spite of the fact that Warren Williams and Ida Lupino are co-starred. Undoubtedly Harry Cohn's "Lone Wolf" series would do much better if he carried the same cast throughout the series, as Fox has done with the Charlie Chans and Jones Family, and MGM with the Judge Hardy series.

In one "Lone Wolf" picture, Columbia had Bert Lytel; Frances Lederer in another one, and now this time it is Warren Williams. Consequently this series is not built up around one star, which is neither beneficial to exhibitors nor for public interest.

Among the more important featured players are Rita Hayworth, Virginia Weidler, and Ralph Morgan. "THE LONE WOLF'S SPY HUNT" was produced by the Irving Briskin program unit with Joseph Siström supervising and Peter Godfrey directing. Needless to say, this story was based on Louis Joseph Vance's famous character of the same name.

"King of the Turf" Good Audience Pic

UNITED ARTISTS

(EST. 90%)

Producer Edward Small
 Director Alfred E. Green
 Technical Director Paul E. MacPherson
 Original Screenplay George Bruce
 Star Adolphe Menjou
 Featured: Roger Daniel, Dolores Costello,
 Walter Abel, Alan Dinehart, William Dem-
 arest, Harold Huber, George McKay, Lee
 M. Moore, Oscar O'Shea, Cliff Nazarro,
 George Chandler, Milburn Stone, Robert
 Homas, William Bakewell, Tom Hanlon,
 Snowflake, Oscar Otis.
 Photographer Robert Planck
 Art Direction John DuCasse Schulze
 Musical Director Frank Tours
 Film Editor Robert Crandall
 Time 86 Minutes

Director Al Green comes through with a race track opus well above average in "King of the Turf," highlighted by his handling of horsey atmosphere and thrills, together with a group of stand out performances. On audience appeal the picture rates well above the

drawing power that may be expected from its names.

The story, concocted and scripted by George Bruce, is in that writer's consistently good vein. There is a plot basis of originality, and screen development that maintains continual interest.

Adolph Menjou, in the title role, pulls all the strings for effectiveness in an unusually meaty acting role. He is seen as a one time big shot of the turf now down on his luck, and taken under the wing of a young jockey who is also in trouble—his tribulations being due to unwillingness to take riding orders from the crooked ring. Events work out into a fine regeneration story, topped when Menjou at the climax must destroy the youth's confidence in him for reasons concerned with the youngster's own good.

Roger Daniel, in the jockey role, is a youngster with trouping skill and clean-cut wholesome personality. Dolores Costello is welcome in her part of the mother. More

prominent roles centered around the tracks are well handled by Allan Dinehart, William Demarest, and Harold Huber.

Producer Edward Small has delivered a satisfying picture to the United Artists list, one that while not geared to top ranking marquee honors, will more than please the customers.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "If Edward Small had demonstrated only that there was yet one untitled plot in the horse-racing story field he would seem to have achieved something really unusual. Yet in doing just that in 'King of the Turf,' he also turns up a lusty crop of racing fodder in which is sandwiched a sentimental story of the father and son kind that keeps a big lump in your throat most of the way."

VARIETY: "Human elements running through parts of story and standout portrayal by Adolphe Menjou and young Roger Daniel lift 'King of the Turf' above mediocrity. Trimming below 86 minute form in which it was previewed will no doubt smooth out most of its rough spots."

"Fast and Loose" Okay in Its Cycle

M. G. M.

(EST. 80%)

Producer Frederick Stephani
 Director Edwin L. Marin
 Original Screenplay Harry Kurnitz
 Stars: Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell
 Featured: Reginald Owen, Ralph Morgan,
 Etienne Girardot, Alan Dinehart, Jo Ann
 Sayers, Joan Marsh, Anthony Allan, Tom
 Collins, Sidney Blackmer, Donald Douglas,
 Ian Wolfe, Mary Forbes, Leonard Carey.
 Photographer George Folsey
 Recording Director Douglas Shearer
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor Elmo Veron
 Time 78 Minutes

"Fast and Loose" is another entrant from Metro in the cycle started by "Thin Man" and since continued a bit too frequently for the good of each succeeding subject. The writers are in danger of exhausting the number of ways in which boy and girl—or husband and wife—can bicker with each other for seven reels of film while murders happen to the right and to the left of them.

Considered on its own, and without regard for the growing case of cycle ennui, "Fast and Loose" can be reported as a capably handled, entertaining job of picture making, without

any danger that it would ever have started a cycle. The highlight is an exceptionally skillful screenplay, brightly dialogued, by Harry Kurzin. Tie this together with the personalities of Montgomery and Russell, and the result is pretty safe. Edwin Marin's direction is straightlined and fast-paced on the whole, while taking full laugh advantage of the lines and the players.

Montgomery and Miss Russell are book dealers specializing in items for collectors, and not finding the going any too easy. Then, into what should be two tranquil bookish lives, excitement enters when an important

private library is robbed and murder follows. The pair get themselves involved to the extent of almost being suspect of the crime as they go their thinmanish way about solving the mystery.

If you are a mystery guessing addict there is plenty of opportunity to exercise your talents—almost a half dozen possible guilty ones being at different times under suspicion. If you want laughs to remind you—and serve as solace—of the long months that have passed since "Thin Man" you will be satisfied.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Whether acknowledged or not, 'Fast and Loose' classifies as a sequel to 'Fast Company.' In the case of 'Fast and Loose,' however, one has the impression that a nice ante has been made to the original's budget."

VARIETY: "Every device of suspensive suspicion planting is employed in this de luxe whodunit to puzzle the murder mystery addicts. But there is enough swell comedy and beguiling romance interwoven with the lethal elements to put the customer in a frame of mind where he will not care a hoot who killed whom or why. The picture should be welcome on any bill which pretends to any discrimination."

"Yes, My Darlings—"

(Continued from Page 3)

number one in anybody's favor, even when you disagree with him.

But don't let them get "sly" on us.

Don't let them take the incident of a picture that "should probably never have been made" and kid us that it is the occasion to sound the bugle, run up the flag, and let the battle cry of freedom wail.

You Are Only Worth What the
 BOX OFFICE Says You Are Worth!

«

—and the only service in the industry which gives you the authentic box office value of every individual associated with the making of motion pictures is the

»

DIGEST'S BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

"HONOLULU"

Robert Young

plays

Brooks Mason & George Smith

A METRO GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURE

"Let Freedom Ring" Gilt-Edged Hokum

M. G. M.
(EST. 130%)

Producer Harry Rapf
Director Jack Conway
Original Screenplay Ben Hecht
Star Nelson Eddy
Featured: Virginia Bruce, Victor McLaglen, Lionel Barrymore, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbe, Charles Butterworth, H. B. Warner, Raymond Walburn, Dick Rich, Trevor Bardette, George F. Hayes, Louis Jean Heydt, Sara Padden, Eddie Dunn, C. E. Anderson.
Photographer Sidney Wagner
Montage Effects John Hoffman
Songs Otis and Leon Rene, Riccardo Drigo, Bob Wright and Chet Forrest
Musical Director Arthur Lange
Orchestral Arrangements Leonid Raab
Recording Director Douglas Shearer
Art Director Cedric Gibbons
Film Editor Fredrick Y. Smith
Time 85 Minutes

You may never see an American flag with your eyes in "Let Freedom Ring," but it is there in every foot of celluloid. MGM has out-Cohaned the famous George M. in a rattling down to earth melo conceived for the masses and executed in a manner that guarantees a box office clean up.

"Let Freedom Ring" is just the sort of title this unashamed rip snorter should have. The title is as honest and forthright as the picture. And the picture runs the gamut from fists and fights to the Constitution of the

United States and the Star Spangled Banner for a musical topper.

Director Jack Conway has used all the skill that his past has recorded in a succession of hit pictures to give this meller the dressings and finesse of class handling that make it pseudo-big time. Particularly effective is his trick of building each situation to a laugh topper—so that he retains the strength of his meller while effectively mellowing it.

From Nelson Eddy he secures one of the best performances of that player's career, aside from his outstanding singing, for which he was provided an unusually good range of material for popular purposes. Virginia Bruce registers, again clinching the feeling that she is always welcome in any cast, no matter how wide the range of parts. Edward Arnold is the villain of the piece, his skill saving a part that in weaker hands could easily have gone overboard. Charles Butterworth shares much of the footage with Eddy as his comedy pal, and justifies his selection nobly. Victor McLaglen, doing a lumbering Irish railroad construction foreman, is in his physical element.

When you go on to add that the cast includes Lionel Barrymore, George Windy Hayes, Raymond Walburn, Guy Kibbe, and H. B. Warner, you appreciate that when Leo invites you to a melo feast he gives you the best of the house.

The story? Well, those same nasty rail-

road builders who made all the trouble for "Stand Up and Fight" and "Jesse James" have now worked further west, and this time turn up using arson and other pleasant means to drive Lionel Barrymore and fellow settlers from their right of way. An election is going to have much to do with settling the issue, and Arnold's odd thousand of assorted hunkies control the votes. Eddy uses the printing press, his fists, and finally oratory and song to save the day and make them all better citizens. Yes, the picture closes with the Star Spangled Banner.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has taken the Iron Horse, the building of the west, all of the best ingredients of successful Westerns, rolled them all into one and then sprinkled it with its bit towards Americanism and patriotism, and has emerged with a picture that should be a standout attraction on any screen. The title 'Let Freedom Ring' does not justify the fine ingredients of entertainment housed in this attraction, but even that title will not slow up box office traffic for the run of this show."

VARIETY: "A wealth of popular entertainment has been packed into 'Let Freedom Ring'—one of the best original screenplays of several seasons, tramped by a cast which socks its infectious melodrama at every turn. With its roster of important names, lavish production, songs to stir the heart of the crowd, and a quality which will inspire much word of mouth custom, the picture is headed for exceptional grosses."

"Wife, Husband and Friend" Fast-Paced

20th CENTURY-FOX
(EST. 110%)

In Charge of Production Darryl F. Zanuck
Associate Producer Nunnally Johnson
Director Gregory Ratoff
Screenplay Nunnally Johnson
Based on Novel by James M. Cain
Featured: Loretta Young, Warner Baxter, Binnie Barnes, Ceasar Romero, George Barbier, J. Edward Bromberg, Eugene Pallette, Helen Westley, Ruth Terry, Alice Armand, Iva Stewart, Dorothy Dearing, Helen Ericson, Kay Griffith, Harry Rosenthal, Edward Cooper, Rene Riano, Lawrence Grant, Charles Williams, Howard Hickman, George Irving, Harry Hayden.
Photographer Ernest Palmer
Art Directors Richard Day, Mark-Lee Kirk
Musical Director David Buttolph
Music and Lyrics Samuel Pokrass,
Walter Bullock, Armando Hauser
Film Editor Walter Thompson
Time 75 Minutes

"Wife, Husband and Friend"—that's a title, or is it?—is rattling good entertainment in the category that is on the edge of being screwball without being entirely out of line. It's the sort that exhibitors recognize by the fact that there will always be one or two elderly ladies to emerge from the theater saying, "It was so silly. Things like that could never happen."

Well, maybe they couldn't. But for the hour or so taken from the day's worries to at-

tend the theater showing this picture it will provide a full share of enjoyable laughs. Performances, particularly that of Warner Baxter, are tophole. Direction by Gregory Ratoff and screenplay by Nunnally Johnson draw the line no place at achieving their aim. Clever where cleverness will suffice, unvarnished slapstick where they thought they could get away with it. Logic? Who cares? There is enough of fundamental truth in the man and wife situations depicted to carry all through on a succession of chuckles.

But don't forget those elderly ladies—there will be those to tell you "it's all too silly. I don't like that kind of picture."

It seems that Warner Baxter, apparently successful lowbrow contractor, has a wife with a voice. Like most wives with a voice Loretta Young needs little encouragement from the friend, Ceasar Romero, to feel that she should sing professionally, and little more to inform hubby that if she hadn't married him she might have been a big star.

That's the basis. The situation is emphasized by the fact being pointed up by George Barbier, Loretta's father—he, poor soul, had gone through a life of this stuff with her mother, Helen Westley.

Plot grows a little too convenient even for farce when Binnie Barnes enters as a famous

operatic star, takes a liking to Warner and makes the discovery that he is possessor of a great baritone. Loretta's career goes down, while Warner's—carried on clandestinely with Binnie's help, goes up. Rocks along the path of married happiness. A Reno trip. All ends well, however, when Warner's operatic debut comes a cropper—as Ratoff and Johnson put him through a Chester Conklin routine that even softens Loretta up enough to patch things.

A corking cast in every respect—Baxter, as mentioned, turning in a blend of legitimacy and farce that is a delight, and looking as young as you want to figure your handsome husband. Loretta Young is her usual capable self, with canny Helen Westley outstanding in support. Eugene Pallette's return is a welcome one.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Wife, Husband and Friend' is terrific entertainment, and the kind for which audiences have been yelling."

VARIETY: "Here is sparkling entertainment for the class houses, with comedy broad enough to carry it well along the subsequent trail. It has fresh story content and slick treatment. The players deliver with relish and complete satisfaction, encouraged by fat dialog, genuinely humorous character relationships and neatly contrived farce episode."

"Saint Strikes Back" Good Series Bet

R. K. O.

(EST. 80%)

Producer Executive.....Lee Marcus
 Producer.....Robert Sisk
 Director.....John Farrow
 Screenplay.....John Twist
 Original.....Leslie Charteris
 Featured: George Sanders, Wendy Barrie,
 Jonathan Hale, Jerome Cowan, Neil Ham-
 ilton, Barry Fitzgerald, Robert Elliott,
 Russell Hopton, Edward Gargan, Robert
 Strange, Gilbert Emery, James Burke,
 Nella Walker.
 Photographer.....Frank Redman
 Art Director.....Van Nest Polglase
 Musical Director.....Roy Webb
 Film Editor.....Jack Hively
 Time.....64 Minutes

RKO has struck the right combination for "The Saint" series in Director John Farrow, Scripter John Twist, and George Sanders in title role. Readers of these Leslie Charteris thrillers must be numbered in the legion for the books have been consistent best sellers for something like a decade. These followers will fully accept the RKO depiction of their hero; others will enjoy making his acquaintance.

For the benefit of those unaware of The Saint's identity he can be described as a gentleman crook, or probably more fitly as a

crooked gentleman. The myth that surrounds his birth way back in Volume One of a lengthy saga is that he was a super-ex-Raffles who turned the methods of dishonest villains on them in the cause of God and country and adventure. His actions are outside the law, doing the jobs law itself cannot do.

His current brush with law and crooks centers in San Francisco, after getting off to a fogbound start in New York. The personable Wendie Barrie is apparently the leader of the gang outside the law, though it later appears that Wendie, too, has some of that good old justification on her side since she is trying to clear the memory of her father. But enough of plot—it's action that counts, and here there is action and intrigue in high key photography and somber shadows—in speed of action and stop-motion suspense moments.

The script and the direction are the highlights. The script by John Twist retains the flavor of the originals, maintains pace with humor, logic with thrills. Farrow's direction is in keeping, being at its best in the human values he creates in his characters. He makes them real—a welcome note in a thriller. Aside from the fine interpretation of the main character he secures from Sanders, he takes

a group of players who have been striding valiantly through our best B's and gives them an opportunity to shine. Thus Jonathan Hale, divorced from a routine police official role, comes through especially effectively. Other fine performances are contributed by Neil Hamilton, Robert Elliott, Russell Hopton, Edward Gargan, James Burke, and Nella Walker.

Barry Fitzgerald, currently a New York stage hit, and neglected by Hollywood since "The Informer," comes in for one of those cameo bits—and the Fitzgerald-Farrow combination gives a sequence worthy of anybody's picture.

Frank Redman's photography is of high standard. Bob Sisk capably handled the production reins, while William Sistrom, producer of the first Saint adventure, is in England preparing for the third of his screen forays.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Second of RKO's whodunits around that modern Robin Hood, The Saint, will gratify the reading public who follow Leslie Charteris' romantic figure on the printed page. 'The Saint Strikes Back' emerges as top-notch fare for those fans who like their mystery deep and their hero suave.

"Silver on the Sage" Standard Hopalong

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 75%)

Producer.....Harry Sherman
 Associate Producer.....J. D. Trop
 Director.....Lesley Selander
 Screenplay.....Maurice Geraghty
 Based on story by.....Clarence E. Mulford
 Featured: William Boyd, George Hayes, Rus-
 sell Hayden, Stanley Ridges, Frederick
 Burton, Ruth Rogers, Jack Rockwell, Roy
 Barcroft, Ed Cassidy, Sherry Tanzey, Jim
 Corey, Wen Wright, Bruce Mitchell.
 Photographer.....Russell Harlan
 Musical Director.....Boris Morros
 Art Director.....Lewis J. Rachmil
 Film Editor.....Robert Warwick
 Time.....66 Minutes

Hopalong Bill Boyd rides along steadily through the years, holding his stride pretty evenly, sometimes coming up with an extra

good picture, never a poor one. "Silver on the Sage" can be rated as average—up to standard, but without any surprises.

It is once again cattle rustling—there are never any unemployment lulls for cattle rustlers it is safe to say. This time they do Hopalong dirt by getting away with his herd under circumstances that also result in his pal Lucky being jailed on suspicion of murder. Hopalong squares his shoulders, works himself into the confidence of the gang, and soon the action starts a popping. There's a plentitude of the action for the addicts.

George Hayes is welcomed back in the cast as Windy, while Boyd and Russell Hayden play their usual personable characterizations. The girl this time is Ruth Rogers, who has little more to do than may be asked of a Western heroine, but does that little well.

Maurice Geraghty turned in the workmanlike script, gaining a sufficiency of continued action without cluttering the premises with plot elements that might have blurred the action necessities. Russell Harlan's usual top job of photography enhances the whole.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The latest of the Hopalong Cassidy series emerges as average western entertainment, having as its chief virtue a box office cinch because of the following built up by previous pictures."

VARIETY: "Silver On The Sage' is easily digested fodder for followers of Hopalong Cassidy's adventures, maintaining standard of series in every respect. Western fans and those not so addicted to prairie sagas will find more than enough action, scenery and other stock ingredients of desert drama to satisfy."

"Navy Secrets" Well Worth Selling

MONOGRAM

(EST. 75%)

Executive Producer.....Scott R. Dunlap
 Associate Producer.....William T. Lackey
 Director.....Howard Bretherton
 Screenplay.....Harvey Gates
 Original.....Steve Fisher
 Stars.....Grant Withers, Fay Wray
 Featured: Dewey Robinson, Andre Cheron,
 Robert Frazer, Craig Reynolds, George
 Sorrell, Wm. von Brincken, Joseph Cre-
 han, Arthur Housman.
 Photographer.....Harry Neuman
 Film Editor.....Russell Schoengarth
 Time.....62 Minutes

"Navy Secrets" is a good title for Monogram exhibitors, and the picture will justify the title. In addition, the presence of Fay Wray and Grant Withers in the leads gives it

better than ordinary rating as star values go in the program group.

Associate producer William Lackey placed his reliance on fast action tinged with mystery complications, the result being a picture interesting all the way. Harvey Gate's script is workmanlike, direction by veteran Howard Bretherton is entirely up to the material.

Supporting personable performances by Fay Wray and Grant Withers are such safe trouperers as Dewey Robinson, Robert Frazer, Craig Reynolds, William Von Brincken, Arthur Houseman, etc. This is a group of players who know their stuff in action melos, and they deliver as might be expected.

Timeliness of the yarn is obvious, and it should garner some extra money for exhibitors who give it a plug above their routine fare. The plot finds Craig Reynolds as the traitor

in navy blue, operating through a clever device by which he supposedly secures unusual stamps for collectors. A good plot twist has both Miss Wray and Withers on the trail of the conspirators, with their real identities unknown to each other until events have run an exciting course.

Without any great production flash, atmosphere is, however, authentic and helps to make it pretty safe that the picture will stand up for the extra plugging we have suggested.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Navy Secrets' has two good selling features—timeliness and a title—but unfortunately the production does not provide adequate support for these two factors."

VARIETY: "Intriguing tale and good performances make 'Navy Secrets' worthwhile meller."

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

CHARITY is in the air. Jack Benny is number one volunteer for the benefit at the Coconut Grove on March 15th for sufferers from the Chilian earthquake. A spontaneous action which Jack's Latin-American followers will appreciate . . . And on next Monday a group of enthusiastic picture folk will help to christen Harry Sugarman's new Hollywood Tropics with a benefit luncheon for the Film Welfare League with the refugee fund sharing half of the proceeds . . . Prominently active on the committee are Eleanor Powell and Alice Faye . . . Incidentally, Harry's formal opening of the new spot will be by invitation only on Tuesday night.

* * *

WHO EATS WITH WHOM?

. . . Well, since such items are of interest we will report a few. Gertrude Michael sat out a twosome at the Bali with Eddie Stevenson . . . And Lou Ostrow is these days scanning the menu for Kay Mulvey . . . Paulette Goddard was her pretty dignified self across a table from Sir Adrian Bailey at the Bali . . . The influence of Bob Murphy's manse had Rita and Ed Lowe dining together . . . and Claudette Colbert was seen munching a double-decker at Carpenter's Vine Street drive-in. . . . Which, while true, also goes to show how democratic a gossip's wanderings can be . . . We will pick up the Main Street reports within the next week or so . . . Isabel Jewell isn't wanting for

friendly evenings while Alan Curtis is in the neighborhood.

* * *

SPORTS AND OTHERWISE.

. . . Don't let Fritz Lieber's character parts fool you about his agility. You should have seen him skating at Arrowhead over the week end. The missus (Virginia Bronson) can do a few Sonja Henies herself . . . Mr. and Mrs. Charles Howard, owners and nurses of Seabiscuit, were a subdued couple at the House of Murphy the night of Seabiscuit's race that made it a problem as to whether the king will start in the Derby . . . Funny thing is that the Biscuit's miss didn't take much Hollywood money. Not because of lack of confidence in the champ, but just the Hollywood natural reaction to a short price . . . A fellow just asked us: "If motion pictures are our best entertainment—why do I have to go to Santa Anita to find most picture people?" . . . Raquel Luro, wealthy Argentine with a string of horses at Santa Anita, likes that Southern accent of Honey Chile Pat Wilder's if we judge by the twosome at the Manse of Murphy . . . Lyle Talbot, who owns no horses, just bets on them, was there the same evening with Betty Ascher.

* * *

WHERE THEY'RE GOING AND MAYBE WHY . . . La Conga's Rumba Club is still hitting on high. The last session saw two such sprites as Edward Arnold and Edward Robinson, with the delectables Joan Bennett and Ar-

leen Judge, on the floor at the same time. Joan was bouncing with Alex Darcy while Arleen Judge had her brother along. And, oh yes, Martha Raye was there without hubby. But perfectly protected by an army of in-laws—mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and brother-in-law. Gosh, what a lot of hyphens to find on a typewriter keyboard . . . Eddie Lewis is off to the wars with a good start for the Ruby Foo Vendome. Shades of the past! But there is nothing wrong with an opening that brought Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone, Hedy LaMarr and her Charlie McCarthy, Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler . . . And no one could forget that all the Ritz Brothers were there with all the Ritz wives.

* * *

SUCCESS STORY . . . Bill Dieterle must have a picture in "Juarez" if you judge by one of the toughest criterions of all, the happy good fellowship of all concerned with its making now that a long tough job is concluded. Mr. and Mrs. Dieterle were hosts at a Victor Hugo party that was a delight. Betty Davis, fighting a touch of flu, was the only member of the unit's forces not present, and golly, she sent tons of flowers. Among those who were on hand were Charles Einfeld, John Garfield, Paul Muni, Brian Aherne, John Miljan, Donald Crisp. And wives, of course. They're that sort of people . . . We don't recall any of the Valentine Day parties so hot that they are worth repeating to you, but the fact can be re-

corded that Bob Murphy, who has been nursing a case dime, spent it for a Valentine for his wife. Ask her about it.

* * *

EXCLUSIVE STUFF . . . Joe Sullivan opens at the Hawaiian Paradise on February 27th with a picked group of musicians who will be with him every Monday night thereafter. But this Monday night business is geared as a private club to which only members are admitted . . . While we are thinking of the Paradise, Buster Keaton had a grand evening with a party there last week with Rube Wolfe doing a great master of ceremonies job the same night . . . Rotund Bob Leonard and spouse joined forces with Mr. and Mrs. Harry Beaumont for a large party in the Florentine Room of the Beverly Wilshire . . . While making the rounds the other night we overheard some executive gossip from a Universal table and if what the boys say about their own picture is correct we may turn forecaster. The prophecy we gather is that this young sixteen year old radio veteran, Walter Tetley, carries off all the honors in the coming "Spirit of Culver." If our ears were tuned right the execs were trying to figure out the advisability of delaying the preview to make retakes building up the Tetley part—or else tearing it down if the competition was too stiff for Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew. Don't say we don't get some tips for you in this random page.

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Things to Do---!

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**NATIONAL BOX OFFICE
DIGEST**

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

		%
Alexander's Ragtime Band	FOX	227
Show White	RKO	219
Test Pilot	MGM	187
In Old Chicago	FOX	181
Boys Town	MGM	171
Adventures of Robin Hood	WAR	170
You Can't Take It With You	COL	161
Sweethearts	MGM	160
Marie Antoinette	MGM	153
Happy Landings	FOX	152
Angels With Dirty Faces	WAR	148
Too Hot To Handle	MGM	146
That Certain Age	UNIV	146
Mild About Music	UNIV	140
Girl of the Golden West	MGM	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife	PAR	137
The Buccaneer	PAR	137
Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
Suez	FOX	133
Kentucky	FOX	132
The Crowd Roars	MGM	132
A Yank at Oxford	MGM	130
The Cowboy and the Lady	U.A.	127
Jezebel	WAR	126
My Lucky Star	FOX	125
If I Were King	PAR	123
Men With Wings	PAR	122
Carefree	RKO	122
Three Loves Has Nancy	MGM	120
Sing You Sinners	PAR	119
Adventures of Tom Sawyer	PAR	119
Mannequin	MGM	119
Adventures of Marco Polo	U. A.	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook	FOX	118
Allegiers	U. A.	118
The Goldwyn Follies	U. A.	118
The Citadel	MGM	117
Trade Winds	U. A.	117
Vivacious Lady	RKO	117
Bringing Up Baby	RKO	117
Swain of the North	PAR	115
Three Comrades	MGM	115
The Sisters	WAR	112
Little Miss Broadway	FOX	111
The Sisters	WAR	111
Hollywood Hotel	WAR	109
Room Service	RKO	108
Kentucky Moonshine	FOX	108
Joy of Living	RKO	108
Sally, Irene and Mary	FOX	105
Tropic Holiday	PAR	105
Three Blind Mice	FOX	103
Artists and Models Abroad	PAR	103
The Shining Hour	MGM	103
Thanks For Everything	FOX	103
Dr. Rhythm	PAR	103
Gold Is Where You Find It	WAR	103
Letter Of Introduction	UNIV	102
Having Wonderful Time	RKO	102
Baroness and the Butler	FOX	101
The Rage of Paris	UNIV	101
The Young In Heart	U. A.	100
There Goes My Heart	U. A.	100
Drums	U. A.	100
Submarine Patrol	FOX	100
The Great Walk	MGM	100
Big Broadcast of 1938	PAR	99
Four's A Crowd	WAR	98
Just Around The Corner	FOX	98
Arkansas Traveler	PAR	97
Boy Meets Girl	WAR	96
Every Day's a Holiday	PAR	96
Merrily We Live	MGM	95
Holiday	COL	94
Her Jungle Love	PAR	94
The Texans	PAR	94
College Swing	PAR	93
Juste	FOX	93
Blockade	U. A.	93
Always Goodbye	FOX	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

		%
Out West With the Hardys	MGM	147
Stablemates	MGM	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy	MGM	131
Bad Man of Brimstone	MGM	130
Brother Rat	WAR	122
Four Daughters	WAR	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse	WAR	113
A Slight Case of Murder	WAR	112
I Am The Law	COL	103
Straight, Place And Show	FOX	98
Port of Seven Seas	MGM	95
Judge Hardy's Children	WAR	95
Valley Of The Giants	WAR	94
Four Men and a Prayer	FOX	93
Showboy Angel	MGM	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn	WAR	93
Lord Jeff	MGM	92
Hold That Co-Ed	FOX	90

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

		%
The Birth Of A Baby	IND	167
Blondie	COL	100
Crime School	WAR	103
Little Tough Guy	UNIV	86
King Of Alcatraz	PAR	83
The Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	82
Saint in New York	RKO	81
Girls on Probation	WAR	80
Tom Sawyer, Detective	PAR	80
Christmas Carol	MGM	80
Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
White New York Sleeps	FOX	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	78
Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Smashing the Spy Ring	COL	78
Gangster's Boy	MONO	86

Tip Off Girls	PAR	78
City Girl	FOX	78
Condemned Woman	REK	78
Change of Heart	FOX	78
Little Tough Guys in Society	UNIV	78
Touchdown Army	PAR	78
Time Out for Murder	FOX	77
No Time to Marry	FOX	77
Girl's School	COL	77
Always in Trouble	FOX	77
Scandal Street	PAR	77
Double Danger	REK	77
Crashing Hollywood	FOX	77
Sharpshooters	REK	77
Illegal Traffic	PAR	77
Torchy Blane Gets Her Man	WAR	77
The Great Man Votes	REK	76
Blondes at Work	WAR	76
He Couldn't Say No	WAR	76
Affairs of Annabelle	REK	76
Campus Confessions	REK	76
Women in Prison	COL	76
Bullidge Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
Youth Takes a Fling	UNIV	76
Speed to Burn	FOX	74
Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
Secrets of A Nurse	UNIV	74
Blind Alibi	REK	74
Over the Wall	WAR	74
Dangerous to Know	PAR	74
Island in the Sky	FOX	74
Beloved Brat	WAR	74
Broadway Musketeers	WAR	74
Prison Farm	PAR	74
Annabelle Takes a Tour	REK	74
Prison Break	UNIV	73
One Wild Night	FOX	73
Mr. Moto's Gamble	FOX	73
Tarnished Angel	REK	73
Love on a Budget	FOX	73
Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
Prescription for Romance	UNIV	73
Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	73
Down on the Farm	FOX	72
The Lady Objects	COL	72
Boolo	PAR	72
Torchy Blane in Panama	WAR	72
Little Miss Roughneck	COL	72
Midnight Intruder	UNIV	72
International Settlement	FOX	72
Passport Husband	FOX	72
Next Time I Marry	REK	71
The Kid Comes Back	WAR	71
Go Chase Yourself	REK	71
The Patient in Room 18	WAR	71
Everybody's Doing It	FOX	71
Mr. Moto's Chance	FOX	71
Bullidge Drummond in Africa	PAR	71
Fast Company	MGM	71
Strange Faces	UNIV	71
The Black Doll	UNIV	71
Exposed	UNIV	70
I'm From the Legion	REK	70
Sons of the Legion	PAR	70
Dare Devil Drivers	WAR	70
Hunted Men	PAR	70
Nurse from Brooklyn	UNIV	70
Young Fugitives	REK	70
Night Spot	REK	70
Sinners in Paradise	UNIV	70
Safety in Numbers	FOX	70
Mr. Doodle Kicks Off	REK	70
Freshman Year	UNIV	69
One Wolf in Paris	COL	69
His Exciting Night	UNIV	68
Meet the Girls	FOX	68
The Devil's Party	UNIV	68
Reck's Bad Boy at Circus	REK	68
The Crime of Dr. Hallett	UNIV	68
The Jury's Secret	UNIV	68
Love, Honor and Behave	WAR	68
She Loved a Fireman	WAR	68
Glamorous Night	REK	68
When Were You Born?	WAR	67
Wives Under Suspicion	UNIV	67
Men Are Such Fools	WAR	67
Swing Sister Swing	UNIV	66
The Chaser	MGM	66
Vacation from Love	MGM	66
Personal Secretary	UNIV	66
Road Demon	FOX	65
Men With 100 Faces	G.B.	62
Sez O'Reilly to McNabb	G.B.	61
Three on A Weekend	G.B.	61
Strange Boarders	G.B.	61
Dark Sands	B. I. P.	58
Crime Over London	G.B.	58
Little Orphan Annie	PAR	58
To the Victor	G.B.	56

Duke of Westpoint	U.A.	80
Hard To Get	WAR	88
There's Always a Woman	COL	87
Everybody Sing	MGM	87
Newsboys Home	UNIV	86
Going Places	WAR	85
I'll Give A Million	FOX	81
There's That Woman Again	COL	81
Yellow Jack	MGM	84
White Banners	WAR	84
Listen Darling	MGM	83
Racket Busters	WAR	83
Mother Carey's Chickens	REK	83
Penitentiary	COL	82
Hold That Kiss	MGM	82
Give Me A Sailor	PAR	82
Rascals	FOX	81
Heart of the North	WAR	80
Garden of the Moon	WAR	80
The Gladiator	COL	80
Wide Open Faces	COL	80
Checkers	FOX	80
Paradise for Three	MGM	80
Gateway	FOX	80
You and Me	PAR	80
Woman Against Woman	MGM	80
Say It in French	PAR	80
Up the River	FOX	80
Flirting With Fate	MGM	80

Ride A Crooked Mile	PAR	79
Swing Your Lady	WAR	79
Of Human Hearts	MGM	79
Spring Madness	MGM	78
Five of A Kind	FOX	78
Breaking The Ice	REK	78
The Road To Reno	UNIV	77
Wise Girl	REK	77
The Storm	UNIV	77
Thanks For The Memory	PAR	77

Swiss Miss	MGM	76
I Mel My Love Again	U.A.	76
Army Girl	REF	76
Blockheads	MGM	76
Comet Over Broadway	WAR	76

Keep Smiling	FOX	75
Arsene Lupin Returns	MGM	75
First 100 Years	MGM	75
Love Is a Headache	MGM	74
Battle of Broadway	FOX	74
Secrets Of An Actress	WAR	71

Service Deluxe	UNIV	73
Spring Madness	MGM	73
Stolen Heaven	PAR	73
Rich Man, Poor Girl	MGM	72
Hawaii Calls	REK	72
Goodbye Broadway	FNIV	72
Start Cheering	COL	72

My Bill	WAR	71
Women Are Like That	WAR	71

Sailing Alone	G. B.	70
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Cocoanut Grove	PAR	79
Dramatic School	MGM	79

Professor Beware	PAR	84
Kidnapped	FOX	84
Badie City Revels	REK	83

The Toy Wife	MGM	81
Gold Diggers in Paris	WAR	81

Pools for Scandal	WAR	72
Divorce of Lady X	U. A.	72

Sixty Glorious Years	REK	71
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We're Going to Be Rich	FOX	68
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Telephone Operator	MONO	69
Invisible Enemy	REF	69
Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
Last Express	UNIV	68
Rose of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
Last Warning	UNIV	68
Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
Woman Against the World	COL	68
Numbered Women	MONO	67
Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
Under the Big Top	MONO	66
Mr. Champ	WAR	66
Fugitives For A Night	REK	66
Saleslady	MONO	66
Ladies in Distress	REF	65
Convicted	COL	65
Reckless Living	UNIV	65
Romance on the Run	REF	65
The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
Mystery House	WAR	64
Lady in the Morgue	UNIV	64
My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	63
Maid's Night Out	REK	63
This Marriage Business	REK	63
Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
Main Event	COL	63
Highway Patrol	COL	63
Cipher Bureau	G.N.	61
International Crime	G.N.	61
Born to Be Wild	REF	19

THE HONOR
BOX WINNER
FOR THIS WEEK

George Stevens

Producer-Director

'GUNGA DIN'

AN RKO RADIO PRODUCTION

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 8. No. 5

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, MARCH 4, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 10 CENTS

"YOU CAN'T CHEAT—" TOPS WEEK; "THREE MUSKETEERS" IS SECOND

*Of Ten New Releases in the Past Week, Only One Rated Over 100%;
Four Came Thru Okay, and Five Were Very Weak.*

BY NORMAN WEBB

Universal—1 New Release

Universal Pictures have their top box office release so far this year in, "YOU CAN'T CHEAT AN HONEST MAN," which has opened in over 30 key-city situations and is doing real well, at an average of 123%. This is considerably better than "LETTER OF INTRODUCTION," most recent topper.

"YOU CAN'T CHEAT AN HONEST MAN" is a comedy riot from beginning to end, with McCarthy, Bergen, Fields, and Mortimer Snerd romping around a circus background. This outstanding comedy hit was produced by Lester Cowan and directed by George Marshall. George Marion, Jr., Richard Mack, and Everett Freeman wrote the screenplay from Charles Bogle's original. Among the more important featured players are Constance Moore, John Arledge, Princess Baba, and Ed Brophy, and not to forget the scene-saving spots by Eddie "Rochester" Anderson of Jack Benny radio fame.

With the exception of "SON OF FRANKENSTEIN," Universal has not had a big hit for some time; and so exhibitors who have contracted for the "U" product will undoubtedly be glad to book "YOU CAN'T CHEAT AN HONEST MAN" for extended playing time.

Fox—1 New Release

20th Century-Fox's latest release, "THE THREE MUSKETEERS," is also a comedy riot, but is not any too strong, at a 97% average. This comedy version of Dumas' famous classic starring Don Ameche as D'Artagnan, and the Three Ritz Brothers as the Three Musketeers, is a very enjoyable

comedy and has been well received by the critics; but evidently the public would rather visualize this plot in a more serious vein. When Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., produced the real "Three Musketeers" some years ago, it ran considerably better—around 160%.

Due to the fact that the last two or three Ritz Brothers pictures did not hold so well at the box office, Zanuck has not only added Don Ameche to the cast of "THE THREE MUSKETEERS," but also such important names as Binnie Barnes, Gloria Stuart, Joseph Schildkraut, John Carradine, and many other prominent players. Consequently word-of-mouth advertising may help this one along on its future bookings.

Raymond Griffith acted as associate producer and Allan Dwan directed.

Columbia—2 New Releases

Columbia Pictures have two new releases this week, one that appears to be a fairly good box office hit, and the second a very weak program picture.

"LET US LIVE" is a heavy melodrama which will create considerable word-of-mouth advertising, and if properly exploited, should bring very good results, particularly in houses that "cleaned up" with M-G-M's "FURY." On its first few bookings it is averaging 88%, with indications of going stronger.

Columbia Pictures are very limited on their publicity and exploitation budgets (with the exception of their Capra pictures). But if one of the major studios had this picture to sell and exploit, it would undoubtedly pull another 10 or 15%. There are three good marquee names — Maureen O'Sullivan, Henry Fonda, and Ralph Bellamy. If exhibit-

10 New Releases Not in Last Issue

1 Over 100%.....4 O. K.....5 Weak.

		% We Est.
1. You Can't Cheat An Honest Man.....UNIV.....	123.....	110
2. The Three Musketeers.....FOX.....	97.....	115
3. Let Us Live.....COL.....	88.....	90
4. One Third of a Nation.....PAR.....	87.....	80
5. Boy Slaves.....RKO.....	81.....	70
6. Persons in Hiding.....PAR.....	77.....	80
7. The Sunset Murder Case.....G.N.....	72.....	70
8. Convicts Code.....MONO.....	69.....	65
9. Long Shot.....G.N.....	67.....	65
10. My Son Is a Criminal.....COL.....	64.....	65

(Continued on Page 8)

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ *"Honor Box"* ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **UNIVERSAL** Wins With

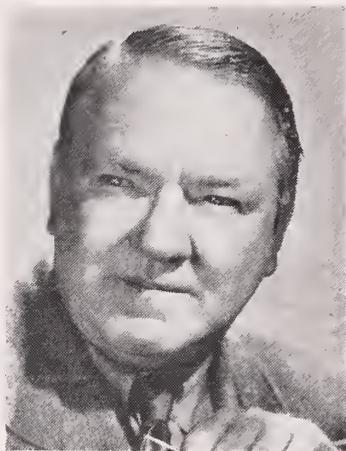
"CAN'T CHEAT AN HONEST MAN" -123%



Producer
LESTER COWAN



Director
GEORGE MARSHALL



W. C. FIELDS



Original
CHARLES BOGLE

Screenplay
**GEORGE MARION, JR.
RICHARD MACK
EVERETT FREEMAN**

Photography
MILTON KRASNER

Film Editor
OTTO LUDWIG



Edgar **BERGEN** - Charlie **McCARTHY**



CONSTANCE MOORE



NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

HOW DO THEY GET WISE?

One of the mysteries of the picture business is the uncanny faculty the million-million cash customers display as they discover flops and hits.

Particularly the flops. Where the word starts from, and why everyone in Keokuk knows simultaneously with Hollywood that a certain picture is citrus, no man has ever been able to diagnose.

But "THEY" do find out. And there is the picture business problem.

We could use a Scripture phrase to the general effect that "Your sins will find you out," but maybe it is more to the point to say this:

"A flop picture is recognized and known by Mr. and Mrs. Jones long before the poor exhibitor in Keokuk has to stake his three precious days of the three hundred and sixty-five in the year to try and sell tickets for it."

And the funny part of it is, that while Mr. and Mrs. Jones are being conspicuous by their absence at theater box offices on a certain picture—and Mr. Smith, the exhibitor, is suffering—we will find Hollywood creators still congratulating themselves on what a fine picture making job they did.

Let's get sore and set an axiom:

"NO SHOW JOB IS DONE WELL UNLESS YOU SELL TICKETS."

* * * *

After absorbing that axiom, suppose we try and turn around in thought and wonder why it is that "THEY" can discover a HIT so quickly.

For example, no one needs to write a book and tell Darryl Zanuck, Harry Joe Brown and all others concerned that "Alexander's Ragtime Band" is not an epic concerned with the rise or fall of nations, or the future of ideologies.

But it is a darn good show.

And "THEY" discovered the fact. Even before some exhibitors who, under present booking conditions, just get time to route the print

in and out of town and little chance for advertising.

How did the picture-buying public get wise so quickly and make "Alexander" the top money picture for its year? How do "THEY" discover a picture so quickly as to pile up such grosses?

* * * *

Let's consider a sample: A theater in Valatie, New York,—population 2,500—will have "Alexander" booked for the usual three days. The picture will receive the same exploitation—two six sheets in front of the house, the stock ad in the county weekly—as will be given to something like—well, let us say—"Dramatic School."

(Mind you, we are in a picture sequence now, so do some visualizing.)

Why will that neighborly public, with only the same temptations in the way of six sheets—

BREAK A HOUSE RECORD ON AN "ALEXANDER" AND BREAK DOWN THE OL' ROCKING CHAIR STAYING HOME FOR THE OTHER PICTURE?

Howinell do they sense it?

* * * *

There was a time when we used to give automatic answers—we would say, for example, the fan magazines helped the build up.

That doesn't mean anything anymore, because the fan mags are reviewing and boosting subjects that have been shelved before the publication's press day arrived.

So what is it that spreads the word—so quickly as to make a hit a hit and a flop a flop almost before Hollywood has caught its breath?

The fellow who could answer that question categorically would have the business wrapped up in his hand. We won't even try. But we have a thought.

"The reason why the good and the bad is so quickly discovered is that the public is HUNGRY for good motion picture entertainment. In

(Continued on Page 4)

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

			%
1.	M. G. M.	45 Releases	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	52 Releases	92
3.	United Artists	17 Releases	92
4.	Paramount	40 Releases	88
5.	Warner Brothers	53 Releases	87
6.	R. K. O.	39 Releases	83
7.	Columbia	33 Releases	80
8.	Universal	39 Releases	77
9.	Republic	25 Releases	73
10.	Monogram	14 Releases	69
11.	Grand National	4 Releases	66
12.	Gaumont British	10 Releases	59

371

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

We suppose the Highlighter's reports should be a simple matter this week. He could just talk about Sam Goldwyn's troubles with United Artists, and a lot of space would have passed under the desk. Or, he could talk about the Screen Directors' settlement with the producing moguls, and that would settle his week's chores. So, let's try it that way:

Sam and the Un-United Artists

We will never forget the day in 1920 in New York when the telegraph wires brought news that a company called United Artists had been formed, and Dick Rowland, then First National head, looked across the luncheon table and said to us: "Well, the lunatics have taken possession of the asylum." . . . The thought keeps bouncing back in memory because United Artists never seems able to get itself out of the asylum . . . Here we were, four or five weeks ago, saying: "Murray Silverstone has got the thing rolling. All is okay." . . . Gosh, the breath of the Highlighter is hardly spent on the air before Sam kicks the traces wherever kicked-over traces go. So now what?

Think of the Poor Exhibitor

Have any of these big shot owners ever considered what a job they give their sales managers and other operating heads? The exhibitor, back down the years, has taken a licking from United Artists whenever it had a hit or a star. He listens to the sermon, "Individual selling," and he discovers that it means—"Whenever we have a hit—you pay through the nose. At other times, just pay us and listen to our promises." . . . The exhibitor can take just so much. He is as apt to act up at some odd moment as any dumb animal. So ace high men like Doctor Giannini and George Schaefer do their best through the years, always fearing that there is someone out in the kitchen readying up to rattle the tin pans at any moment. It happens with frequency enough to clinch the truth of the phrase, "History repeats itself." And all the time the exhibitor is taking it: "Pay for a hit because it is a hit; pay for a flop because the great U. A. is giving you the privilege." Gentlemen, the problem before the House is not for the fortification of Guam, the question is: "How much can an exhibitor take?"

Lambs and Lions Play Together

At first blush, the exhibitor will probably not recognize the importance there is in the fact that the Directors' Guild and the "boss men" have got together. If he were as close to the scene as we are he would know that the handling of that headache was as important as anything else that can happen in the next year . . . Let's put it this way: Today's hit pictures are being made by the combination of Zanucks-Wallises-Sam Katzes with di-

9 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was	New
1. Stand Up and Fight.....MGM.....	121	119
2. Topper Takes a Trip.....U.A.....	113	110
3. Wings of the Navy.....WAR.....	117	109
4. Zaza.....PAR.....	106	104
5. Tailspin.....FOX.....	98	92
6. St. Louis Blues.....PAR.....	90	86
7. King of the Underworld.....WAR.....	85	82
8. Devils Island.....WAR.....	86	80
9. Fisherman's Wharf.....RKO.....	83	80

rectors who know their stuff. Writers got so busy organizing a couple of years ago that they stopped writing. Or, correctly, they stopped thinking and kept on writing. Players' agents got so important that the company paying someone like Garbo Colman had to send nothing less than a vice-president out to Santa Anita on a Thursday afternoon to see what the agent's meal ticket would like for Friday's breakfast . . . And so the boys wrapped themselves up . . . At the same time box offices were going to pieces. It was inevitable that Fate should work things out as they have. Producers with the ideas and the sense of responsibility that comes of being the money-spender, got together with the fellows who put the product on the screen. There could never be any question about the finish of the argument. Because all correct arguments end in the pocket book. And with the current panic, the picture pocket book is in the hands of the directors who deliver. Selah.

Running Around the Studio Corners

So someone else has started a suit against Loew's, Inc. This sport is going to get so popular that within the year the boys will start suing each other. Do you think we are kidding? . . . It seems that the current headlines allege favoritism from MGM to the infant Twentieth Century-Fox . . . And they still call them newspapers . . . But if all comes out topside in the box office and the dividends, who's worried? It always reminds us of the fellow who reaches his 2 A. M. highnote with the declamation: "I can lick MGM and Fox tomorrow—give me enough money, and enough brains." We have never been able to answer his argument, because we don't just know where to tell a fellow to buy brains in handy packages . . . Universal and Edward Ludwig have finally got together on an assignment for his direction, but we are personally peeved because we wanted to see that Ludwig chap go to work on a Danniell Darrieux subject. He's the man who could do it, as "That Certain Age" showed . . . The Academy Awards are all bestowed and we haven't said a word from our throne. Did you miss us? . . . Inside stuff from the Jap spies who infest this coast: They tell us that

3 FEATURES "GOING UP"

	Was	Now
1. Four Girls in White.....MGM.....	76	85
2. Off the Record.....WAR.....	81	83
3. Disbarred.....PAR.....	74	76

The News at a Glance

the fight scene climax of "Dodge City" is the greatest of its kind the screen has ever seen. They—meaning the whisperers from Burbank—also tell us that Guinn Williams comes into his own in this picture. And add that the hard-working Mike Curtiz has never done a better job. Somebody is going to give that fellow Curtiz an Oscar one of these days—and it will probably be Frank Capra who does it . . . But to continue with our reports from the spies (all the Coast is spy conscious these days) we hear that when Mark Sandrich sneaked off to Palm Springs yesterday he had put in the bag a Jack Benny picture that has them all raving. This is inside stuff. From the same operative who told us that MGM is daring the Fates on "Wizard of Oz" by opening the picture with a reel of black and white, and then after a color feast, closing with a reel of black and white.

The Second Guesser Edges In

The Second Guesser just asked us to find out if he is welcome enough to return to our pages next week. He says he has a lot of things on his mind. "F'rexample," he mutters, "I think all of us reviewers fell down on giving proper credit to Sam Pokrass for his contribution to 'The Little Princess.' That dream sequence is a Zanuck showmanship inspiration, a great job of execution by Walter Lang—and it is topped by the musical chore performed by Pokrass. This same fellow gave the same touch of class to a gypsy number that he had Don Ameche sing in a recent picture, and repeated with his contribution to 'Wife, Husband and Friend.' We reviewers shouldn't forget those things." . . . All we could say is, "Well, why do you?" But we tempered the remark by asking if he had enough things on his mind to make a page for next week. He snorted as only Second Guessers can snort. "Have I got enough to say—? Why supposing I start talking about how Universal works its head off to make good pictures, and then rushes them through the cutting room to the first play-date so fast that they have to start apologizing to all concerned later? And supposing I say what I think about—" . . . "Hold everything," we barked. "Save it for next week."

How Do They Get Wise?

(Continued from Page 3)

their family conclaves and their bridge luncheons they spread the word so fast that television would be stuttering.

"So—we of the motion picture industry are manufacturers with potential customers who are HUNGRY for our wares.

"Would it be a bad idea to forget a few of the ideologies, all of the worries about Spain and Etropria, and everything else except the thought that:

"NO SHOW JOB IS DONE WELL UNLESS YOU SELL TICKETS."

"Ice Follies of 1939" Just a "So-So" Job

M. G. M.

(EST 120 %)

Producer.....Harry Rapf
 Director.....Reinhold Schunzel
 Story.....Leonard Praskins
 Screenplay.....Leonard Praskins,
 Florence Ryerson, Edgar Allan Woolf
 Star.....Joan Crawford
 Featured: James Stewart, Lew Ayres, Lewis
 Stone, Eess Ehrhardt, Lionel Slander,
 Charles D. Brown, Roy Shipstad, Eddie
 Shipstad, Oscar Johnson.
 Photographer.....Joseph Ruttenberg
 Technicolor Photographer.....Oliver T. Marsh
 Time.....81 Minutes

"Ice Follies of 1939" is one of those MGM pictures which defies a reviewer by forcing him to use the pat phrases. He must say, 'It will undoubtedly make money, because of the money that has been spent on it and because of the standard box office draw of the marquee people concerned with it.'

But if the truth must be told, if he were reviewing the picture under the Republic or Monogram trade mark he would like to go to town and give all of his possible reasons for proof that it is not a picture.

So your present reviewer will use both spring boards. The picture will make money. When the skaters get out there and do their stuff there is a show angle to the picture that any showman will recognize. Having said that, we are compelled to report that it will not do anybody concerned with its making, any good. Except the fellow who made the ice.

Exhibitors will be interested in knowing what it does for Joan Crawford who has been killing herself off fast at the box office. We can report that it does the best job in a long time in that respect, because she plays a part that could just as well have been played by a stock girl—except that a stock girl would not have been allowed to make some of the close-up speeches that Crawford does in this one.

"My Wife's Relatives" Entertains

REPUBLIC

(EST. 75%)

Director.....Gus Meins
 Original.....Dorrell & Stuart MacGowan
 Screenplay.....Jack Townley
 Stars.....James Gleason, Lucile Gleason,
 Russell Gleason
 Featured: Harry Davenport, Mary Hart,
 Tommy Ryan, Purnell Pratt, Maude
 Eburne, Marjorie Gateson, Henry Arthur,
 Sally Payne, Edward Keane.
 Photographer.....Jack Marta
 Time.....63 Minutes

"My Wife's Relatives" will hold its own in the family picture league and gives indication that if the pace is kept up this series will be a very satisfactory buy for Republic exhibitors.

The picture has all the values that are inherent in these family subjects, with the Gleason entourage present in full strength, and Harry Davenport—you remember "You Can't Take It With You"—on hand for good measure as a grandpa who almost steals the show. Add to the story values, and the people

CURRENT REVIEWS		
1 Over 100%.....3 Okay.....1 Weak.		
		%
1. Ice Follies of 1939.....	MGM.....	120
2. The Flying Irishman.....	RKO.....	90
3. Never Say Die.....	PAR.....	90
4. Spirit of Culver.....	UNIV.....	85
5. My Wife's Relatives.....	REP.....	75

The picture will help Jimmy Stewart just because Jimmy Stewart is right and hot, but he can't get any place if they wish a few more like this on him. Lew Ayres is also present in the action and if they had given him another speech or two he and James Stewart would have taken the picture up in their lily white hands and walked away with it far from the confines of Westwood Village, where the picture was previewed.

Our word to the exhibitor is this: Take what value Crawford still has and if you have the time and space to advertise, tell the potential customers that there is some of the most dazzling ice stuff that the screen has ever seen. There are a lot of customers who will go because of the ice stuff, who will probably also be happy because Joan Crawford neither sings or skates. There are others who will go, of the standard type, just because Joan Crawford is present.

The story? Well, it took three of them to get together and concoct a yarn that dies in the seventh reel while they throw in a Technicolor 'Ice Follies.' We do not like to go into detail about story because the picture gives an unwelcome impression of a couple of writers kicking the ball around.

But we started to tell you the story. We will proceed. It seems that Joan is a little girl from nowhere, who marries James Stewart in the early reels, and Joan gets a chance at Hollywood fame which she clinches, while

Jimmy keeps on with his life's ambition to be an ice-skating promoter. Lew Ayres is the off-hand pal, called into the story because they figured they would need some extra scenes. Joan and hubby get split up for a couple of reels and then get reunited for no apparent reason that anyone can see except that the company paid Technicolor prices for the final reel.

We will have to sum it up again—it is a story mess but it will be a money maker. However, we think that Leo is optimistic in using the title of "Ice Follies of 1939" if he thinks that this one will justify a series.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "As a segment of dramatic art, 'Ice Follies of 1939' will call down the wrath of the critical and informed, who will label it as another 'Hollywood colossal' which blunders into the realm of artistic greatness in spite of itself. But here, regardless, MGM has a picture which is headed for spectacular box office grosses."

VARIETY: "Presenting her again in a glamorous role, after a succession of pictures not so light in mood, 'The Ice Follies of 1939' is of definite and very considerable benefit to Joan Crawford . . . And while the star profits, the combination of drama and follies in its diversity of entertainment also provides an excellent medium for the other top players . . . and the stellar skaters from the International Ice Follies. Offering as a whole provides beguiling diversion which should reflect most happily at the tills."

playing it, the fact that Gus Meins, veteran of the screen comedy wars, has used everything he knows to time and pace his laughs, and the total spells one of those very enjoyable evenings when the family audience will find something on the double bill to be happy about.

The Higgins Family is now definitely a small town family, with the typical tribulations of the average American small town family. Jimmy, after having lost his lifetime job, has to look around for ways and means, and decides on entering the candy business. Troubles come as thick and fast as they can to any small business man. All members of the family—never forgetting Grandpa Harry Davenport—try to help, and in their various ways do the usual good farce job of keeping things balled up until time for the ending.

Gus Meins hasn't been hesitant about using some of the gags that are now collecting their Social Security, but he does it well and keeps the picture moving.

There is a minor love interest adequately

played by Mary Hart as the Higgins daughter, and Henry Arthur, as the son of Pa Higgins' chief irritation, while a youngster, Tommy Ryan, shows in the moments he gets that variation can be secured in later issues of the series by building up his part a la the Hardy's.

Frankly, this reviewer thinks the title will be the picture's worst handicap. There is just a something about it that may cause a lot of the families for whose enjoyment it was made to stay home from the theater this particular night.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The second in Republic's Higgins Family series shapes up as one of the better comedies to come out of the studio, and should help to build up a receptive box office for subsequent pictures in the series."

VARIETY: "Swell family comedy, 'My Wife's Relatives' will go a long way in selling future members of Republic's Higgins Family series. Spacing generous comedy with proper amount of drama, feature hits a pace that never lets down due to direction, writing and trouping of cast."

• THE HONOR BOX WINNER •

**“YOU CAN’T CHEAT
AN HONEST MAN”**

DIRECTED BY

GEORGE MARSHALL

"Flying Irishman" Can Make You Money

R. K. O.
(EST. 90 %)

Director..... Leigh Jason
Screenplay..... Ernest Pagano, Dalton Trumbo
Featured: Douglas Corrigan, Paul Kelly, Robert Armstrong, Gene Reynolds, Donald MacBride, Eddie Quillan, J. M. Kerrigan.
Photographer..... J. Roy Hunt
Time..... 73 Minutes

The best way for a reviewer to cover this picture, particularly for exhibitor readers, is to forget the pat phrases and just come clean. We will tell you about the picture just as it hit us bouncing off that screen.

First of all, let's say there was a slight bad mark against the picture in our minds because we figured that the hot heat of Corrigan was now air-conditioned by time to a Frigidaire point. That was a bad break for the picture to start with.

Then, for a reel or two, we were preparing our opening line which would have read something like this: "Aviation has sold everything lately from government budgets to tailspins, maybe it can sell eggs."

But while we were mentally saying this we were countering ourselves with something like this, "This guy Leigh Jason is trying hard with a tough assignment." Then Paul Kelly appeared. What a lift the picture took. Some of those thoughts went out.

All of a sudden a sequence approached us that parallels the one in "Tailspin" where Nancy Kelly does an air-suicide, and we see that Paul Kelly is headed for the same fate. The fellow sitting next to us, an ordinarily sympathetic picture producer, said: "Gosh, if they kill Kelly off they won't have an actor left in the cast."

Well—they killed Kelly off, and Nancy can go down and see the picture for lessons in how to die from the stratosphere—but about this point the audience was beginning to take the picture. (We, too.) And the reason was the unabashed amateurishness of Corrigan, adroitly handled by Jason, AND the punch and ticket selling value of aviation.

From that point on, the picture went to town in a solid convincing way. (No American flags were used.— Jason picked up his aviation and his Corrigan, and said, "Shucks, those are the strongest points I have to sell, and I'll just show 'em I can do it."

The result is a whale of an audience picture, without being an epic. We have used this method of review as a sort of tip-off to the circuit buyer who sets his dates and terms on the strength of a twelve-thirty A. M. projection room showing with his wife and brother-in-law present for advice. We say to him:

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "There may be those who think RKO missed its market with the Doug (Wrong Way) Corrigan picture, but once they get a look at it, there's hardly a question but what they will change their mind, for at long last, 'The Flying Irishman' was previewed, and, although not a smash attraction, it's a highly interesting and very entertaining picture."

VARIETY: "Essential problem in selling 'The Flying Irishman' as entertainment is whether or not producer and exhibitors with adroit and concentrated ballyhoo can recreate a box office interest in Douglas Corrigan."

RELEASES OF 1939

		%
1. Jesse James.....	FOX	180
2. Gunga Din.....	RKO	172
3. Idiot's Delight.....	MGM	142
4. You Can't Cheat An Honest Man.....	UNIV	123
5. Honolulu.....	MGM	119
6. Made For Each Other.....	U.A.	118
7. Stand Up And Fight.....	MGM	118
8. The Beachcomber.....	PAR	112
9. Topper Takes A Trip.....	U.A.	110
10. Wings Of The Navy.....	WAR	109
11. Zaza.....	PAR	104
12. Paris Honeymoon.....	PAR	104
13. Son Of Frankenstein.....	UNIV	103
14. They Made Me A Criminal.....	WAR	97
15. The Three Musketeers.....	FOX	97
16. Tailspin.....	FOX	92
17. The Lady Vanishes.....	FOX	90
18. Let Us Live.....	COL	88
19. One Third Of A Nation.....	PAR	87
20. St. Louis Blues.....	PAR	86
21. Four Girls In White.....	MGM	85
22. Off The Record.....	WAR	83
23. King Of The Underworld.....	WAR	82
24. Boy Slaves.....	RKO	81
25. Devil's Island.....	WAR	80
26. Fisherman's Wharf.....	RKO	80
27. The Girl Downstairs.....	MGM	80
28. Arizona Wildcat.....	FOX	78
29. Pardon Our Nerve.....	FOX	78
30. Pacific Liner.....	RKO	77
31. Persons In Hiding.....	PAR	77
32. Homicide Bureau.....	COL	77
33. Charlie Chan In Honolulu.....	FOX	76
34. Disbarred.....	PAR	76
35. Ambush.....	PAR	75
36. Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt.....	COL	74
37. The Sunset Murder Case.....	G.N.	72
38. Pride Of The Navy.....	REP	71
39. Burn 'Em Up O'Connor.....	MGM	70
40. Mysterious Miss X.....	REP	70
41. Convicts Code.....	MONO	69
42. Fighting Thoroughbreds.....	REP	69
43. Federal Man Hunt.....	REP	68
44. Long Shot.....	G.N.	67
45. I Am A Criminal.....	MONO	66
46. My Son Is A Criminal.....	COL	64

RELEASES OF THE WEEK

(Continued From Page 1)

tors have the time and money to exploit this one, it can probably stand up on its own, but otherwise it will have to be double billed.

Columbia's second release is another weak programmer from the Irving Briskin unit, "MY SON IS A CRIMINAL," 64%, which "MY SON IS A CRIMINAL," 64%.

PARAMOUNT—2 NEW RELEASES

Paramount has two new releases this week, both of which are good entertainment, but nothing sensational at the box office.

"ONE THIRD OF A NATION," 87%, is the first picture produced at Paramount's Long Island studio in several years. It is a heavy melodrama based on the poor housing and tenement conditions in East Side New York.

Paramount's second release, "PERSONS IN HIDING," 77%, is another programmer from the Harold Hurley unit—the first of the new J. Edgar Hoover F. B. I. series (G-Men). This picture has been very well received by the critics as an outstanding piece of entertainment as well as having a strong moral value; but due to the lack of marquee names, it is only averaging around 77%.

R. K. O.—1 NEW RELEASE

RKO's latest release this week in "BOY SLAVES," 81%, a serious drama of today, dealing with child peonage. While this theme will probably act like small pox, or Box Office Poison, to carriage trale houses, still it will have a wide appeal in the average naborhood house.

G. N.—2 NEW RELEASES

The usually quiet Grand National, has come to life this week with two new releases, both of which will probably get by in the spots for which they were intended—the lower half of double bills. "THE SUNSET MURDER CASE," 72%, stars the famous Sally Rand, whose name should bring a certain amount of money to any box office.

G. N.'s second release, "THE LONG SHOT," 67%, is another programmer co-starring Marsha Hunt and Gordon Jones.

MONOGRAM—1 NEW RELEASE

In the much overdone present cycle of crime pictures, Monogram enters the ring with still another one, "CONVICTS CODE," 69%, which will probably get by on the average double bill.

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

CHARITY: The picture colony is keeping up its pace in good deeds. We have a lot of boy scouts in our midst, and it is one of the happiest thoughts that come through being associated with this show business. In addition to the Chilean earthquake benefit set for the Grove on March 15th, at which Jack Benny will headline, the gang is now working to make the Mount Sinai affair the year's top benefit. Jack Warner has taken his coat off to help, and when you get one of those Warner Brothers excited—things begin to happen . . . As we go to press no one knows just what has happened to the Assistance League affair at the Grove, stymied because the waiters felt like walking out. A real tough and mean break to a number of ladies who had worked their heads off building up a show and selling tickets. Probably every one of the waiters who walked out will be around to the WPA offices next week asking some of the charitable folk of the Assistance League to pay their freight.

* * *

SCANDAL! —There are other things to talk about—scandal for instance. Divorce impending—why, we could even run some divorce rumors six months before certain people have been married. That sort of stuff may be reading matter, but it doesn't set with The Digest palate . . . Sort of bad taste . . . Of course, we won't be able to resist the temptation once in a while to Winchell something like this: There is a new Don or Donna Ameche with reservations for next June . . . Gosh, that piece of news got over in a nice way. Maybe it's because we were talking about regular people . . . But we have other news, too. We can report that Lupe Velez and Johnny Weismuller met each other last week at the end of a telephone wire, and the general result was a blank. But we shouldn't bother

Places to Go! Things to Do!

● The Digest will keep you posted in "Here and Thereabouts"

telling you that—because it is our opinion that the mass American public is so sick and tired hearing about a swimmer and a tamale—that they are becoming poison to box offices, and aside from box offices, what else counts?

* * *

ODDS AND ENDS—We dropped into the Hollywood Tropics one night last week and dropped right out again. We thought our eyes were bothering us. The Leo Morrisons and Freddie Bartholomew were at dinner along with Aunt Millicent. And we had just been told that Singer's Midgets were up at the San Francisco Fair . . . Incidentally, there were some interesting tables elsewhere at the Tropics that night. Up at the Broiler Bar we saw Edward Arnold, Alice Faye, and Cesar Romero. We did not say Alice Faye was with Cesar Romero, no matter what anyone else says. Looking around, Nancy Carrol was seen smiling across the dinner check at Charles Grayson; and Robert Taylor & Barbara Stanwyck were present. Those two must eat three or four places a night, the way they get around.

* * *

THEY ALWAYS COME BACK:

Townsend Netcher is back in circulation again, currently spending most of his time with Gertrude Niessen for dinner talks in the Florentine Room of the Beverly Wilshire . . . While we are on the subject of the Florentine Room we suppose we should tell you that Dick Barrie and his music will follow Harry Owens on the 21st. But what we meant, about the

subhead, "They Always Come Back" is, that Gene Markey is always present with Hedy Lamarr almost any place you go—and we are merely putting it down for the sake of the records. The last time that we saw the twosome was in the Florentine Room, but that line was written just before going to press, and since The Digest has no extras, it may be all haywire tomorrow. Paulette Goddard has been caught by our Operative eating lunch ALONE at Marcus Daly's. It was a shame for us to tell of Paulette's enjoyment at the House of Murphy's dinner with Sir Adrian, and it was a heroic gesture for Paulette and Charlie to spend the next week eating together. But when it is all added up what difference does it make in the fate of the world except additional proof that Charlie has never been able to keep his woman.

* * *

HAPPY PEOPLE: We wish that screen writers could squeeze into pictures a few of the gags that were bounced across the table when Groucho Marx and the Mister and Missus Bob Leonards were enjoying themselves at the Marcus Daly spot. For that matter, we could probably sell out for a mess of porridge if we had been close enough to hear George Burns and Gracie Allen. But we had just as good a night as anyone else, because we spent our evening with Olin Dutra. We want to tip the town off that a new fad is coming off just as Santa Anita closes and the hockey ice begins to melt. From the reservations we have seen it is going to be a Monday night

Swing Cat session with Joe Sullivan's band at the Hawaiian Paradise Isle. They make it tough by asking for party reservations or "invitations" but the general idea is that a lot of our better names just seem to be aching in the joints for an opportunity to swing it . . . John Steinberg, who used to be a good friend of ours back on Long Island, and who also knew the Prince of Wales, continues to entertain some of our best people at the Victor Hugo. The last night that we were at the Hugo there was an interesting twosome—if you like that word—Joan Crawford and Charles Martin. To tell the truth, it looked a bit serious.

* * *

SCOOP! SCOOP!: This is a fact whether you believe it or not: Marlene Dietrich was ALONE for dinner at the Beverly Tropics. On the same evening John Garfield was entertaining a party while Sidney Fox, fresh from the New York stage and ready to try Hollywood again, talked over the system with Ernest Truex. We might just as well add the fact that Margaret Roach and Robert Page were holding hands at the same spot and it looked very interesting.

* * *

BOOM NEWS: The La Conga is the current hottest spot, with the advent of a group of regulars dispossessed from the Cocomanut Grove by the strike. The Peanut Vendors have their own draw, and gave fun last week to such as Martha Raye, Dave Rose, Edmund Lowe and Rita Kaufman, Lyle Talbot and Marta Downs, and even sparked a new romance that concerns Tom Brown and Frances Robinson. Alice Faye was also present for La Conga exercises, with agent Johnny Hyde the accompanist . . . What did Grace Bently do to that Junior Chamber of Commerce party at Swanee Inn last week? Too hot to tell.

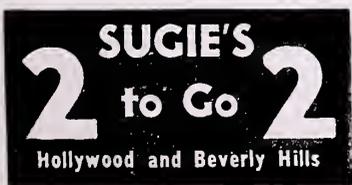
He's Here Starting Wed. March 8th

**Joe Sullivan
AND HIS MUSIC**

Hawaiian Paradise Isle

7566 MELROSE

YOrk 8264



ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Alexander's Ragtime Band	FOX	227
Snow White	RKO	219
Test Pilot	MGM	187
In Old Chicago	FOX	181
Boys Town	MGM	174
Adventures of Robin Hood	WAR	170
You Can't Take It With You	COL	161
Sweethearts	MGM	160
Marie Antoinette	MGM	153
Happy Landings	FOX	152
Angels With Dirty Faces	WAR	148
Too Hot To Handle	MGM	146
That Certain Age	UNIV	146
Mad About Music	UNIV	140
Girl of the Golden West	MGM	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife	PAR	137
The Buccaneer	PAR	133
Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
Suez	FOX	133
Kentucky	FOX	132
The Crowd Roars	MGM	132
A Yank at Oxford	MGM	130
The Cowboy and the Lady	U.A.	127
Lezard	WAR	126
My Lucky Star	FOX	125
If I Were King	PAR	123
Men With Wings	PAR	122
Carefree	RKO	122
Three Loves Has Nancy	MGM	120
Sing You Sinners	PAR	119
Adventures of Tom Sawyer	PAR	119
Mannequin	MGM	119
Adventures of Marco Polo	U. A.	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook	FOX	118
Alibis	U.A.	118
The Goldwyn Follies	U. A.	118
The Gladiol	MGM	117
Trade Winds	U.A.	117
Vivacious Lady	RKO	117
Bring Up Baby	RKO	117
Spahn of the North	PAR	115
Three Comrades	MGM	115
The Sisters	WAR	112
Little Miss Broadway	FOX	111
The Sisters	WAR	111
Hollywood Hotel	WAR	109
Room Service	RKO	108
Kentucky Moonshine	FOX	108
Joy of Living	RKO	108
Sally, Irene and Mary	FOX	105
Tropic Holiday	PAR	105
Three Blind Mice	FOX	103
Artists and Models Abroad	PAR	103
The Shining Hour	MGM	103
Dr. Rhythm	PAR	103
Gold Is Where You Find It	WAR	103
Letter Of Introduction	UNIV	102
Having Wonderful Time	RKO	102
Baroness and the Butler	FOX	101
The Rage of Paris	UNIV	101
The Young In Heart	U.A.	100
There Goes My Heart	U.A.	100
Drums	U.A.	100
Submarine Patrol	FOX	100
The Great Waltz	MGM	100
Big Broadcast of 1938	PAR	99
Four's A Crowd	WAR	98
Just Around The Corner	FOX	98
Thanks for Everything	FOX	97
Arkansas Traveler	PAR	97
Boy Meets Girl	WAR	96
Every Day's a Holiday	PAR	96
Steenly We Live	MGM	95
Holiday	COL	94
Her Jungle Love	PAR	94
The Texans	PAR	94
College Swing	PAR	93
Josette	FOX	93
Blockade	U. A.	93
Always Goodbye	FOX	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Out West With the Hardys	MGM	147
Stablemates	MGM	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy	MGM	131
Bad Man of Brimstone	MGM	130
Brother Rat	WAR	122
Four Daughters	WAR	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse	WAR	113
A Slight Case of Murder	WAR	112
I Am The Law	COL	103
Straight, Place And Show	FOX	98
Port of Seven Seas	MGM	95
Judge Hardy's Children	MGM	95
Valley Of The Giants	WAR	94
Four Men and a Prayer	FOX	93
Showdown At Angel	MGM	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn	WAR	93
Lord Jeff	MGM	92
Hold That Co-Ed	FOX	92

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Crime School	WAR	105
Blondie	COL	90
Little Tough Guy	UNIV	86
King Of Alcatraz	PAR	83
The Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	83
Saint in New York	RKO	81
Girls on Probation	WAR	80
Christmas Carol	MGM	80
Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
Tom Sawyer, Detective	PAR	78
While New York Sleeps	FOX	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	78
Tarzan's Revenge	FOX	78
Smashing the Spy Ring	COL	78
The Great Man Votes	RKO	78

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

D. BELOW \$100,000

The Birth of a Baby.....IND.....151

Hard To Get	WAR	88	Illegal Traffic	PAR	78
There's Always a Woman	COL	87	Tip Off Girls	PAR	78
Everybody Sing	MGM	87	City Girl	FOX	78
Duke of Westpoint	U.A.	86	Condemned Woman	RKO	78
Newsboys Home	UNIV	86	Change of Heart	FOX	78
Going Places	WAR	85	Little Tough Guys in Society	UNIV	78
I'll Give A Million	FOX	81	Touchdown Army	PAR	78
There's That Woman Again	COL	84	Time Out For Murder	FOX	77
Yellow Jack	MGM	84	No Time to Marry	COL	77
White Runners	WAR	81	Girl's School	COL	77
Rocket Darling	MGM	83	Always in Trouble	FOX	77
Racket Busters	WAR	83	Scandal Street	PAR	77
Mother Carey's Chickens	REK	83	Double Dancer	RKO	77
Hold That Kiss	COL	82	Crashing Hollywood	RKO	77
Give Me A Sailor	MGM	82	Sharnshooters	FOX	77
Rasals	PAR	82	Torchy Blame Gets Her Man	WAR	77
Heart of the North	FOX	81	The Great Man Votes	RKO	76
Garden of the Moon	WAR	80	Blondes at Work	WAR	76
The Gladiator	WAR	80	Ile Couffint Say No	WAR	76
Wide Open Faces	COL	80	Affairs Of Annabelle	RKO	76
Checkers	COL	80	Campus Confessions	PAR	76
Paradise for Three	FOX	80	Women in Prison	COL	76
Gateway	MGM	80	Bulldog Drummond's Peril	PAR	76
You and Me	FOX	80	Youth Takes a Fling	UNIV	76
Woman Against Woman	PAR	80	Speed to Burn	FOX	74
Say It in French	MGM	80	Mysterious Mr. Moto	FOX	74
Up the River	PAR	80	Secrets Of A Nurse	UNIV	74
Flirting With Fate	FOX	80	Blind Alibi	RKO	74
	MGM	80	Over the Wall	WAR	74
			Dangerous to Know	PAR	74
			I-land in the Sky	FOX	74
			Beloved Brat	WAR	74
			Broadway Musketeers	PAR	74
			Prison Pain	WAR	74
			Annabelle Takes a Tour	RKO	74
			Prison Break	UNIV	73
			One Wild Night	FOX	73
			Mr. Moto's Gamble	FOX	73
			Tarnished Angel	RKO	73
			Love on a Budget	FOX	73
			Walking Down Broadway	FOX	73
			Prescription for Romance	UNIV	73
			Nancy Drew, Detective	WAR	72
			Swing That Cheer	UNIV	72
			Down On The Farm	FOX	72
			The Lady Objects	COL	72
			Boo-oo	PAR	72
			Torchy Blame in Panama	WAR	72
			Little Miss Roubinck	COL	72
			Midnight Intruder	UNIV	72
			International Settlement	FOX	72
			Passport Husband	FOX	72
			Next Time I Marry	RKO	71
			The Kid Comes Back	WAR	71
			Go Chase Yourself	RKO	71
			The Patient in Room 18	WAR	71
			Everybody's Doing It	FOX	71
			Moto's Chance	FOX	71
			Bulldog Drummond in Africa	PAR	71
			Strange Faces	MGM	71
			The Black Doll	UNIV	71
			Exposed	UNIV	70
			I'm From the City	RKO	70
			Sons of The Legion	PAR	70
			Dare Devil Drivers	WAR	70
			Hunted Men	PAR	70
			Nurse From Brooklyn	UNIV	70
			Young Fugitives	UNIV	70
			Night Shot	RKO	70
			Sinners in Paradise	UNIV	70
			Safety in Numbers	FOX	70
			Mr. Doodle Kicks Off	RKO	70
			Freshman Year	UNIV	69
			Lone Wolf in Paris	COL	69
			His Exciting Night	UNIV	68
			Personal Secretary	UNIV	68
			Meet the Girls	FOX	68
			The Devils Party	UNIV	68
			Peck's Bad Boy at Circus	RKO	68
			The Crime of Dr. Hallett	UNIV	68
			The Jury's Secret	UNIV	68
			Love, Honor and Behave	WAR	68
			She Loved a Fireman	WAR	68
			Glamourous Night	REP	68
			When Were You Born?	WAR	67
			Wives Under Suspicion	UNIV	67
			Men Are Such Foods	WAR	67
			Swing Sister Swing	UNIV	66
			The Chaser	MGM	66
			Vacation From Love	MGM	66
			Road Demon	FOX	65
			Men With 100 Faces	G.B.	62
			Sez O'Reilly to McNabb	G.B.	61
			Three On A Weekend	G.B.	61
			Strange Boarders	G.B.	61
			Dark Sands	B. I. P.	58
			Crime Over London	G.B.	58
			Little Orphan Annie	PAR	58
			To the Victor	G.B.	56

Professor Beware	PAR	84	Swiss Miss	MGM	76
Kidnapped	FOX	84	I Met My Love Again	U.A.	76
Radio City Revels	RKO	83	Army Girl	REP	76
			Blockheads	MGM	76
			Comet Over Broadway	WAR	76
			Keep Smiling	FOX	75
			Arsene Lupin Returns	MGM	75
			First 100 Years	MGM	75
			Love Is a Headache	MGM	74
			Battle of Broadway	FOX	74
			Secrets Of An Actress	WAR	74
			Service DeLuxe	UNIV	73
			Spring Madness	MGM	73
			Stolen Heaven	PAR	73
			Rich Man, Poor Girl	MGM	72
			Hawaii Calls	RKO	72
			Goodbye Broadway	UNIV	72
			Start Cheering	COL	72
			My Bill	WAR	71
			Women Are Like That	WAR	71
			Sailing Alone	G. B.	70
			Action For Slander	U. A.	64
			Gaiety Girls	U. A.	62
			The Rat	RKO	61
			Romance in the Dark	PAR	60
			Storm In A Teacup	U. A.	54
			Look Out For Love	G. B.	52
			The Girl Was Young	G. B.	46
			Return of Scarlet Pimpernel	U. A.	44

Cocoanut Grove	PAR	79	Telephone Operator	MONO	69
Dramatic School	MGM	79	Invisible Enemy	R.F.	69
			Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
			Last Express	UNIV	68
			Rose Of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
			Last Warning	UNIV	68
			Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
			Woman Against the World	COL	67
			Numbered Women	MONO	67
			Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
			Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
			Under the Big Top	MONO	66
			Mr. Champ	WAR	66
			Fugitives For A Night	RKO	66
			Saleslady	MONO	66
			Ladies in Distress	REP	65
			Convicted	COL	65
			Reckless Living	UNIV	65
			Romance on the Run	REP	64
			The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
			Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
			Mystery House	WAR	64
			Lady in the Morgue	UNIV	64
			My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	63
			Maid's Night Out	RKO	63
			This Marriage Business	RKO	63
			Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
			Main Event	COL	63
			Highway Patrol	COL	63
			Cipher Bureau	G.N.	61
			International Crime	G.N.	60
			Born to Be Wild	REP	59

Strange Case of Dr. Meade	COL	80	Flight Into Nowhere	REP	77
Crime Takes a Holiday	COL	80	King of the Newsboys	REP	77
Dark Rapture	UNIV	80	Flight Into Nowhere	COL	77
			City Streets	COL	76
			The Wrong Road	REP	76
			Serjeant Murphy	WAR	76
			The Spy Ring	UNIV	76
			Prison Nurse	REP	76
			Storm Over Bengal	REP	75
			Mr. Wong, Detective	MONO	75
			Outside of Paradise	REP	75
			Lady Behave	REP	74
			Mama Runs Wild	REP	74
			The Higgins Family	REP	74
			Shadows Over Shanghai	G.N.	74
			Adventure in Sahara	COL	73
			Parrot & Twin Brother	WAR	73
			Penrod's Double Trouble	WAR	73
			Little Miss Thoroughbred	WAR	73
			Escape by Night	REP	72
			Juvenile Courts	COL	72
			Flight to Fame	COL	72
			Crime Ring	RKO	72
			Hollywood Stadium Mystery	REP	72
			Little Adventress	COL	72
			Gang Bullets	MONO	72
			A Man To Remember	RKO	71
			I Stand Accused	REP	71
			The Missing Guest	UNIV	71
			Monte Chent	RKO	71
			Marriage Forbidden	G.N.	71
			The Duke Comes Back	REP	71
			Exiled to Shanghai	REP	71
			When G-Men Stop in	COL	71
			Arson Gang Busters	REP	71
			Come On Leathernecks	REP	71
			Delinquent Parents	IND	70
			Romance of Limberlost	MONO	70
			Telephone Operator	MONO	69
			Invisible Enemy	R.F.	69
			Wanted By The Police	MONO	68
			Last Express	UNIV	68
			Rose Of the Rio Grande	MONO	68
			Last Warning	UNIV	68
			Who Killed Gail Preston	COL	68
			Woman Against the World	COL	67
			Numbered Women	MONO	67
			Port of Missing Girls	MONO	67
			Damaged Goods	G.N.	67
			Under the Big Top	MONO	66
			Mr. Champ	WAR	66
			Fugitives For A Night	RKO	66
			Saleslady	MONO	66
			Ladies in Distress	REP	65
			Convicted	COL	65
			Reckless Living	UNIV	65
			Romance on the Run	REP	64
			The Marines Are Here	MONO	64
			Accidents Will Happen	WAR	64
			Mystery House	WAR	64
			Lady in the Morgue	UNIV	64
			My Old Kentucky Home	MONO	63
			Maid's Night Out	RKO	63
			This Marriage Business	RKO	63
			Barefoot Boy	MONO	63
			Main Event	COL	63
			Highway Patrol	COL	63
			Cipher Bureau	G.N.	61
			International Crime	G.N.	60
			Born to Be Wild	REP	59

“TRADE WINDS”

STORY AND DIRECTION BY:

TAY GARNETT

NOW IN PREPARATION:

“WORLD
CRUISE”

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 6

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, MARCH 11, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 10 CENTS

'LITTLE PRINCESS' TOPS WEEK WITH GREAT FIGURES

SEE PAGE 5

EDITORIAL: LET'S ALL BE AMERICANS!

SEE PAGE 3

'DARK VICTORY' SENSATIONAL TEAR - JERKER

SEE PAGE 6

•
The
Only
Authentic
Box
Office
Figures
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•

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ *"Honor Box"* ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY-FOX** Wins With
"THE LITTLE PRINCESS"—153%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Producer
GENE MARKEY



Director
WALTER LANG



Screenplay
**ETHEL HILL
WALTER FERRIS**

Based on Novel by
FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

Photography
**ARTHUR MILLER
WILLIAM SKALL**

Film Editor
LOUIS LOEFFLER



SHIRLEY TEMPLE



Featured

IAN HUNTER

SYBIL JASON

CESAR ROMERO

ARTHUR TREACHER

MARCIA MAE JONES



RICHARD GREENE



MARY NASH



ANITA LOUISE

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

LET'S ALL BE AMERICANS!

There are quarters in Hollywood which can impress a publisher that it is unpopular to oppose the thought that the screen was made for ideologies.

They have means of making their gentle admonitions very sharp-pointed.

They are probably sincere. So was Ruth Snyder that 2 A. M. when she caressed her loving hubby with a ten pound window sash. She was sincere about something or other.

They are not exactly fair.

Because they are in the position of wanting an entire industry, giving livelihood to them and a million or so others—trade papers which give livelihood to a few brave souls, exhibitors who keep mortgage companies and ushers, and janitors alive—

ALL TO JOIN THEIR SIDE OF AN IDEOLOGICAL BANDWAGON—AS AND WHEN THEY CRACK THE WHIP—AND IN FULL KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY MAY CHANGE THEIR OWN IDEOLOGY TOMORROW AND THEN EXPECT US COMMON FOLK TO JUMP BACK ACROSS THE FENCE WITH THEM.

They may be sincere—if sincerity is the word that is an apology for intense unwillingness to give the other fellow a chance to earn his living without carrying your hod.

* * *

Picture box offices are not in the best of health. And don't let any occasional interview outgiver kid you with headlines that all is red and rosy.

The situation never had the top worryers like Darryl Zanuck, Hal Wallis, and others with the same shoulder burdens, worrying so much.

Of course, they are clicking with their big ones—but they are not getting the rosy velvet that they would have got in olden days with the big ones, and their moderate successes are recurrent headaches—by which we mean the type of headache that goes like this: "Sometimes aspirin works, sometimes it doesn't."

A number of factors are to blame, aside from the one that concerns the inherent quality of entertainment offered.

That—the quality of entertainment—is the most important.

BUT THAT IS THE FACTOR THAT WE CAN HANDLE IF WE GO TO WORK—AND IF WE HAVE BRAINS ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY OUR EXISTENCE.

* * *

The other elements are concerned with the fact that the populous industrial sections of the country east of Chicago are torn asunder by ideologies, that there are sections where cautious observers believe from box office returns that there are racial boycotts at work; that there are termites boring away with a great big inter-American hatred campaign.

They—the termites—don't care whom you hate. They work as they do on building construction—without fear or favor, and with plenty of fervor.

If they get their way they will have half the stars on radio blacklisted because they don't like the way they part their hair or sound their A, and half the picture folk on the same list for more reasons—and more pertinent ones.

So why put obstacles in the way of the Zanuck, the Wallis, the Le Baron, the Skouras, and thousands of exhibitors? They are out to make money for themselves—true; but in making it, they pay us all off, and even buy school pad copy paper for budding ideologists.

Times are troublous. Don't let anybody veneer you with a sugar laquer about that.

Why not try to use our heads first, as we would like to use them; instead of trying to use them after someone else has potshotted them to hell. Along with our bankroll.

And our bread and butter. And our caviar.

A revolutionary idea:

Would there be anything radical about suggesting—on behalf of the folks who have to live by and with the motion picture—to some of the others:

"If you don't like the picture business, why don't you go back where you came from?"

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

	Releases	%
1. M. G. M.	45	103
2. 20th Century-Fox	52	92
3. United Artists	17	92
4. Paramount	40	88
5. Warner Brothers	53	87
6. R. K. O.	39	83
7. Columbia	33	80
8. Universal	39	77
9. Republic	25	73
10. Monogram	14	69
11. Grand National	4	66
12. Gaumont British	10	59

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: SCHAEFER SPANKS WANGER; JOCK WHITNEY TEMPTED AGAIN

Don't ever sell Warner intelligence short. We humbly uttered a warning a few weeks ago that the ism boys were gleefully preparing to climb aboard the Warner bankroll for a ride to the races against censorship. Two days after our editorial rambling appeared, Arthur Garfield Hays, the apostle of people who don't need press agents because they do their own work, offered magnanimously to help Warner's out in the bitter battle against the devils of censorship. In a whispering voice he mentioned, of course, that he had a client of his own with a French picture that has been described to us by that good old schoolhouse word "Smutty." . . . Did the Warners fall for the orchids? Nosir. They may have called Charles Einfeld in from the coast, and made other moves—but all moves within the family. The result? Well, the picture is passed on appeal, Warner's self-respect rides high, and it is all but a forgotten incident. And, oh, yes, the French picture was banned.

George Schaefer Says a Mouthful

We have known George Schaefer since he hit the top spots running the Boston office for Paramount in the dear dead days beyond recall. He was always as straightlined a salesman, and as two-fisted an individual as his forebears would have desired. He never rose to greater heights than he did last week when aroused by a Walter Wanger interview given to New York's papers. Said Wanger, "I FEEL I AM EXPRESSING THE VIEWS OF A LARGE GROUP IN HOLLYWOOD AND NOT ONLY MY OWN PERSONAL OPINIONS." And then continued with those personal opinions. Said Schaefer:

"The motion picture producer," he stated, "should have the right to make politically controversial pictures if he chooses to do so, but he should make them with his own money and show them in his own theatres. If he chooses to be a propagandist for any cause he has that right but he has no right to use his stockholders' money for that purpose, unless they are aware of and in accord with his ideas; but neither they or he have the right to foist personal opinions upon the paying public under the guise of entertainment.

"That the motion picture could be a tremendous instrument for propaganda no one can deny, but that it has kept itself practically free from misuse and has stuck to its primary job of furnishing entertainment is a tribute to the common sense and integrity of the industry as a whole.

"The right of free speech and a free press is a fundamental of our democracy and this constitutional right can and should be interpreted to include a free screen. But the privilege of a free screen carries with it the responsibility of preserving it. If a producer chooses to use the motion picture instead of the newspaper, the pamphlet or other media

5 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was	Now
1. Gunga Din	RKO	172	178
2. Tailspin	FOX	92	96
3. St. Louis Blues	PAR	86	88
4. Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76	78
5. Pride of the Navy	REP	71	74

for the expression of his ideas, that is his right and I would be the last to deny it, but this privilege does not include the right to smuggle propaganda to those who have paid their admission price for entertainment.

"Furthermore: the use of stockholders' money, invested for creating entertainment, for any other purpose constitutes an improper use of funds.

"By all means Mr. Wanger, or any other producer, should be permitted to make all the controversial films he wants but he should produce them with his own money and exhibit them in his own theatres. It is the privilege of any American to 'hire a hall'."

Jock Whitney Offered Another Bargain

If we can believe all we read in print, Jock Whitney is trembling with expectancy at the prospect of buying RKO-Radio for five million of undervalued dollars. The same story says that the Rockefellers are also interested in the deal. Shucks, that's no news. The Rockefellers have been interested in RKO red ink long before they started building skyscraper centers. If you want our opinion, which probably isn't worth anything and is only based on some words Whitney handed us recently, he isn't interested in anything these days except the wind . . . But at that, maybe RKO could use a shift of jockeys. Did you see that latest financial statement? After a year in which Santa Claus brought "Snow White" the company barely made a butcher boy profit. Which seems to indicate that Pan Berman had a fine fifty-two week year at the pay window, and should now be down on his knees to Walt Disney . . . A fellow whom he barely knows . . . And still the salesman has to tell the exhibitor that it is some sort of fate that boosts Hollywood production costs from year to year . . . Next year there will be the "Gunga Din" surplus—and what else? . . .

10 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

		Was	Now
1. Idiot's Delight	MGM	142	138
2. Made For Each Other	U.A.	118	114
3. Honolulu	MGM	119	113
4. Beachcomber	PAR	113	109
5. Wings of the Navy	WAR	109	103
6. Three Musketeers	FOX	97	88
7. Let Us Live	COL	88	82
8. King of the Underworld	WAR	82	80
9. Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	80	77
10. Ambush	PAR	75	73

Happy Days Are Here Again

We really should not worry so much about the picture business when a single week can bring in nightly succession three pictures like "Dark Victory," "Midnight," and "Love Affair." And mention of the McCarey picture reminds us, after some odd thoughts we have expressed above, that RKO may be riding into a big surprise this year. Any company with "Gunga Din," "Love Affair," and the Astaire-Rogers picture breaking in the first six months of the calendar for general release, will be able to stick its chin out plenty prominently . . . And when these pictures hit as they will hit, Radio will go body and soul to producer-director set-ups . . . Bill LeBaron, between time out from attentions to Brown Jade, is tampering with the same idea at Paramount, but of course Bill doesn't get so much time off . . . Would anyone be surprised if they were informed that Sam Goldwyn's suit against U. A. was largely a publicity build up? Sam always remembers his days as a glove salesman and won't stop at anything to make a sale. In fact you could suggest this afternoon to Sam that it would be a great idea for a fellow named Goldwyn to hire a fellow named Hitler as an assistant to the President, and Sam would have the cable off before you had a chance to smile.

Producer-Director Is Current Theme Song

Latest news from MGM is that Clarence Brown's contract next year will be essentially a producer-director deal. Your humble Highlighter said about a year ago that this was the way the picture business was going but not so many people paid any attention to him, and that dig even includes some of the fellows whose cause he was fighting . . . Our exhibitor readers may not be interested, but for the sake of the records, we suppose we should say that the Los Angeles papers currently have a daily headline about writer troubles with the NLRB. No matter what they are arguing about, the world is still safe for democracy when script jobs can hit the screen such as Casey Robinson, Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Delmar Daves and Donald Ogden Stuart turned in this week. These pictures give an awfully surprising feeling that maybe some of the writers are still writing . . . It is interesting news that Frank Ross has stepped into a vice-president spot at the Hal Roach studio. The boys who do the work have been telling your Highlighter about this Ross for the past year. He probably didn't have any title during that time, unless you wish to use variations on the word "assistant." You know what we mean, "assistant to this" and "assistant to that." But those same boys who do the work tell us to keep an eye on Frank Ross.

"LITTLE PRINCESS" SETTING TOP MARK FOR 1939 RELEASES; "PYGMALION" ALSO STRONG

BY NORMAN WEBB

FOX---2 NEW RELEASES

The first quarter of 1939 is certainly starting off in fine style for exhibitors holding 20th Century-Fox contracts. In 1938 20th-Fox had three of the top ten pictures with "IN OLD CHICAGO," "HAPPY LANDING," and "ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND." So far this year 20th-Fox has already had one big hit in "JESSE JAMES" and now that "THE LITTLE PRINCESS" has been released, Darryl Zanuck definitely has another big box office winner.

Since Shirley Temple's big triumph in "WEE WILLIE WINKLE" some two years ago, it has been a well known fact that Shirley's glorified program pictures have not been doing very much above average business. However, Mr. Zanuck decided to stage a big comeback for Shirley in "THE LITTLE PRINCESS"—and he has certainly succeeded, for this picture has opened in many big de-luxe first run houses from coast to coast, and on its first bookings is being exceptionally well received, averaging around 153%.

Exhibitors running this picture will find that, like "WEE WILLIE WINKLE," it has as strong an appeal for adults as it has for children. As a matter of fact, some exhibitor reports show that word-of-mouth is helping this picture so much that its second weeks have even out-grossed the first week's business. Walter Lang directed this box office hit from an outstanding screenplay by Ethel Hill and Walter Ferris.

Fox's second release this week is another Mr. Moto programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, entitled "MR. MOTO'S LAST WARNING," which like the rest of this series, is just doing so-so at a 72% average. Besides Peter Lorre, this one also featured Ricardo Cortez, George Sanders, and Virginia Field. Direction was by Norman Foster.

MGM---2 NEW RELEASES

MGM has two new releases this week, one an English importation that is breaking many box office records, and the second a very outstanding program picture.

In the early part of 1938, Gabriel Pascal made arrangements in London with George Bernard Shaw to picture some of his better known works. As the first one, Mr. Pascal produced "PYGMALION," co-starring Leslie Howard with a young English actress, Wendy Hiller. Mr. Pascal also made arrangements with MGM to handle the distribution of his picture. In order to give "PYGMALION" a thorough test, MGM opened this picture in New York City and Los Angeles some three months ago, and it has been so successful that it is still running on both of these two original bookings, now in the eleventh weeks. We have had several inquiries as to

Of Thirteen New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%; One Came Thru Okay; and Nine Were Very Weak.

why we did not comment on this picture sooner; but we wanted to wait until "PYGMALION" had broken for general release in some 20 or 30 cities throughout the United States. In the past ten days, this picture has broken all over the country, and is almost repeating its phenomenal New York and Los Angeles successes, as it is averaging around 126%. Of course there have been some isolated cases where "PYGMALION" has even run 60 or 70% above average business; but its actual average on general release is closer to 126%.

MGM's second release this week is a new fast-moving comedy entitled "FAST AND LOOSE," which has been built along the lines of the "Thin Man," only instead of Bill Powell and Myrna Loy, we have Bob Montgomery and Rosalind Russell. Evidently this is the type of story that Bob Montgomery's many fans prefer to see him in, as this programmer is doing quite well on its first bookings, at an 87% average.

WARNERS---3 NEW RELEASES

Warner Brothers have three new releases this week, one a definite box office triumph, while the other two are just fair program pictures. "YES, MY DARLING DAUGHTER" was a great New York stage success, and the motion picture version likewise is repeating the original legitimate success. The fact that the New York Censor Board K. O'ed this picture created considerable attention; so much in fact that when the Board of Regents reversed the decision, Warner Brothers had to book it in two New York theaters simultaneously to handle the crowds, and throughout the rest of the nation this picture has been doing equally as well, averaging 118%. William Keighly directed from Casey Robinson's screenplay.

Warner Brothers' other two releases this

week are new programmers from the Bryan Foy unit, both the latest in their respective series. "TORCHY BLANE IN CHINATOWN," 75%, again co-stars Glenda Farrell and Barton MacLane in another of the famous "Torchy" series.

"NANCY DREW, REPORTER," 73%, is another of the fairly popular series starring Bonita Granville. William Clements directed. Both of these programmers will prove suitable for neighborhood houses, but are not strong enough for big first-run houses, unless they are double-billed with a much stronger attraction.

RKO---1 NEW RELEASE

RKO-Radio's only new release this week is a new Richard Dix programmer, "TWELVE CROWDED HOURS," an entertaining picture but which is just getting by at a 77% average. Lucille Ball is Dix's leading lady, and there are no other names in the cast of any importance. Robert Sisk produced for the Lee Marcus unit, and Lew Landers directed. John Twist wrote the screenplay from Garrett Fort and Peter Ruric's original.

REPUBLIC---2 NEW RELEASES

Republic Pictures has two new programmers this week, both of which are fairly good entertainment, but which will do little business on their own, because of the lack of marquee names. "WOMAN DOCTOR," 70%, co-stars Freida Inescourt and Henry Wilcoxon and "FORGED PASSPORT," 68%, features Paul Kelly, June Lang, and Lyle Talbot. Sidney Salkow directed "WOMAN DOCTOR" and John H. Auer directed "FORGED PASSPORT." Both pictures will make good fillers, or can be readily spotted in on bank nights.

PARAMOUNT---1 NEW RELEASE

Harold Hurley's program unit over at Paramount must have run out of ideas and so decided to re-unite Charles Ruggles and Mary Boland in a series of domestic comedies. The first of these is "BOY TROUBLE," which is doing rather poorly at a 68% average, meaning that it can only be used as the lower half of a strong double bill.

Some four or five years ago, when this writer was an exhibitor, we used to take our check book out about three times a year and write out a check to Paramount Pictures to pay for the shelving of a Ruggles-Boland picture, and many other exhibitors did likewise. In other words, it was cheaper to pay for these pictures and lay them on the shelf than to run them. Accordingly, if Ruggles and Boland did not draw then, there is no special reason why they should draw today, when both of the players are considerably older, and also con-

(Continued on Page 7)

13 New Releases Not In Last Issue

3 Over 100%.....1 O. K.....9 Weak

		% We Est.
1.	The Little Princess	FOX 153 150
2.	Pygmalion	MGM 126
3.	Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR 118 115
4.	Fast And Loose	MGM 87 80
5.	Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO 77 80
6.	Torchy Blane In Chinatown	WAR 75 75
7.	Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR 73 75
8.	Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX 72 70
9.	Woman Doctor	REP 70 70
10.	Boy Trouble	PAR 68 75
11.	Forged Passport	REP 68 75
12.	North of Shanghai	COL 67 70
13.	Gambling Ship	UNIV 67 70

"Dark Victory" Will Pack Box Offices With Women Who Want to Shed Tears

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 130%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer David Lewis
Director Edmund Goulding
Screenplay Casey Robinson
From the play by George Emerson Brewer, Jr.,
Bertram Bloch
Star Bette Davis
Featured: Georgia Brent, Humphrey Bogart,
Geraldine Fitzgerald, Ronald Reagan,
Henry Travers, Cora Witherspoon, Dorothy
Peterson, Virginia Brissac, Charles
Richman, Herbert Rawlinson, Leonard
Mudie, Fay Helm, Lottie Williams.
Photographer Ernie Haller
Song: "Oh, Give Me Time for Tenderness"—
Elsie Janis, Edmund Goulding
Time 104 Minutes

They can wrap up that Oscar which Bette Davis recently won and put it in a permanent coat of cement. No other actress this year will have the opportunity to top her performance in "Dark Victory." While the boys in the shipping room are wrapping up packages they might just as well save time by telling Hal Wallis to keep his Oscar because it will save transportation costs on sending it to him next year. And if they wish to save the cost of an entire banquet they can send Casey Robinson his Oscar now for a screen adaptation job.

Director Edmund Goulding will not be far behind in the balloting. It all depends upon whether some picture more cheerfully entertaining comes along during the year. For, as a picture making job for the customers who have tears to shed and the money to pay for the shedding thereof, "Dark Victory" is a picture-maker's delight from direction, writing, cast, and all the way through.

It is that sort of picture. What it will do at the box offices will be balanced by the theme, because the theme is heavy and morbid, and there is no way of getting away from that fact. For the women who love to shed tears, and show business has always shown there are millions of them, the picture will be a mop-up at the box office and conversationally. If you have one of those in-between audiences at the age that doesn't like to consider death, use your own judgement.

The story tells of a girl in society with nothing on her mind except the enjoyment of spending her money, who learns that she is doomed to the loss of her eyesight, to be followed closely by death. There is an operation that might help, and George Brent is the specialist who performs the operation. The girl, Miss Davis, in between celebrating the fact that the operation was a success and handling her many cocktail parties, falls in love with Brent. But the truth is, that while the operation is a surgical success, it leaves the audiences and Brent knowing that Miss Davis is going to die five reels hence.

The way Goulding and Robinson handle the last five reels, the way Miss Davis, George Brent and Geraldine Fitzgerald handle those reels, is a marvelous job of picture-making and audience winning. The women in your

RELEASES OF 1939			%
1. Jesse James	FOX	180	
2. Gunga Din	FOX	178	
3. Little Princess	FOX	153	
4. Idiot's Delight	MGM	138	
5. Pygmalion	MGM	126	
6. You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121	
7. Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	118	
8. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	117	
9. Made For Each Other	U.A.	114	
10. Honolulu	MGM	113	
11. Topper Takes A Trip	U.A.	110	
12. The Beachcomber	PAR	109	
13. Wings of the Navy	WAR	103	
14. Zaza	PAR	102	
15. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102	
16. Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	101	
17. They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	97	
18. Tailspin	FOX	96	
19. The Lady Vanishes	FOX	90	
20. Three Musketeers	FOX	88	
21. St. Louis Blues	PAR	88	
22. Fast And Loose	MGM	87	
23. One Third Of A Nation	PAR	87	
24. Four Girls In White	MGM	86	
25. Off The Record	WAR	83	
26. Let Us Live	COL	82	
27. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81	
28. Boy Slaves	RKO	81	
29. King of the Underworld	WAR	80	
30. Devil's Island	WAR	80	
31. Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	78	
32. Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	78	
33. Arizona Wildcat	FOX	78	
34. Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	77	
35. Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	77	
36. Homicide Bureau	COL	77	
37. Persons In Hiding	PAR	76	
38. Disbarred	PAR	76	
39. Pacific Liner	RKO	76	
40. Torchy Blane In Chinatown	WAR	75	
41. Pride of the Navy	REP	74	
42. Ambush	PAR	73	
43. Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt	COL	73	
44. Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73	
45. Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72	
46. The Sunset Murder Case	G.N.	72	
47. Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	70	
48. Mysterious Miss X	REP	70	
49. Woman Doctor	REP	70	
50. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69	
51. Convicts Code	MONO	69	
52. Forged Passport	REP	68	
53. Federal Man Hunt	REP	68	
54. Boy Trouble	PAR	68	
55. North Of Shanghai	COL	67	
56. Long Shot	G.N.	67	
57. Gambling Ship	UNIV	67	
58. I Am A Criminal	MONO	67	
59. My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64	

audience won't bother with handkerchiefs, the men will be pretending they have a cold as they snifle and sneeze.

The picture necessarily puts all the attention on Miss Davis, but excellent trouping highlights every other part in the picture. George Brent, playing with restraint, has never done a more appealing performance. Humphrey Bogart shows that he can act without a gun in his pocket. There is a newcomer, Geraldine Fitzgerald, from the New York stage by way of Dublin, who carries considerable of this picture as a background for Miss Davis, and who gives every indication of being a real bet in the Futurity.

Don't give away chinaware or jitterbug awards the night you show it, but as a favor to the patrons it wouldn't be a bad idea to have plenty of crying towels.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Here is drama so engrossing that it will hold its audience breathless for its entire length. Here is art—and dramatic art—which dwarfs all previous film efforts."

VARIETY: " 'Dark Victory' is the triumph of spirit over the flesh, and an exceedingly fine picture has been made of it. A very serious picture, dealing closely with the ultimate dreads and challenges of life in a very forthright way, but carrying also the victory of courage so superbly portrayed as to rob the tragic drama of depression."

"Midnight" Corking Entertainment

PARAMOUNT
(EST. 120%)

Producer Arthur Hornblow, Jr.
 Director Mitchell Leisen
 Screenplay Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder
 Based on story by Edwin Justus Mayer,
 Franz Schulz
 Stars Claudette Colbert, Don Ameche
 Featured: John Barrymore, Francis Lederer,
 Mary Astor, Elaine Barrie, Hedda Hopper,
 Rex O'Malley, Monty Woolley, Armand
 Kaliz.
 Photographer Charles Lang, Jr.
 Time 92 Minutes

Here is "Cinderella" with spice—and we cannot imagine any better formula for sure-fire audience and word-of-mouth appeal. "Midnight" is a honey of a picture, probably as good a romantic farce as the year will see. It bubbles and chuckles, it has its spice without vulgarity, it presents a group of happy performances by a happy cast.

All concerned, from Producer Arthur Hornblow, Jr., and Director Mitchell Leisen through to writers Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder, and finishing with the cast, can prepare to accept their laurels for one of the prize entertainments of the year. Speaking from an exhibitor's standpoint, we only wish that it had a better title. The title doesn't live up to, nor sell, the entertainment that is offered.

Claudette Colbert is seen as the "Cinderella" who arrives in Paris stoney broke in the midst of a rain storm, and takes refuge in Don Ameche's taxi cab. She is a Cinderella who knows the answers and apparently is not

CURRENT REVIEWS	
3 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....3 Ordinary	
1. Dark Victory	WAR 130
2. Midnight	PAR 120
3. Love Affair	RKO 120
4. The Lady And The Mob	COL 85
5. Blackwell's Island	WAR 75
6. Society Smugglers.....	UNIV 70

ready to give them, so she eludes Don's offer of overnight hospitality and by a freak of circumstances, finds herself set down in a society circle posing as a Baroness. Here John Barrymore, who with one twitch of his eyes lets the audience know that he is wise to her all the time, becomes her Santa Claus because it serves a purpose of his own.

From here on the plot and complications become pure farce, tempered with romance, because as you would expect, taxi driver Ameche has really fallen in love. The things that happen keep the picture moving so fast and so interestingly that an audience will never catch its breath until the picture approaches its ending. The ending is a bit of a let-down, perhaps because all that preceded it was so good and clever, maybe because the producers didn't have the courage to go to town in high wide and handsome gag style.

Miss Colbert is nearer to her performance of "It Happened One Night" than the routine "Zaza," and her audiences will love her. Don Ameche, playing the light romantic role, de-

livers in a part that will do him a lot of good in the future. Barrymore is Barrymore—what a man, and what a scene stealer. Francis Lederer, Mary Astor, Hedda Hopper, Rex O'Malley, and Monty Woolley are among those prominent in the excellent supporting cast. Elaine Barrie is on the credit sheet but not prominent elsewhere.

Mitchell Leisen's direction clinches his position as a man who can juggle and toy with his laughs and his spice in the manner considered exclusively Continental. And the year will probably find few dialogue jobs equalling the machine gun tempo contributed to "Midnight" by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: "Here is a bubbling farce, smart in every department, but broad enough to lift guffaws from the balcony, while bringing deep chuckles from the loges. It's top of the bill stuff throughout."

VARIETY: "Arthur Hornblow, Jr., has given the piece lavish production and smart showmanship in welding together one of the best entertainment offerings to come out of Paramount in a long time."

"Love Affair" Shows Dunne-Boyer at Best

R. K. O.
(EST. 120%)

Producer-Director Leo McCarey
 Screenplay Delmar Daves,
 Donald Ogden Stewart
 Original Mildred Cram, Leo McCarey
 Stars Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer
 Featured: Maria Ouspenskaya, Lee Bowman,
 Astrid Allwyn, Maurice Moscovich.
 Time 87 Minutes

Leo McCarey has delivered to Radio a great big bundle of money making entertainment, and to the industry he has delivered one more argument in proof of the fact that the producer-director combination is the thing that makes pictures.

For the public we should have started this review with raves about Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer. They have never done more delightful work, and to say that they step along in stride—step for step, is a tribute to either one in red hot competition. We could also mention that the screenplay is an exceptionally intelligent effort. But when we are all through, we would have to come back to McCarey.

It is a producer-director's picture in the full sense of the word, as we used to use it on the stage in describing hits that found players at their best and their happiest. It is farce and comedy—but never a gag that can be recognized as a naked gag—it has romance and even something of tragic suspense. When you get all those elements in a picture you know

you have something that spells "audience."

It is a simple "boy meets girl" story—in this case Boyer, a Casanova so prominent that he is worthy of radio mention, is travelling on a boat to America to marry someone who could be described as Barbara Hutton. On the liner he meets Irene Dunne, also on her way to an altar engagement. Of course they fall in love, but it is the sparring type of love of a Casanova with a girl who is seeing a faint glimpse of real happiness but is not entirely willing to trust it.

From there on the story must go to plot. There is tragedy when Miss Dunne is injured in an auto accident just when she is keeping her appointment with Boyer to be married.

It must be unfortunately recorded that there is a let down in interest for a half reel when boy and girl are separated. But McCarey's skill in handling individual scenes with the old Roach technique carries through this tough spot and on to a grand climax.

In addition to the outstanding performances by Miss Dunne and Boyer, a highlight spot is contributed by Maria Ouspenskaya. There is also a song, contributing quite a bit to the plot, that is good in itself and will probably be heard plenty on the radio. Credit for this is given to B. G. DeSylva.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: " 'Love Affair' is by all odds an impressive picture. It strives hard to be

great. It succeeds in being distinguished in certain moments. But for the most part it must rely upon the pull of its lead names for box office effect."

VARIETY: "A great piece of entertainment and a box office smash. It has names. Substance. Treatment. And above all irresistible charm and heart appeal."

Releases of Week (Continued from Page 5)

sidering that this Ruggles-Boland series is being made on a much cheaper scale.

Therefore, we were very surprised that the box office conscious Hurley unit is endeavoring to re-establish this series.

COLUMBIA—1 NEW RELEASE

Columbia has another of its many weak programmers from the Irving Briskin unit this week, entitled "NORTH OF SHANGHAI," 67%.

UNIVERSAL— ALSO 1 NEW RELEASE

Universal also has a weak program release this week in "GAMBLING SHIP," 67%, which is a good box office title, but again minus marquee names.

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

DIRECTED BY

Walter Lang

A TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX PRODUCTION

“THE LITTLE PRINCESS”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK



A TWENTIETH
CENTURY-FOX
PRODUCTION

Shirley Temple

“THE LITTLE PRINCESS”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

Mary Nash

plays

"AMANDA MINCHIN"

Management
Leland Hayward-John McCormick, Inc.
Agency

A TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX PRODUCTION

"THE LITTLE PRINCESS"

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

Screenplay by

Ethel Hill

and

Walter Ferris

A TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX PRODUCTION

“THE LITTLE PRINCESS”

"Lady and the Mob" Worth Selling

COLUMBIA
(EST. 85%)

Associate Producer Fred Kohlmar
Director Ben Stoloff
Screenplay Richard Maibaum,
Gertrude Purcell
Original Story George Bradshaw Price Day
Stars Fay Bainter, Ida Lupino
Featured: Lee Bowman, Henry Armetta, Warren Hymer, Harold Huber, Forbes Murray, Joseph Sawyer, Tom Dugan, Joseph Cairns, Jim Toney, Tommy Mack, Brandon Tynan, George Meeker.
Photographer John Stumar
Art Director Lionel Banks
Musical Director M. W. Stoloff
Film Editor Otto Meyer
Time 65 Minutes

"The Lady and the Mob" will not get the attention or make the money of "A Lady For a Day," but a large part of this difference will be due to these freak conditions which make one type of picture a hit this year and another merely a success another year.

"The Lady and the Mob" will stand up on its own anywhere as entertainment, and Fay

Bainter, who gets her starring break in this picture just on the heels of an Academy Award, gives as grand a performance as any one would want.

From all we have said, in our comparisons with "A Lady for a Day," it is probably obvious that the picture finds a lovable elderly woman spotted in the midst of gangsters, racketeers, and what have you. That is what the story is. Fay Bainter is the high pooh-bah of a midwestern city who gets a trifle peeved when small time racketeers upset her small comforts. Fay decides to take things in hand herself and she finishes by taking over the gang with methods that would meet with the approval of Al Capone. She even finishes in jail on a variety of screwy charges, but all ends happily.

Aside from a marvelous and inspiring job by Fay Bainter, the picture is worth while in cast throughout, for a good romantic job is performed by Ida Lupino and Lee Bowman, great help is given by top-notch comedy-character portrayals by such troupers as

Harold Huber's stand-out work, Warren Hymer's excellent contribution and Henry Armetta's brief moment.

The scripters, Richard Maibaum and Gertrude Purcell, have turned in a corking job and Director Ben Stoloff handles it in excellent fashion. This director, Stoloff, takes his assignments in stride. He seems to frequently meet some of those action work-outs from which nothing is expected, but he never fails to show that he knows his job. It is a pleasure to see what he has done with this one, because it will give a lot of pleasure to many audiences.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Lady and the Mob' is stocked with laughs and backed by a different story which has been handed grand treatment in production and direction. This one will almost sell itself."

VARIETY: "The Lady and the Mob, turns out to be a neat little farce filled with meaty mirth. It is not a costly picture, but it is one that will do business, and send customers away satisfied they've had more than they paid for."

"Blackwell's Island" True to Formula

WARNER BROTHERS
(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Bryan Foy
Director William McGann
Screenplay Crane Wilbur
Original Crane Wilbur, Lee Katz
Featured: John Garfield, Rosemary Lane, Dick Purcell, Victor Jory, Stanley Fields, Morgan Conway, Granville Bates, Anthony Averill, Peggy Shannon, Charles Foy, Norman Willis, Joe Cunningham.
Photographer Sid Hickox
Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
Art Director Stanley Fleischer
Film Editor Doug Gould
Time 71 Minutes

"Blackwell's Island" is Warner red meat at its reddest. Or, maybe we should say, its meatiest. There are Warner theaters, and Warner customers, who will be able to make plenty of money from it—there are other theaters, including some Warner theaters, that may have to decide that the rough and ruddy prison stuff has been done to death as far as their particular audiences are concerned.

So the picture has to be considered two ways: First, as a picture-making job on its

own; Second, on its audience value in a suffocating cycle.

As a picture: It is top hole, ace-high picture making. Look at the credit names and you know the workmanship: Bryan Foy, Bill McGann, Crane Wilbur. Put those names together and you know you will get a picture. It may be one that reminds you of some of the super-A's, or it may have its "Alcatraz" and "Devil's Island" angles, but for the exhibitor who is only selling a picture tonight to the customer who bought a ticket tonight, that's okay—and he hopes they keep it up.

There are other customers—but that's a different story.

This time the choice people who inhabit our penal institutions are caught on Blackwell's Island, New York's vacation spot for boys who are not naughty enough to be sent to the State pen. And it seems—as the newspaper headlines said a few years ago—that a racketeer, Stanley Fields, just took possession of the Island when he received his sentence. The warden becomes a figurehead, and Fields, gangland Caesar, uses dope-running and every-

thing else to build the institution into a big business enterprise. John Garfield is the exposing reporter, Rosemary Lane a nurse with high ideals, Duck Purcell, the honest copper.

The picture is so darn true to the facts that it almost reaches the unbelievable point as screen entertainment. But the Foy-Wilbur-McGann trio hop it so well with laughs when laughs are needed, and drama heavy when heavy drama can be taken, that it measures up.

Stanley Fields gets the fat part and comes through great; John Garfield is okay, but the part is a detour in his build-up; Rosemary Lane is Rosemary Lane. Support is true and tried.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It has crammed so much punch into reel after reel, infused such elements of comedy to balance its graphic moments, that these, with certain outstanding performances to clinch matters, keep it absorbingly fresh throughout."

VARIETY: "While 'Blackwell's Island' is by no means an outstanding picture, it no doubt will do good business in those sectors where theatre customers find relaxation in newspaper, crime and prison pictures."

"Society Smugglers" Just Gets By

UNIVERSAL
(EST. 70%)

Associate Producer Ken Goldsmith
Director Joe May
Screenplay Arthur T. Horman, Earl Felton
Stars Irene Hervey, Preston Foster
Featured: Walter Woolf King, Frank Jenks, Fred Keating, Regis Toomey, Clay Clement, Frances Robinson, Raymond Parker, Milburn Stone, Doris Rankin, Harry Hayden.
Photographer John W. Boyle
Art Director Jack Otterson
Musical Director Charles Previn
Time 65 Minutes

Theaters like the Globe on New York's Broadway, and many others in the Bronx and Brooklyn hinterlands, will cash in on this picture for enough to pay the negative cost. Because New York and its boundaries have

been very conscious of "society smugglers," due to recent highly publicized trials.

So, for those houses, and some in the Loop section of Chicago, and probably for many others, "Society Smugglers" has an added box office value because of its title.

As for the picture itself—it will satisfy in its proper spot on the booking chart. It never expected to be more than it is, so we are happy to say that Universal, through associate producer Ken Goldsmith, has as good a B picture as B pictures are expected to be.

The story has Preston Foster as a treasury agent, using his fellow worker, Irene Hervey, by placing her in the office of Clay Clement, that dirty-nasty villun, so that he might unmask a certain smuggling ring. Good troupers such as Regis Toomey are present and they

go through the motions very effectively.

Suspense bounces here, there and everywhere. But it must be said that there is never a dull moment—because Producer Goldsmith and Director Joe May keep it moving.

The picture will never win any medals, but we are just low down picture conked enough ourselves to say that there are houses aplenty where this job will give healthy satisfaction.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Society Smugglers' is liberally spiked with so-called 'good audience stuff.' It moves fast and smartly, and it should give ample satisfaction in the second division, for which it is shaped."

VARIETY: "Well mounted and carrying a load of entertainment, 'Society Smugglers' is worth-while fare for supporting berth on dualers."

HERE AND THEREABOUTS

IN HOLLYWOOD

BAD TASTE. No one ever accused Billy Rose of having good taste—in anything—so perhaps we are wasting space to tell what the real people think of the dirty deal that Billy gave Dorothy Lamour with his announcement in the New York papers that he was dickering with her on a proposition to appear at the New York World's Fair in something less than nothing. Nothing has ever stood in Billy Rose's way—including wives or pals—if it was a dollar or a headline at the end of the road. But this particular trick was kind of mean. Because it was so small. . . . In addition it was the unethical show trick of bouncing in on the other fellow's territory. Our 42nd Street Operative tells us that everything was set for a great Don Ameche, Dorothy Lamour, Edgar Bergen break for the benefit of N. B. C., but which really would have helped the picture business because Ameche is the only picture figure in the group that means anything. Bergen, as far as popular appeal is concerned, is merely a dummy for Charlie McCarthy. Everything was set up right, and proof that it was right, is that five thousand people stormed Grand Central Station to see them. (Of course, you could get five thousand people to storm Grand Central Station if you gave away free frankfurters). But we have to indict Billy on two counts: First, bad taste in insinuating that Dorothy was merely considering the sum of money that she would get in proportion to the things she would not wear; and second, crashing in on the other fellow's field.

* * *

IMPATIENT NOTE: We are getting impatient about a number of things and one of them is when Marlene Dietrich is, or is not, going to settle a contract. The Marlena is about the busiest social person in town—and she has become the goat-getter of the reporters. Because one night it might be Harry Cohn and the next night anyone you can mention from M. G. M. Marlene seemed at home last week, however, when

she and Josef Von Sternberg hosted a party for Richard Tauber and his wife Diana Napier at the Little Hungary. Incidentally, an interesting twosome the same evening, saw Franz Schulz and Miriam Hopkins smiling at each other.

* * *

CIRCULATION NOTE: There is something about those he-men. "Shipwreck Kelly," who once tossed pigskins and other things around, and who now owns a football team in Brooklyn—or is anything in Brooklyn a team?—can't move in New York without providing Winchell with an inch or two a week. Well, he has only been in Hollywood a few weeks on his latest trip, and the scouts have to report: Many, many dates with Lupe Velez, and even a near scene the night that he walked in to the Cafe La Maze with Andrea Leeds on his arm and met Lupe seated with Billy Seymour. Of course there would have been more fun if it had been the night before—and Lupe had walked in and found "Shipwreck" paying the dinner check for Mary Brian. . . . Just what does a fellow do to get shipwrecked?

* * *

WHATINELL NOTE: Just when the picture business was wondering how David Selznick and George Cukor were making out after the wind blew so strong, we spotted a very engaging party at the La Maze which consisted of George Cukor and David Selznick along with both wifely aides. . . . As a matter of fact that was a pretty good night for color at the La Maze, for the Three Musketeers of the Lone Range—Cary Grant, Randolph Scott, and Reginald Gardiner—were also present. It if means anything to you, they were escorting the Countess Di Frasso. The Countess rarely has less than a section of the American Legion for her escorts of late. . . . And, oh, yes, Harry Crocker was present eating with the Earl of Warwick. We can not imagine anything more unlikely to put some life into Harry's Examiner column, unless Harry is thinking

of going back to Westminster Abbey and talking to some of the boys who knew how to do it in Queen Bess's time. He might meet Pepys or Swift.

* * *

SONG WRITERS ARE PEOPLE: Honest and truly, you would have agreed with us if you had seen the gang going strong at the Hawaiian Paradise last Wednesday night. It is a tribute to Joe Sullivan that his torrid piano solos entertained a gang that included the Larry and Bing Crosby families along with Jimmy Monaco, Harold Spina and Edward Emerson. All giving every indication of having a good time. . . . Maybe we should get something of news interest in here once in a while. But after all the excitement of Betty Grable's Texas operation with Jackie Coogan jumping airplanes like a grasshopper—perhaps it is not interesting to say that Jackie and Betty seemed to be having a very quiet time last week listening to Bruz Fletcher's songs at the Club Bali.

* * *

STILL IN CIRCULATION: We do not know how Hoot Gibson does it, because Hoot decided he was a grandfather and we admitted to being a grandmother so many years ago that we do not like to count them, but you would never have suspected anything of the kind if you had seen Hoot at the Seven Seas last night. For that matter, why should Ernest Truex retain so much youthful vigor as he showed in the same place? We have nothing to say about Art Rosson and George Bronson except that they were present.

* * *

HONEST AND TRULY: Believe it or not, Bob Murphy's staff actually gave him a surprise birthday party last week. Bob seems to have these birthdays too often for the calendar to keep up with him, but it did not take a thing away from his enjoyment of the feeling that the staff thought that much of him. . . . Sorry to say that when we got around to the House of Murphy we ran into one of those

situations that means some one is having trouble. Because on three visits within a week we caught Lee Garlow phoning a Paris, France, call for Sandra Rameau and very anxious about it too. So we suppose the Lee Garlows are only talking through the lawyer.

* * *

LET'S GO NUTS: We might just as well, when you consider the new way they have of snaking it around at the La Conga. If we tried to describe it to you it would sound like a Cal-Tech prof. explaining mathematical problems. But it seems to be fun if you can judge by the expressions the other night when Dolores Del Rio, Fay Bainter, Denis O'Keefe, Nancy Kelly, Lyle Talbot and such others were doing the Cuban Snake Dance. . . . Marcel's La Maze had a big night last week when they not only had the Louis Mayers and Joe Schencks, but also the picture business's original Charlie McCarthy, A. C. Blumenthal, and the pontifical George McManus on the same evening.

* * *

STEALING HOME PLATE: It looks as though John Steinberg just lifted the old Trocadero front liners for his Sunday nights at the Victor Hugo. Last Sunday looked like comedian's night with the front line tables occupied by the old time Trocadero standbys George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny, The Ritz Brothers, Chico Marx, Cliff Nazaro, and double-ups that included Dick Powell and Joan Blondell, Lana Turner and Bregg Bautzer.

* * *

THEY'RE HAVING FUN: Honest to goodness, for you would be surprised at the enjoyment a number of the folks are getting over at that Swanee Inn in listening to Gladys Bentley's bluer than blue songs. The gal has something that catches the boys. We felt like having some fun after having left the serious conversation of Harry Grabiner, President of the Chicago White Sox, with baseball Number One Nut, Joe E. Brown, at the Hollywood Brown Derby.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Alexander's Ragtime Band	FOX	227
Snow White	RKO	219
Test Pilot	MGM	187
In Old Chicago	FOX	181
Boys Town	MGM	174
Adventures of Robin Hood	WAR	170
You Can't Take It With You	COL	164
Sweethearts	MGM	160
Marie Antoinette	MGM	153
Happy Landing	FOX	152
Angels With Dirty Faces	WAR	148
Too Hot To Handle	MGM	146
That Certain Age	UNIV	146
Mad About Music	UNIV	140
Girl of the Golden West	MGM	139
Bluebeard's 8th Wife	PAR	137
The Buccaneer	PAR	137
Dawn Patrol	WAR	135
Suez	FOX	133
Kentucky	FOX	132
The Crowd Roars	MGM	132
A Yank at Oxford	MGM	130
The Cowboy and the Lady	U.A.	127
Jehel	WAR	126
My Lucky Star	FOX	125
If I Were King	PAR	123
Men With Wings	PAR	122
Carcaree	RKO	122
Three Loves Has Nancy	MGM	120
Sing You Sinners	PAR	119
Adventures of Tom Sawyer	PAR	119
Mannequin	MGM	119
Adventures of Marco Polo	U. A.	119
Rebecca of Sunnybrook	FOX	118
Alders	U. A.	118
The Goldwyn Follies	U. A.	118
The Citadel	MGM	117
Trade Winds	U. A.	117
Vivacious Lady	RKO	117
Bringing Up Baby	RKO	117
Spawn of the North	PAR	115
The Sisters	MGM	115
Three Comrades	MGM	115
Little Miss Broadway	WAR	112
The Sisters	FOX	111
Hollywood Hotel	WAR	109
Room Service	RKO	108
Kentucky Moonshine	FOX	108
Joy of Living	RKO	108
Sally, Irene and Mary	FOX	105
Tropic Holiday	PAR	105
Three Blind Mice	FOX	103
Artists and Models Abroad	PAR	103
The Shining Hour	MGM	103
Dr. Rhythm	PAR	103
Gold Is Where You Find It	WAR	103
Letter Of Introduction	UNIV	102
Having Wonderful Time	RKO	102
Baroness and the Butler	FOX	101
The Rage of Paris	UNIV	101
The Young In Heart	U.A.	100
There Goes My Heart	U.A.	100
Drums	U.A.	100
Submarine Patrol	FOX	100
The Great Waltz	MGM	100
Ric Broadcast of 1938	PAR	99
Four's A Crowd	WAR	98
Just Around The Corner	FOX	98
Thanks for Everything	FOX	97
Arkansas Traveler	PAR	97
Boy Meets Girl	WAR	96
Merrily We Live	PAR	96
Holiday	MGM	95
Her Jungle Love	COL	94
The Texans	PAR	94
College Swing	PAR	94
Josette	PAR	93
Blockade	FOX	93
Always Goodbye	U. A.	93

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Out West With the Hardys	MGM	147
Stablemates	MGM	134
Love Finds Andy Hardy	MGM	131
Bad Man of Brimstone	MGM	130
Brother Rat	WAR	122
Four Daughters	WAR	120
Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse	WAR	113
A Slight Case of Murder	WAR	112
I Am The Law	COL	103
Straight, Place and Show	FOX	98
Port of Seven Seas	MGM	95
Judge Hardy's Children	MGM	95
Valley Of The Giants	WAR	94
Four Men and a Prayer	FOX	93
Shopworn Angel	MGM	93
Cowboy From Brooklyn	WAR	93
Lord Jeff	MGM	92
Hold That Co-Ed	FOX	90

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 125% over normal business, and others 55% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Title	Distributor	%
The Birth of a Baby	IND	161
Blondie	COL	90
Little Tough Guy	UNIV	86
King Of Alcatraz	PAR	83
The Young Dr. Kildare	MGM	82
Saint In New York	RKO	81
Girls on Probation	WAR	80
Christmas Carol	MGM	80
Sky Giant	RKO	80
Law of the Underworld	RKO	79
Tom Sawyer, Detective	PAR	78
White New York Sleeps	FOX	78
Arrest Bulldog Drummond	PAR	78
Tarran's Revenge	FOX	78
Smashing the Spy Ring	COL	78
The Great Man Votes	RKO	78
Crime School	WAR	105

Strange Case of Dr. Meade..... COL. 80
Crime Takes a Holiday..... COL. 80
Dark Rapture..... UNIV. 80

Tenth Avenue Kid..... REP. 78
Call of the Yukon..... REP. 78
Making the Headlines..... COL. 78
Reformatory..... COL. 78
Juvenile Court..... COL. 78
Down in Arkansas..... REP. 78
King of the Newsboys..... REP. 77
Flight Into Nowhere..... COL. 77

City Streets..... COL. 76
The Wrong Road..... REP. 76
Sergeant Murphy..... WAR. 74
The Spy Ring..... UNIV. 76
Prison Nurse..... REP. 76
Storm Over Bengal..... REP. 75
Mr. Wong, Detective..... MONO. 75
Outside of Paradise..... REP. 75
Lady Behave..... REP. 71
Mama Runs Wild..... REP. 71
The Higsons Family..... REP. 71
Shadows Over Shanghai..... G.N. 74
Adventure in Sahara..... COL. 73
Peppod's Twin Brother..... WAR. 73
Penrod's Double Trouble..... WAR. 73
Little Miss Thoroughbred..... WAR. 73
Escape by Night..... REP. 72
Juvenile Courts..... COL. 72

Flight to Fame..... COL. 72
Crime Ring..... RKO. 72
Hollywood Stadium Mystery..... REP. 72
Little Adventuress..... COL. 72
Gang Bullets..... MONO. 72
A Man To Remember..... RKO. 71
I Stand Accused..... REP. 71
The Missing Guest..... UNIV. 71
Blonde Cheat..... RKO. 71
Marriage Forbidden..... G.N. 71
The Duke Comes Back..... REP. 71
Exiled to Shanghai..... REP. 71
When G-Men Stop in..... COL. 71
Arson Gang Busters..... REP. 71
Come On Leathernecks..... REP. 71
Delinquent Parents..... IND. 70
Romance of Limberlost..... MONO. 70

Telephone Operator..... MONO. 69
Invisible Enemy..... RFT. 69
Wanted By The Police..... MONO. 68
Last Express..... UNIV. 68
Rose Of the Rio Grande..... MONO. 68
Last Warning..... UNIV. 68
Who Killed Gail Preston..... COL. 68
Woman Against the World..... COL. 67
Numbered Women..... MONO. 67
Port of Missing Girls..... MONO. 67
Damaged Goods..... G.N. 67
Under the Big Top..... MONO. 66
Mr. Chump..... WAR. 66
Fugitives For A Night..... RKO. 66
Safeslady..... MONO. 66
Ladies in Distress..... REP. 65
Convicted..... COL. 65
Reckless Living..... UNIV. 65
Romance on the Run..... MONO. 64
The Marines Are Here..... MONO. 64
Mystery House..... WAR. 64
Lady in the Morgue..... UNIV. 64
My Old Kentucky Home..... MONO. 63
Maid's Night! Out..... RKO. 63
This Marriage Business..... RKO. 63
Barefoot Boy..... MONO. 63
Main Event..... COL. 63
Highway Patrol..... G.N. 61
Cincher Bureau..... G.N. 61
International Crime..... G.N. 60
Born to Be Wild..... REP. 59

Illegal Traffic..... PAR. 78
Tip Off Girls..... PAR. 78
City Girl..... FOX. 78
Condemned Woman..... RKO. 78
Change of Heart..... FOX. 78
Little Tough Guys in Society..... UNIV. 78
Touchdown Army..... PAR. 78
Time Out For Murder..... FOX. 77
No Time to Marry..... COL. 77
Girl's School..... COL. 77
Always in Trouble..... FOX. 77
Scandal Street..... PAR. 77
Double Dancer..... RKO. 77
Crashing Hollywood..... RKO. 77
Sharpshooters..... FOX. 77
The Great Man Gets Her Man..... WAR. 77
Blondes at Work..... RKO. 76
He Couldn't Say No..... WAR. 76
Affairs of Annabelle..... RKO. 76
Campus Confessions..... PAR. 76
Women in Prison..... COL. 76
Bulldog Drummond's Peril..... PAR. 76
Youth Takes a Fling..... UNIV. 76
Speed to Burn..... FOX. 74
Mysterious Mr. Moto..... FOX. 74
Secrets of A Nurse..... UNIV. 74
Blind Alibi..... RKO. 74
Over the Wall..... WAR. 74
Dangerous to Know..... PAR. 74
Island in the Sky..... FOX. 71
Beloved Brat..... WAR. 71
Broadway Musketeers..... WAR. 71
Prison Farm..... PAR. 71
Annabelle Takes a Tour..... RKO. 74
Prison Break..... UNIV. 73
One Wild Night..... FOX. 73
Mr. Moto's Gamble..... FOX. 73
Tarnished Angel..... RKO. 73
Love on a Budget..... FOX. 73
Walking Down Broadway..... FOX. 73
Prescription for Romance..... UNIV. 73
Nancy Drew, Detective..... WAR. 72
Swing That Cheer..... UNIV. 72
Down On The Farm..... FOX. 72
The Lady Objects..... COL. 72
Boo-oo..... PAR. 72
Torchy Blane in Panama..... WAR. 72
Little Miss Roughneck..... COL. 72
Midnight Intruder..... UNIV. 72
International Settlement..... FOX. 72
Passport Husband..... RKO. 72
Next Time I Marry..... RKO. 71
The Kid Comes Back..... WAR. 71
Go Chase Yourself..... RKO. 71
The Patient in Room 18..... WAR. 71
Everybody's Doing It..... FOX. 71
Mr. Moto's Chance..... FOX. 71
Bulldog Drummond in Africa..... PAR. 71
Fast Company..... MGM. 71
Strange Faces..... UNIV. 71
The Black Doll..... UNIV. 71
Exposed..... UNIV. 70
I'm From the City..... RKO. 70
Sons of the Legion..... PAR. 70
Dare Devil Drivers..... WAR. 70
Hunted Men..... PAR. 70
Nurse From Brooklyn..... UNIV. 70
Young Fugitives..... UNIV. 70
Night Spot..... RKO. 70
Sinners in Paradise..... UNIV. 70
Suits in Numbers..... FOX. 70
Mr. Doodle Kicks Off..... RKO. 70

Freshman Year..... UNIV. 69
Lone Wolf in Paris..... COL. 69
His Exciting Night..... UNIV. 68
Personal Secretary..... UNIV. 68
Meet the Girls..... FOX. 68
The Devils Party..... UNIV. 68
Peck's Bad Boy at Circus..... RKO. 68
The Crime of Dr. Hallett..... UNIV. 68
The Jury's Secret..... UNIV. 68
Love, Honor and Behave..... WAR. 68
She Loved a Fireman..... WAR. 68
Glamorous Night..... REP. 68
When Were You Born?..... WAR. 67
Wives Under Suspicion..... UNIV. 67
New Are Such Fools..... WAR. 67
Swing Sister Swing..... UNIV. 66
The Chaser..... MGM. 66
Vacation From Love..... MGM. 66
Road Demon..... FOX. 65
Men With 100 Faces..... G.B. 62
Sey O'Reilly to McNabb..... G.B. 61
Three On A Weekend..... G.B. 61
Strance Boarders..... G.B. 61
Dark Sands..... B. I. P. 58
Crime Over London..... G.B. 58
Little Orphan Annie..... PAR. 58
To the Victor..... G.B. 56

Hard To Get..... WAR. 88
There's Always a Woman..... COL. 87
Everybody Sing..... MGM. 87
Duke of Westpoint..... U.A. 86
Newsboys Home..... UNIV. 86
Going Places..... WAR. 85
I'll Give A Million..... FOX. 84
There's That Woman Again..... COL. 84
Yellow Jack..... MGM. 81
White Banners..... WAR. 81
Listen Darling..... MGM. 83
Racket Busters..... WAR. 83
Mother Carey's Chickens..... RKO. 83
Femlentiary..... COL. 82
Hold That Kiss..... MGM. 82
Give Me A Sailor..... FOX. 82
Kassals..... FOX. 81
Heart of the North..... WAR. 80
Garden of the Moon..... WAR. 80
The Gladiator..... COL. 80
Wide Open Faces..... COL. 80
Checkers..... FOX. 80
Paradise for Three..... MGM. 80
Gateway..... FOX. 80
You and Me..... PAR. 80
Woman Against Woman..... MGM. 80
Say It in French..... PAR. 80
Up the River..... FOX. 80
Flirting With Fate..... MGM. 80

Ride A Crooked Mile..... PAR. 79
Swing Your Lady..... WAR. 79
Of Human Hearts..... MGM. 79
Spring Madness..... MGM. 78
Five Of A Kind..... FOX. 78
Breaking The Ice..... RKO. 78
The Road To Reno..... UNIV. 77
Wise Girl..... RKO. 77
The Storm..... UNIV. 77
Thanks For The Memory..... PAR. 77
Swiss Miss..... MGM. 76
I Met My Love Again..... U. A. 76
Army Girl..... REP. 76
Blockheads..... MGM. 76
Comet Over Broadway..... WAR. 76
Keep Smiling..... FOX. 75
Arsene Lupin Returns..... MGM. 55
First 100 Years..... MGM. 55
Love Is a Headache..... MGM. 51
Battle of Broadway..... FOX. 51
Secrets Of An Actress..... WAR. 51
Service Deluxe..... UNIV. 73
Spring Madness..... MGM. 73
Stolen Heaven..... PAR. 73
Rich Man, Poor Girl..... MGM. 72
Hawaii Calls..... UNIV. 72
Goodbye Broadway..... RKO. 72
Start Cheerling..... COL. 72

My Bill..... WAR. 71
Women Are Like That..... WAR. 71
Sailing Alone..... G. B. 70
Action For Slander..... U. A. 64
Gaiety Girls..... U. A. 62
The Rat..... RKO. 61
Romance in the Dark..... PAR. 60
Storm In A Teacup..... U. A. 54
Look Out For Love..... G. B. 52
The Girl Was Young..... G. B. 46
Return of Scarlet Pimpernel..... U. A. 44

Professor Beware..... FAR. 84
Kidnapped..... FOX. 84
Radio City Revels..... RKO. 83

The Toy Wife..... MGM. 81
Gold Diggers in Paris..... WAR. 81

Cocoanut Grove..... FAR. 79
Dramatic School..... MGM. 79

Fools for Scandal..... WAR. 72
Divorce of Lady X..... U. A. 72
Sixty Glorious Years..... RKO. 71

We're Going to Be Rich..... FOX. 69

LAST CALL!

- ¶ THE DIGEST ANNUAL is now going to press . . . Every effort has been made by the staff to see that all credits given producers, directors, writers, and players, are correct . . . In fact no trade publication has ever put forth so much time and effort in this direction.
- ¶ But if there is a picture on which you believe a mix-up may have occurred on credits—for any reason or other—let us know.
- ¶ THE DIGEST ANNUAL wants to live up to the authenticity that you have given it by calling it: THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY.

1939

BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

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HOLLYWOOD, - CALIFORNIA

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

★ ★ *"Honor Box"* ★ ★

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **M-G-M** Wins With
"HUCKLEBERRY FINN"—128%



Producer
JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ



Director
RICHARD THORPE



Screenplay
HUGO BUTLER

Original
MARK TWAIN

Photographer
JOHN SEITZ

Film Editor
FRANK E. HULL



MICKEY ROONEY



Featured

WALTER CONNOLLY
WILLIAM FRAWLEY
REX INGRAM
LYNNE CARVER
JO ANN SAYERS
MINOR WATSON
ELIZABETH RISDON
VICTOR KILIAN
CLARA BLANDICK



NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

Published By
Robert E. Welsh

WARNERS BEAT THE GUN

Distribution chiefs recognize that they face one of the industry's most troublesome years as they gird the loins for the 1939-40 selling season.

There is the problem of uncertain foreign markets, and the dire things that such a situation can do to expectations on grosses.

There is the apparently insurmountable factor of steadily increasing manufacturing costs—on the purely mechanical and physical side of expenditures. Without consideration for creative costs—producers, directors, players, etc.

There is the sad fact that, despite the outstanding successes of a limited number of pictures, the current season has not been a healthy one even in the domestic market.

So the distribution worriers look ahead and sense the oncoming headaches. There is nothing, essentially practical, that they can say to the production department except a fervent: "Give us good pictures—and saleable pictures—and we'll get by."

* * *

Trust the Warner freres, at a time like this, to be looking just a little further ahead, and be just a little better prepared for eventualities, than some more lumbering organizations.

At their convention in New York this week a DEFINITE announcement was made of the 48 features to constitute their 1939-40 bid.

The announcement is distinctive for one particular reason among many: It is an exhibitor's announcement.

The exhibitor can take this announcement and do his pencil and paper work. A definite number of prestige pictures; a definite number of star vehicles with definite stars; a definite number of current interest mass appeal subjects, definitely announced.

There's an announcement that is a film salesman's delight. He is given something to talk about, other than the wind and the weather.

The announcement is a tribute to the cooperation that must exist between selling and producing in that Warner organization. Fore-

handed planning and thinking and decisioning — between Harry Warner and Gradwell Sears on the one hand, and Jack Warner and Hal Wallis on the other coast.

It's a tribute particularly to production to know that the salesman can talk this program without anyone asking him if there is any doubt about Warners delivering all the pictures it promises for a season.

* * *

The announcement could be analyzed in a number of ways, all of them interesting. We have mentioned the "balance" in type of subject, the assurance of star deliveries, the headline themes spotted here and there.

All this is talking the salesman's language — and that means the exhibitor's language. Because, strange as it seems, you have to talk a man's language to properly sell him.

There is another important factor between the lines — and behind the words:

Both salesman and exhibitor know that Warners SELL their pictures.

Give that organization a slice of Shakespeare or a Warden Lawes; give them Bette Davis working for an Academy Award or Brynie Foy for the shekels; give them masterpieces or inbetweeners—or even sick babies—and that crew directed on both coasts by Charles Einfeld will go out and SELL.

You have never seen Warners LAY DOWN on a picture once made; the same cannot always be said of many other organizations.

We will guarantee that if they were selling a seven reel epic on the sex life of the cocoon tomorrow, they would come up with both a selling angle and ENTHUSIASM. The

sales angle might be something to the effect that we should see the picture to know where airplanes come from—but some sales angle would be there.

And Einfeld's gang—from ads to copy to trailers—would nationalize it for the benefit of box offices.

That's the final touch of angelic wings for a film salesman's Paradise.

DISTRIBUTORS BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1938

1. M. G. M.	45 Releases.....	103 %
2. 20th Century-Fox.....	52 Releases.....	92
3. United Artists	17 Releases.....	92
4. Paramount	40 Releases.....	88
5. Warner Brothers	53 Releases.....	87
6. R. K. O.	39 Releases.....	83
7. Columbia	33 Releases.....	80
8. Universal	39 Releases.....	77
9. Republic	25 Releases.....	73
10. Monogram	14 Releases.....	69
11. Grand National.....	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	10 Releases.....	59

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: JACK L. WARNER SOUNDS DEATH KNEEL TO DUAL BILLS---MAYBE

From all angles, the Highlight of the week is Jack Warner's frank declaration that his company is out to kill off double bills—with greater ammunition than words. . . . A Highlight from the exhibitor's viewpoint, and a Highlight to a large section of the Hollywood payroll. . . . Let's first take the exhibitor's viewpoint: As we have said, probably too repeatedly, it has always been a joke to hear high and mighty Hollywood executives in interviews and prompted editorials decry the double feature "evil," when producer-owned theatres were the chief offenders, and had at any time of any day or any night the power to do as they would with it. But they always blamed the ghostly figure known as the "independent exhibitor." This is the lowly fellow whose cash is good when you want it and need it—but who is the cause of all evils—including, perhaps, even the loss of a third race at Santa Anita—when you are seeking evils.

Jack Warner Gives A Pledge

And now the responsible spokesman of an organization owning its share of theatres says that his company will bend every effort to kill double bills. Meaning, we imply, by starting in their own theatres. There are rumbles that other leading producer-exhibitors will follow suit at coming conventions. Meaning, we presume again, THEIR own theatres will lead the way. All of which means something, if it eventually means anything. At least it takes the double feature evil out of the lap of the lowly independent exhibitor. Or will it? . . . Now let's look at the Hollywood side of the picture. The quantity product that double bills make necessary form no small part of the Hollywood picture—in payrolls particularly. Spread payrolls—as contrasted with payrolls concentrated in a few hands. It costs just as much per hour for an electrician or a grip on a B picture as it does on "Gone With The Wind." Other production costs are lower, which means a greater SPREAD of pay envelopes among a greater number of workers. Should the killing of double bills eliminate that product the Hollywood result will be tragic. Beverly Hills, Bel-Air, the Gold Coast, will be unaffected—and won't be turning out any better product than they are today. . . . And now we come to the conclusion of a discussion that would really need a book's space. Will they kill double bills? The answer is: "Yes—when the wage-earners of the country return to the joyous 1929 levels where they didn't give a darn how they spent their money." Do you know when that day is coming? . . . Neither do we.

H. J. Yates Going To The Races

Whoa! — We meant that "going to the races" in the right way. H. J. is out here on his Republic camping ground and the rubber

6 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was	Now
1. <i>Pygmalion</i>	MGM	126	133
2. <i>Stand Up and Fight</i>	MGM	117	120
3. <i>The Lady Vanishes</i>	FOX	90	92
4. <i>Fast and Loose</i>	MGM	87	92
5. <i>King of Underworld</i>	WAR	80	82
6. <i>I Am A Criminal</i>	MONO	67	69

bands are flying. With full confidence in the administration of M. J. Siegel, the lone wolf of the industry has tossed all the rubber bands away to let the bankroll roll on Republic's future. . . . First step, the necessary one to buy complete ownership of the studio property, previously on lease from the bank that took over Mack Sennett's headaches. Second step, more big pictures to balance up one of the finest action programs in the business. Which means elimination of that type of in-between picture which takes just as much effort and brains to make as the ticket-seller, but which dies between two horns of something or other. . . . You know: The critics say, "Fine job for the budget"; the exhibitors say, "But we had nothing to sell." . . . This man Yates usually gets to the destination for which he starts, and he has decided to go real places with Republic.

Universal Affairs On The Upgrade

Universal reports a modest profit for the quarter ending January 28, as compared with a \$388,000 loss for the corresponding period the previous year. All profits are modest these days, so this is something of a miracle. Especially with the U's best money attractions just coming up for box office attention. There has been occasional comment—some of it here—on some of the things those boys at the U have done in the past year. Most has been favorable, some otherwise. But we guess when the whole story is finally told it will relate a great job of "lifting up by your bootstraps." . . . The future looks good, with the number of producer-director deals being made. Already Rowland Lee and John Stahl, and last week Richard Wallace and Ben Stoloff added to similar deals. And then there is Joe Pasternak, who is a picture company in himself. . . . We were interested in this Stoloff announcement, because though he is one of the few we have missed for personal acquaintance, we have watched him since some day in 1929 when he

11 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

		Was	Now
1. <i>Yes, Darling Daughter</i>	WAR	118	113
2. <i>Topper Takes a Trip</i>	UA	110	103
3. <i>Wings of the Navy</i>	WAR	103	99
4. <i>Made Me a Criminal</i>	WAR	97	94
5. <i>Tailspin</i>	FOX	96	92
6. <i>St. Louis Blues</i>	PAR	88	85
7. <i>Three Musketeers</i>	FOX	88	85
8. <i>One Third of a Nation</i>	PAR	87	83
9. <i>Boy Slaves</i>	RKO	81	78
10. <i>Homicide Bureau</i>	COL	77	74

made an all-talkie for Fox at the old Western Avenue studios. Those were the days when all of us approached the talkie problems with bolstered courage. It was a workmanlike job. We've watched him through the intervening years. He's had some bad pictures, but that usually seemed to be because the company did not expect any better, judging by the stories and the casts they gave him. But his pictures have always been "workmanlike." (A word we like to use often. It means a lot to people who really know their picture-making. That doesn't include nine-tenths of our associate producers.) So we will be interested to watch Stoloff at the U—on a producer-director type of deal—if they give him a real chance. Mebbe we'll even meet him some day.

Rounding The Corners For Studio Items

Dr. Herbert Kalmus, of Technicolor, back from his European jaunt. The Doctor should return wreathed in smiles, with two of the current top money makers of the business—"Jesse James" and "The Little Princess" flaunting the Technicolor banner. And in both cases Technicolor has considerable to do with the box office. . . . George Stevens has set his new producer-director deal. Good news for Radio. . . . Harold Lloyd will do two pictures for Radio, in the first of which he will not appear. . . . Interested to hear that Warner Brothers via Brynie Foy are dicker with Bert Wheeler for a return to the screen. The Wheeler-Woolsey team built up too solid a following for it to be neglected, even if Bert must now make the grade alone. When that many loyal fans have followed a player through the years—there's cash that shouldn't be tossed away. It only remains to make the first picture right, and Bert will carry on. . . . Henry Henigson takes over the managerial post at the Myron Selznick agency. Hank knows his picture business—backwards, forwards, and all ways—and also has a wide circle of friends. . . . Must be like an old home week return after absence since childhood for Phil Rosen to be back at the U. Phil will give 'em a picture, too. . . . Marc Lachman in our midst preparatory to reopening his publicity offices, after high pressuring many recent Fox hits. . . . Bela Lugosi so busy he has to read the papers to find his next assignment. Leaves Monday for England, with a line-up ready for action as quickly as he can return. This column takes a bow on informing producers long ago that they were neglecting money value in Lugosi. . . . Hope they now rediscover that fine actress, Mary Nash, after her great performance in "The Little Princess." The Nash name means a lot in the East, which remembers her stage glories, and Hollywood hasn't taken full advantage of it, nor of her talents. . . . Norman McLeod—who started Roach someplace with "Topper"—moves over to MGM following his former chief, Milton Bren. A lot of meaning can be

(Continued on Page 5)

"HUCKLEBERRY FINN" TOPS WEEK'S BUSINESS; "WIFE, HUSBAND AND FRIEND" GOING STRONG

BY NORMAN WEBB

MGM---2 NEW RELEASES

MGM has come through with another good week by having two good money releases—"HUCKLEBERRY FINN" and "LET FREEDOM RING."

MGM's new version of Mark Twain's famous classic, "HUCKLEBERRY FINN" is the top release of the week at a 128% average. There have been any number of instances where this picture has hit considerably higher, particularly in the Middle West—and then on the other hand there have been some key cities, particularly New York, where classics for the kiddies have little first-run value. When this picture gets into its "stick runs" it will undoubtedly pull up considerably, as this type of entertainment always does.

"HUCKLEBERRY FINN" stars the popular hero of the "Andy Hardy" series, Mickey Rooney. Among the more important featured names are Walter Connolly, William Frawley, Lynne Carver, and Jo Ann Sayers. Joe Mankiewicz produced and Dick Thorpe very capably directed from Hugo Butler's screenplay.

MGM's second release this week, "LET FREEDOM RING," is a fairly good box office bet at 111%, but still considerably below what we had estimated (130%). The somewhat low figures may prove one of two things—either that Nelson Eddy without Jeanette MacDonald is not such a big box office bet, or else that the American audiences are not interested in paying to see an American propaganda picture—with such an obviously preachy title.

Mr. Eddy is supported by a very fine cast of featured players of real marquee value, including Virginia Bruce, Victor McLaglen, Lionel Barrymore, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbee, Charles Butterworth, and many others too numerous to mention. Harry Rapf produced and Jack Conway directed from Ben Hecht's original screenplay.

FOX---2 NEW RELEASES

Twentieth Century-Fox also has two new releases this week—one which is an outstanding comedy hit, while the second is another weak English importation.

"WIFE, HUSBAND AND FRIEND" has opened in a number of key city first-runs and is averaging fairly satisfactory at around 113% on its first weeks, and in several bookings, including the Roxy, New York, has been held for a second week. This picture is of special importance to Fox exhibitors as it serves as a fine comeback picture for Warner Baxter.

Seen opposite Mr. Baxter is Loretta Young, and among those prominently featured are Binnie Barnes, Cesar Romero, J. Edward Bromberg, and Eugene Palette. Darryl Zanuck ap-

Of Ten New Releases in the Past Week, Four Rated Over 100%; One Came Thru Okay; and Five Were Very Weak.

pointed Nunnally Johnson associate producer on this picture.

Fox's second release this week, "SMILING ALONG," 71%, is the second of the Gracie Fields series which are produced in England by Robert Kane and directed by Monty Banks. The box office figures on the Gracie Fields pictures definitely show the difference between English and American humor. In England and the British Dominions, Gracie Fields is absolutely tops, and her pictures always run over 150%; yet in her two American releases she has failed to draw in any proportion.

PARAMOUNT---1 NEW RELEASE

Paramount's only release this week, "CAFE SOCIETY," has been very well received at 102%, which is very good, considering the marquee strength. Fred MacMurray and Paramount's newest star, Madeleine Carroll, are co-starred at the head of a big comedy cast which includes Claude Gillingwater, Jessie Ralph, Paul Hurst, Don Alvarado, and others.

Jeff Lazarus produced "CAFE SOCIETY" under William LeBaron's supervision and E. H. Griffith directed. Virginia Van Upp gets sole writing credit for the original story and very smart screenplay.

While this picture is being very well received on its first runs, it probably should be double billed with an action picture when it gets into its neighborhood runs.

COLUMBIA---1 NEW RELEASE

Columbia Pictures, long in the dumps with the exception of the Frank Capra productions, seems to have hit a "ten-strike" in its new "Blondie" series. A couple of months ago the first "Blondie" was released, and was very well received in practically all types of houses. The second in this series, "BLONDIE MEETS THE BOSS," 91%, has just been released and is likewise doing very well on its first bookings.

The same cast, Penny Singleton, Arthur

Lake, and Larry Simms are being carried on in this series. Robert Sparks again supervised and Frank Strayer directed. Richard Flournoy wrote the screenplay, as well as collaborating on the original with Kay Van Riper.

UNIVERSAL---2 NEW RELEASES

Universal has two new programmers this week, both of which are proving to be a little better than their recent run on this type of product, although they are naturally strictly double-bill pictures.

"SOCIETY SMUGGLERS," 76%, features Preston Foster, Irene Hervey and Frank Jenks. Ken Goldsmith produced and Joe May directed. Undoubtedly the timely title of this one has helped it considerably (with apologies to Jack Benny and George Burns).

Universal's second release, "PIRATES OF THE SKIES," 74%, co-stars Rochelle Hudson and Robert Kent. Barney Sarecky produced and Joe McDonough directed.

WARNERS---1 NEW RELEASE

Warner Brothers' only release this week is another programmer from the Bryan Foy unit, "SECRET SERVICE OF THE AIR," 71%. This picture has plenty of thrills and action, but due to the lack of marquee names, will have to be spotted in on the lower half of a strong double bill. Ronald Reagan and John Litel are featured.

MONOGRAM---1 NEW RELEASE

Monogram this week has released the second of their Frankie Darro series, "TOUGH KID," which is fairly satisfactory at a 70% average, considering the negative cost and the type of runs for which it was intended—particularly the "nabes" or for the Saturday kiddies' matinee.

Dick Purcell and Judith Allen are featured. Lindsley Parsons produced and Howard Bretherton directed.

Highlights of the Week

(Continued from Page 4)

read into that move. . . . Jack Moss, who ably earns his title of business manager for Gary Cooper and Henry Hathaway, takes on additional chores in a deal to supervise two production units at Paramount, those of directors Henry Hathaway and Ted Reed. This Moss fellow is a bulldog protector for his clients, so expect some things to happen. . . . There is interest in the news that Darryl Zanuck plans one of his early Cosmopolitan productions for Alice Faye in "Little Old New York." What a tonic the original version of that one was in an ailing box office year. And what a change it made in the Davies career, just when all seemed lost.

10 New Releases Not In Last Issue

4 Over 100%.....1 O. K.....5 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Huckleberry Finn	MGM	128	140
2. Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	113	110
3. Let Freedom Ring	MGM	111	130
4. Cafe Society	PAR	102	95
5. Blondie Meets The Boss	COL	91	90
6. Society Smugglers	UNIV	76	70
7. Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	74	75
8. Smiling Along	FOX	71	70
9. Secret Service of the Air	WAR	71	70
10. Tough Kid	MONO	70	70

RELEASES OF 1939

		%			%
1. Jesse James	FOX	180	36. Boy Slaves	RKO	78
2. Gunga Din	RKO	179	37. Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	78
3. The Little Princess	FOX	147	38. Arizona Wildcat	FOX	78
4. Idiot's Delight	MGM	138	39. Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	77
5. Pygmalion	MGM	133	40. Charlie Chan In Honolulu	FOX	76
6. Huckleberry Finn	MGM	128	41. Disbarred	PAR	76
7. You Can't Cheat Honest Man	UNIV	122	42. Society Smugglers	UNIV	76
8. Stand Up And Fight	MGM	120	43. Pacific Liner	RKO	75
9. Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	113	44. Torchy Blane In Chinatown	WAR	75
10. Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	113	45. Pirates Of The Skies	UNIV	74
11. Made For Each Other	UA	112	46. Pride Of The Navy	REP	74
12. Let Freedom Ring	MGM	111	47. The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	74
13. Honolulu	MGM	110	48. Persons In Hiding	PAR	74
14. The Beachcomber	PAR	109	49. Homicide Bureau	COL	74
15. Topper Takes A Trip	UA	103	50. Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt	COL	73
16. Zaza	PAR	102	51. Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	72
17. Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102	52. Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
18. Cafe Society	PAR	102	53. The Sunset Murder Case	GN	72
19. Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	101	54. Ambush	PAR	71
20. Wings of the Navy	WAR	99	55. Smiling Along	FOX	71
21. They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	94	56. Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	70
22. Tailspin	FOX	92	57. Tough Kid	MONO	70
23. The Lady Vanishes	FOX	92	58. Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
24. Fast and Loose	MGM	92	59. Woman Doctor	REP	70
25. Blondie Meets The Boss	COL	91	60. Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
26. Four Girls In White	MGM	87	61. North of Shanghai	COL	69
27. Three Musketeers	FOX	85	62. I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
28. St. Louis Blues	PAR	85	63. Convicts Code	MONO	69
29. Let Us Live	COL	84	64. Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
30. One Third Of A Nation	PAR	83	65. Forged Passport	REP	68
31. Off The Record	WAR	83	66. Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
32. King Of The Underworld	WAR	82	67. Boy Trouble	PAR	68
33. The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81	68. Long Shot	GN	67
34. Devil's Island	WAR	80	69. My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
35. Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	79			

"Three Smart Girls Grow Up" ---And How!

UNIVERSAL

(EST. 145%)

Producer Joseph Pasternak
 Director Henry Koster
 Original Screenplay Bruce Manning
 Star Deanna Durbin
 Featured: Nan Grey, Helen Parrish, Charles
 Winninger, Nella Walker, Robert Cum-
 mings, William Lundigan, Ernest Cossart,
 Felix Bressart.
 Photographer Joseph Valentine
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Vocal Instructor Andres de Segurola
 Orchestrations Frank Skinner
 Film Editor Bernard W. Burton
 Time 83 minutes

Universal has done it again with that Durbin gal. "Three Smart Girls Grow Up" will be an exhibitor's delight. First, because it proudly upholds the standard of all previous Durbin pictures; second, because it is that joy of the exhibitor, a picture for all ages. He can spot it any days of the week that he wants, and know that he will get top money and give top enjoyment.

The picture is delightful in the quality of smoothness and humanness that Joe Pasternak gives to all his pictures. In Koster he has a director who can take the little things of adolescent years and family life, and make them bring laughs even while we realize how tremendous the happenings must seem to the characters affected. In Miss Durbin he has a little trouper who is just striding forward picture by picture. Her voice seems better; her talents more assured; her maidenly charm as appealing as ever. In Bruce Manning he has a scripter who knows his material and who knows his craftsmanship, and in this case the combination of Manning and Felix Jackson takes the assignment in unflinching stride.

The story thread for "Three Smart Girls Grow Up" is slender, delightfully so, for after all, we are merely spending a few days as inti-

CURRENT REVIEWS			
	3 Over 100%.....	2 O. K.....	8 Weak
1. Three Smart Girls Grow Up.....	UNIV	Est. %	145
2. Oklahoma Kid	WAR		115
3. Sergeant Madden	MGM		100
4. I'm From Missouri	PAR		90
5. Zenobia	UA		85
6. Mr. Moto In Danger Island.....	FOX		75
7. Mystery of Mr. Wong	MONO		75
8. They Made Her A Spy	RKO		75
9. King of Chinatown	PAR		75
10. Heritage of the Desert	PAR		75
11. Risky Business	UNIV		75
12. Sudden Money	PAR		70
13. Within The Law	MGM		70

mate guests of an exceedingly interesting family and we have a great time just watching how they function, even if it all doesn't amount to much in the history of nations.

Miss Durbin is again the Little Fix It. Her problem this time is the fact that sister, Nan Grey, has become engaged to William Lundigan, and Deanna discovers that her heart really belongs to Robert Cummings. The third sister, Helen Parrish, complicates matters because it is she who really loves Lundigan.

What a spot for a Miss Fix It. Especially when you have a tycoon of a father like Charles Winninger, so busy with his international banking operations, he is never quite sure whether he is going or coming; a mother, Nella Walker, who never quite understands your fluttering heart; and a butler confidante in Ernest Cossart, who means well but doesn't help any with his advice.

Lots of things happen before Miss Fix It straightens things out happily, and all of them happen with enthralling skill in the telling, with delightful peeks into the boudoir and hearts of three very delightful girls.

Nan Grey, maturing rapidly now, gives an

assured performance, Miss Parrish, with a lesser opportunity, is not far behind. Miss Durbin delivers four songs, so neatly spotted that we know many audiences will be wishing there were more. That's showmanship.

The cast support is excellent in every member. Robert Cummings comes into his own with a shaded performance of a young musician; Lundigan is clean cut in appeal; Winninger, playing with legitimate restraint, extracts every ounce of pleasure from his role. Miss Walker and Cossart are excellent.

A word should go to the technical crew whose work is so completely in tune with the class of the picture. Jack Otterson's sets, Joe Valentine's photography, Charles Previn's musical direction are top notch.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Universal has done it again. The latest Deanna Durbin picture is top entertainment and adds copious lustre to the already scintillating achievement of its artists and production personnel."

VARIETY: "Three Smart Girls grow up in a picture of great charm and refreshment, of irresistible heart and song appeal, done with the consummate showmanship which wins profitable and happy patronage."

"Zenobia" Presents Hardy-Langdon Team

UNITED ARTISTS

(EST. 85%)

Producer Edward Sutherland
 Director Gordon Douglas
 Screenplay Corey Ford
 Original Walter De Leon, Arnold Belgard
 Stars Oliver Hardy, Harry Langdon
 Featured: Billie Burke, Alice Brady, James El-
 lison, Jean Parker, June Lang, Olin How-
 land, J. Farrell MacDonald, Step'n Fetchit,
 Hattie McDaniels, Phillip Hurlic, Hobart
 Cavanaugh, Clem Bevans, Chester Conk-
 lin, Tommy Mack, Robert Dudley, Hall
 Johnson Choir.
 Photographer Karl Struss
 Time 71 minutes

There are sufficient laughs in "Zenobia," presented by a group of excellent performances to warrant it an adequate place on many bills, but the effort to combine slapstick with more legitimate feature length requirements has not come off so happily as to make it top of the bill fodder without strong support.

Chief interest of the picture is in the fact that it offers the first union of Babe Hardy and Harry Langdon, succeeding the familiar Hardy-Laurel duo. The combination comes off

successfully, though romantic plot elements are allowed to intrude to a greater extent than was customary in Hardy-Laurel vehicles, with consequent lessening of opportunities for the team to do their stuff.

Close to sharing honors with the stars is the elephant which forms the basis of the plot. It seems that old Doc Hardy, country doctor of the old South, who had lost his standing as an attendant on human ills with the sedate villagers, fixes up Zenobia, the pachyderm, when that lumbering beauty comes to the village with a carnival show. An elephant never forgets, and not only does Zenobia never forget, but she attaches herself so closely to Hardy that the result is a courtroom climax when Langdon, her trainer, sues the medico for alienation of affections.

Strung between the starting point and finish are many fine gags, interrupted by a romance between Hardy's daughter, Jean Parker and Jimmie Ellison, which is opposed by the latter's mother, Alice Brady. Miss Brady and Ellison are particularly effective in the excellent supporting cast, which also includes

June Lang, as the girl Jimmie is supposed to marry for social reasons, and Billie Burke as Jean's mother and fluttering wife to Hardy, Stepin Fetchit and Philip Ruric. The last mentioned colored youngster has a highlight scene reciting the Declaration of Independence.

Direction by Gordon Douglas is adequate to the material, a pretty tough assignment for any director because of the wide swing from slapstick to legitimacy involved in the proceedings.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Those cash customers who put their dough on the line to get a load of aching sides via the antics of Laurel and Hardy won't be so happy over the new Hal Roach combination. If they expected to see Harry Langdon stepping into Laurel's brogans, they are going to be disappointed likewise. He isn't given that opportunity."

VARIETY: "Picture is a credit to the production guidance of A. Edward Sutherland and should please audiences accustomed to brand of fun associated with Hardy, Langdon and Billie Burke. It will hold up its end in well regulated programs."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

Joseph Mankiewicz

P r o d u c e d

For Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

“HUCKLEBERRY FINN”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

Richard Thorpe

D i r e c t e d

For Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

“HUCKLEBERRY FINN”

"Sergeant Madden" Heavy Handed Drama

M. G. M.
(EST. 100%)

Producer J. Walter Ruben
 Director Josef von Sternberg
 Story William A. Ulman, Jr.
 Screenplay Wells Root
 Star Wallace Beery
 Featured: Tom Brown, Alan Curtis, Laraine Day, Fay Holden, Marc Lawrence, Marion Martin, David Gorcey, Donald Haines, Ben Welden, Etta McDaniel, John Kelly, Horace McMahon, Neil Fitzgerald, Dickie Jones, Drew Roddy, Charles Trowbridge, George Irving.
 Photographer Joseph Seitz
 Musical Score Dr. William Axt
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor Conrad A. Nervig
 Time 78 minutes

Coming from Metro, "Sergeant Madden" cannot be rated as anything better than a good programmer. Despite the fact that it presents Wally Beery in one of his best characterizations, and in its supporting cast discloses some of the best future bets that any single picture has presented in some time.

The picture is powerful drama, "meaty," and will do its share on double bills, but its first trouble is that it is too "meaty," there is no dessert.

It may be heresy to say it, but Josef von Sternberg's direction is now outdated, the pic-

ture hasn't the lift and tempo demanded of 1938-39 pictures, whether they be gangster epics or screwy farces. There is a theme and a preachment, and it sticks so closely to theme and preachment that it must be confessed some fine performances have a tough time relieving long stretches of weariness during the preachment of the theme. We will have to give Producer J. Walter Ruben his share of the blame for letting this 1929 model reach a 1939 screen.

More cheerful to mention are the cast possibilities that the picture unfolds. There is a girl, Laraine Day, with an appealing touch of Irish brogue, who trumps her scenes with such assurance as to belie the fact that she has never been in anything but bit parts before. Alan Curtis, playing what could be called the juvenile lead, has both good looks of the he-man type, and skill. And a new gangster type is presented by Marc Lawrence. He steals his scenes. Of course there is also the tried and true Tom Brown.

The story is an effort to glorify the New York police department, and through that, other police departments, by Wallace Beery's portrayal of the old time cop who lives and dies in the finest traditions of the police offi-

cer. There are exhibitors who will be able to use this theme for local exploitation. Beery's part arrives from the fact that his son, Alan Curtis, whom he forces through the training that makes a policeman on New York's force, is at heart really a rat with a killer's instincts. Tom Brown is an adopted son, Miss Day a protege whom Beery had originally found as an infant abandoned on his beat.

Curtis is framed up by gangsters whom he has been hounding, with the result that after making a spectacular escape when on his way to Sing Sing he becomes an out and out outlaw and killer. Beery turns in his thirty-year old badge to go out and get him.

It is, as we have said, powerful. But it is all too obvious in development and treatment.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Sergeant Madden' is that type of solid entertainment which will draw no effusive raves, but will give general satisfaction at the head of the bill. Its money prospects will depend largely on the pull of Wallace Beery's name and the interest his appearance as one of 'New York's finest' will excite."

VARIETY: "Intensely human document dotted with heart tugs and expertly converted to celluloid, 'Sergeant Madden' comes through as splendid melodrama."

"Mystery of Mr. Wong" Good Mono Bet

MONOGRAM
(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer William T. Lackey
 Director William Nigh
 Screenplay Scott Darling
 Based on series by Hugh Wiley
 Star Boris Karloff
 Featured: Dorothy Tree, Grant Withers, Lotus Long, Morgan Wallace, Holmes Herbert, Craig Reynolds, Ivan Lebedeff, Hooper Atchley, Lee Tong Foo, Chester Gan.
 Photographer Harry Neumann
 Musical Director Edward Kay
 Film Editor Russell Schoengarth
 Time 69 minutes

Monogram has something in this Mr. Wong series, and since the company has had the happy experience of producing a better picture in the second of the series than in the satisfactory initialer, the customers can probably begin to count on it as staple fare.

The lead, a San Francisco Chinese detective, fits well in the hands of Boris Karloff, playing without expected theatric emphasis. In fact, the chief tip to exhibitors should be to let the patrons know that it is not the horror Karloff of whom they may have grown tired or fearful, but a fast-moving, suspenseful mystery melodrama.

Support for Karloff is also excellent, with direction by William Nigh in that veteran's fast-paced staccato tempo.

It all concerns the murder of Brandon Edwards, wealthy collector of Oriental treasures, with the action involving Grant Withers as a none too brilliant police official, Dorothy Tree and Craig Reynolds in a slender but sufficient romantic touch, and a host of suspects. There are suspects to the right and suspects to the

left, with this element well handled and the proper amount of surprise in the discovery of the real killer.

Wong's interpretation is that of the quiet-moving, unperturbable Oriental, moving slowly but surely towards the solution. Screenplay for the picture, on which William T. Lackey was associate producer, is a workmanlike job by Scott Darling.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Given better production and support than in initialer of Monogram's Chinese whodunit series, Boris Karloff takes this one in stride for a neatly rounded melodrama that will fit into nearly any house."

REPORTER: " 'The Mystery of Mr. Wong,' the second in the series based on Hugh Wiley's character, is a suspenseful murder mystery that should garner better than average receipts for Monogram."

"Risky Business" Fair Attraction

UNIVERSAL
(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Burt Kelly
 Director Arthur Lubin
 Story William Anthony McGuire
 Screenplay Charles Grayson
 Stars George Murphy, Dorothea Kent
 Featured: Eduardo Ciannelli, Leon Ames, Arthur Loft, El Brendel, John Wray, Frances Robinson, Pierre Watkin, Grant Richards, Charles Trowbridge, Mary Forbes.
 Photographer Stanley Cortez
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Maurice Wright
 Time 66 minutes

William Anthony McGuire's story, "Okay America," originally based on the Walter Winchell theme when the Winchell theme was

at its hottest, proves its sturdy quality by being able to come back in a 1939 version and deliver a satisfactory bill of entertainment.

Universal has just gaited the story for program purposes this time and it will fill the bill in that classification. George Murphy is seen this time as the Winchell type who specializes on Hollywood comment by radio. The dramatics occur when Murphy is tricked into becoming the go-between for a kidnapping gang. It carries on through romance and politics with the same dramatic climax when the commentator is killed by the gang while making his grand finale broadcast.

Burt Kelly has turned out an adequate production for program purposes with Arthur Lubin's direction satisfactorily workmanlike.

George Murphy is at home in the part which won't do him any good, nor any particular amount of harm. Dorothea Kent supplies interesting romantic interest while the balance of the supporting cast is of standard quality. El Brendel contributes a bit part particularly well handled for its laughs.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The picture will cause no huzzahs, but it fits nicely into the secondary groove for which it was intended."

VARIETY: "This is an old friend parading under an alias. Today we meet it as 'Risky Business.' Back in 1932, when we were first introduced, it was 'Okay America.' Universal has undergone sweeping changes since it gave birth to 'Okay.' But not so William Anthony McGuire's story, which is practically the same in 'Risky' as it was in the earlier offering."

"Oklahoma Kid" Western Plus Cagney

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 115%)

Executive Producer.....Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer.....Sam Bischoff
Director.....Lloyd Bacon
Screenplay: Warren Duff, Robert Buckner,
Edward E. Paramore.
Original.....Edward E. Paramore, Wally Klein
Star.....James Cagney
Featured: Humphrey Bogart, Rosemary Lane,
Donald Crisp, Harvey Stephens, Hugh
Sothorn, Charles Middleton, Edward Paw-
ley, Ward Bond, Lew Harvey, Trevor Bar-
dette, John Miljan, Arthur Aylesworth,
Irving Bacon, Joe Devlin, Wade Boteler.
Photographer.....James Wong Howe
Time.....85 minutes

This one can be chalked off as an interlude for James Cagney which will probably satisfy his followers without bringing any bouquets. His presence in the picture, and the expenditure of a little extra money, lift it above routine western fare.

Sam Bischoff was apparently given so much money to produce a picture, and a story to make, and he turned in a workmanlike job with what he had, aided by the sparkling Cagney personality. Lloyd Bacon did not help him any, delivering a routine job of direction about as inspired as his last one, "Wings of the Navy."

For mass audiences the Cagney personality, the bang-bang of the action, will give it plenty satisfying appeal. The story goes back to the "Cimarron" period in the land rush when the Cherokee strip was opened in 1893. All the familiar gangsters and thugs you would expect are present, and without any particularly new sides to their nature. Cagney is the familiar western character who starts out in opposition to the law and winds up the avenger who cleans out the crooks.

The supporting cast is of the usual fine

Warner standard, as can be told from the names and credits above.

It will be a mop-up in certain territories, unless the exhibitor feels his customers would just as soon see John Wayne or Gene Autry do the same things at the Saturday matinee.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Odds are that those who like actionful Cagney, and those who would additionally want him in a different atmosphere, will be immeasurably pleased by Warners' newest film exploiting his vital assets. More, it has cavalcade bigness and historical significance, which make it additionally surefire as a heavy grosser at the boxoffice."

VARIETY: "Swift and exciting western, with all the ingredients of the standard outdoor meller, is 'The Oklahoma Kid,' presenting James Cagney in his first guns-and-gallop picture and relying largely on the Cagney name to elevate it above ordinary levels."

"King of Chinatown" Okay for Duals

PARAMOUNT

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer.....Stuart Walker
Director.....Nick Grinde
Screenplay.....Lillie Hayward, Irving Reis
Based on the story by.....Herbert Biberman
Featured: Anna May Wong, Akim Tamiroff, J.
Carrol Naish, Sidney Toler, Phillip Ahn,
Anthony Quinn Bernadene Hayes, Roscoe
Karns, Ray Mayer, Richard Denning, Ar-
chie Twitchell, Edward Marr, George An-
derson, Charles B. Wood, George Magrill,
Charles Trowbridge, Lily King, Wong,
Chong, Chester Gan, Pat West, Guy Usher.
Photographer.....Leo Tover

"King of Chinatown" is a better than average program filler from the Harold Hurley unit at Paramount, with a title that should bring some extra business to the exhibitors for whom the title was intended.

Anna May Wong is presented in a very satisfactory performance, while Akim Tamiroff

is also capably present. The support is studded with the topnotch names of players in Hollywood who can handle this sort of action picture and make it seem real, for the time at least. J. Carrol Naish and Sidney Toler, in particular, deserve mention.

The screenplay from Lillie Hayward and Irving Reis, together with Nick Grinde's direction accentuates action and fast movement with all around satisfactory results for this type of subject.

The story concerns white racketeers operating in and around Chinatown. Tamiroff is their leader. He is shot under circumstances which cause Miss Wong to believe that her father was guilty, with the result that the girl, who is a surgeon just having completed her internship, nurses him back to health. The contact results in a change in Tamiroff's char-

acter and gives him something of a Robin Hood clean-up for the finish.

In between this thread there are cops and robbers' clashes between Tamiroff's gang and the police, sufficient to satisfy any action liker. Production elements are on an adequate scale.

The title tells well enough where Paramount expects the picture to play. It will do well in those spots.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'King of Chinatown' is a pleasing action melodrama which serves as a suitable starring vehicle for Anna May Wong, and should satisfy seekers of action and thrills amid the intrigue and mysteries in Chinatown."

VARIETY: "Giving Anna May Wong one of her best opportunities of late to show thespian wares, 'King of Chinatown' has sufficient strength through playing and direction for adequate support in the dual situations."

"They Made Her a Spy" Gets By

R. K. O.

(EST. 75%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
Producer.....Robert Sisk
Director.....Jack Hively
Story.....George Bricker
Screenplay.....Michael Kanin, Jo Pagano
Featured: Sally Eilers, Allan Lane, Fritz Leiber, Frank M. Thomas, Theodor Von Eltz, Addison Richards, Larry Blake, Pierre Watkin, Louis Jean Heydt, Spencer Charters, Leona Roberts, Charles Halton, Alec Craig.
Photographer.....Nicholas Musuraca
Time.....67 minutes

"They Made Her A Spy" strives so hard to be intricate and suspenseful that it frequently stumbles over its own feet, but on the whole it winds up as a satisfactory program offering, which will do for the spots for which it was intended.

The exhibitors can find plenty of spots for it on the bottom of the double bills, due to the timeliness of the title and story, and the cash customers will not complain.

Sally Eilers carries the lead in the picture, but the most interesting feature of the cast is that the picture should convince RKO that this Allan Lane boy has what it takes to go places. The balance of the supporting cast is in excellent hands.

The burden of the story is on Miss Eilers' shoulders. Her brother, an Army Lieutenant, has been killed under circumstances pointing to foreign spies. Sally sets out for vengeance and securing the approval of the Army Intelligence Corps, works her way into the confidence of the spies. Events run pretty true to spy formula yarns for awhile, when she and

Lane supposedly undertake a murderous mission for the spies and—well, you and I and all the other pulp readers in the world know that in the end Lane is going to turn out to be a fellow conspirator on Sally's side of the fence.

We suppose if they had disturbed the formula it would not have been a program picture, and that wasn't their intention.

The picture marks the first directorial effort of Jack Hively, veteran film editor, and his handling of the material given him entitles him to a chance at something better.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'They Made Her A Spy' is another addition to the cycle of foreign espionage pictures, which have been hitting the market with regularity. RKO's contribution is a worthy addition. It has an interesting tale to tell, and while it is somewhat confusing at times, it measures up to others of the type."

VARIETY: "While 'They Made Her A Spy' gets away to an outpouring of dialog, it settles down after characters are established and moves along for balance of journey at clip that stamps it as o.k. filler."

ADDITIONAL REVIEWS
ON PAGES 14 - 15

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

LOYALTY NOTE: The same week that Time Magazine gives its cover and three pages to a story of the W. R. Hearst financial plight, Hollywood has its rumor that Marion Davies is coming to the rescue in a big way. Even to the extent of shipping the family jewels to the Eastern market for a quick sale. Anyone who knows Marion also knows that she is the kind that would stand by the ship. But what a novel and a picture someone is going to make someday out of the Hearst saga! Napoleon fades away and Pasteur just a horse doctor when you think of the possibilities.

* * *

HOBBY NOTES: We are discovering a lot of hobbies. An accidental stop on Ventura Boulevard showed us that Ruby Keeler's hobby is doing her own shopping at Daigler's Market in Studio City, even down to the personal selection of the cut of steak for the Jolson Mansion. And when there is a Gable-Lombard party in the wind, Gable may be seen looking over the heads of cabbage. The autograph hunters haven't discovered it yet. . . . And we encountered another hobby going strong. John Wentworth, United Artist West Coast artist, recently let his hobby run away with him so much that he established Cinema Center out in the 8800 block on Beverly Blvd. for fellow nuts of 8 and 16 millimeter pictures. Now the stars have discovered it and the convenience of a private projection theatre that seats one hundred with sound projection facilities. The room has seen many a private premiere of big stars without the arclights and the big crowds. . . . Incidentally, Wentworth recently shot a 16mm color picture on his vacation trip to Palm Springs showing forth-

coming bathing suit and accessory styles. It is getting so much attention from department stores that John may have found himself in a business. But whether he has or not he can still have fun with his hobby and there is a welcome on the mat for all other amateur movie fanatics.

* * *

BANKROLL NOTE: Don't do too much worrying about the fact that your bankroll will not get sufficient exercise now that Santa Anita is closed. The California Appellate Court is due to render a decision today — we hope they don't do it before we get off the press—which will decide once and for all just how far you have to swim from the Santa Monica beach before you are in the open seas. If the decision is right the palatial steamship Rex has steam up and all in readiness to re-open quicker than you can take the rubber band off the bankroll. All they need is a decision that the Rex anchorage is in the open sea.

* * *

GOING CONTINENTAL: We are going to have another 'arty' theatre, featuring foreign films and it should get quite a play from the colony. It is the new Cinema now under construction on Western Avenue near Santa Monica. There will be an informal lounge where cigarettes and coffee are served—and even a reading room off the foyer. Lewis Berkoff will operate the theatre.

* * *

NEW DEAL NOTES: A number of new deals in prospect around the popular places. The Beverly Wilshire will bring Dick Barrie and his orchestra to the Florentine Room starting March 21. Harry Owens and his Royal Hawaiians say their farewell on March 19

after a five month engagement. . . Earl Carroll, now that Santa Anita is closed, started a new deal last night by which folks could come in for the show for one buck, four bits—but this was just an admission price and included no food. Carroll is also shifting the show around a bit with some new numbers. Another new deal item: Louis Prima will be back at his own Jitter Bug House on the 24th, having just concluded a successful tour. Phil Selznick is already meeting friends at the "IT" Cafe on Vine Street and it appears certain that he will take over completely about April 1.

* * *

WHO EATS WITH WHOM: Not that it matters much to us, but we may as well let you know. Well, first of all, William Powell came out of the ether long enough to have lunch all by his lonesome at the Vine Street Derby last week. . . . Lupe Velez, at the same place, still has the strangle hold on Shipwreck Kelly. While we are at it we may as well tell you two other twosomes we saw at our Derby visit: Jane Wyman and Billy Seymour, Ida Lupino and hubby, Louis Hayward. You wouldn't consider it news, would you, if we said that Joan Bennett was there with Walter Wanger. . . . Patsy Kelly doesn't go in so strong for twosomes, she had a whole swarm of guests at her Swanee Inn party. And by the way, Bob Lewis is planning an anniversary party at the Swanee for the 21st, which sounds like a humdinger, with all old friends rushing to volunteer. . . . Ever youthful Marcella Burke, looked the proper matron at the Seven Seas when her daughter Mary Alice entertained in honor of Bruce Lester, English actor.

APPRECIATION NOTE: You would have thought it was something to hear Alice Faye's applause at the La Conga for "Spike" Featherstone's arrangement of her pet song, "I Promise You." Incidentally, on the same night that we were at the La Conga we learned that Walter Batchellor really has the honor of signing the first featured player contract for Charles Rogers' picture, "The Star Maker," the previous deals of course only including the one for Bing Crosby's services, and a number of agreements for youngsters on whom Charlie is going to gamble. . . . Joe Sullivan is back at the Hawaiian Paradise after a siege of the flu.

* * *

AVIATION DEPARTMENT: Dick Purcell is planning to fly East next week with his friend, Eddie Norris, providing the latter has his Department of Commerce permit by that time. Eddie, who has 4550 flying hours to his credit now, was telling the news between rhumbas at the Bamba Club. . . . The Jade is getting quite a play from tourists hoping to see their favorite screen stars. . . . John Steinberg's Victor Hugo is getting quite a play for Joaquin Garry, popular Mexican singer, who has his own rendition of Ferdinand the Bull.

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“Son of Frankenstein” (Universal)

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COOLEY-ULLMAN

- Now in England for Argyle Productions
“Dark Eyes of London”
 - Returning Immediately for Universal.
-

"Within the Law" Outdated Story

M. G. M.
(EST. 70%)

Producer Lou Ostrow
Director Gustav Machaty
Screenplay Charles Lederer,
Edith Fitzgerald
Based on play by Bayard Veiller
Featured: Ruth Hussey, Tom Neal, Paul Kelly,
William Gargan, Paul Cavanagh, Rita
Johnson, Samuel S. Hinds, Lynn Carver,
Sidney Blackmer, Jo Ann Sayers, Ann
Morris, James Burke, Donald Douglas,
Cliff Clark, Claude King, Frank Orth.
Photographer Charles Lawton
Musical Director Dr. William Axt
Film Editor George Boemler
Time 65 Minutes

"Within The Law" is outdated, and this new MGM version might just as well be chalked up as an experiment to spend \$200,000 to prove that fact. The experiment succeeded. First of all there is nothing of marquee value present anywhere in the cast; second, the story value was worn out before the World War.

We really believe that MGM will be willing to give you a break on your contracts with this one, because it almost seems clear that the money was spent to give a new director importation, Gustav Machaty, an opportunity to show whether he could direct American pictures, and Ruth Hussey, a chance to show that she can act. Machaty comes through with an adequate job that would be accepted in the Republic and Monogram ranks; Miss Hussey comes through with a great trouping job in the meaty old role, but when all is said and done, all that can be said is: "So what?"

We have a suspicion that they didn't give this Machaty a square deal. He rates pretty high in Europe—and his "Ecstasy" made quite a few dollars for exhibitors. So why give him a down the river assignment? Or, maybe we are all wrong, and \$200,000 doesn't mean anything to MGM but exercise.

If you want to be reminded of the story which was so powerful in those dear dead days

beyond recall, it concerns the girl shipped off to prison for a minor offense because of the oppressive methods of a department store owner. Back in 1914 it was hot stuff—department store owners were ogres and little girls who worked in the stores were always in the most terrible danger. Then, in case your memory is slipping, we will remind you that the girl coming out of prison, sets out to get her revenge—and do it all "within the law."

It all moves so machine-like that one is forced to decide that we must have been nice children in 1914.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: " 'Within the Law' is strictly schedule filler. It has the feeling of supplying a needed niche in the program. And it does just that."

VARIETY: "Perhaps a new generation of theatergoers has come into being since 'Within the Law' last took cinematic wing. If so, perhaps this remake will serve its members as adequate farce."

"Heritage of the Desert" Good Zane Grey

PARAMOUNT
(EST. 75%)

Producer Harry Sherman
Associate Producer J. D. Trop
Director Lesley Selander
Screenplay Norman Houston
Based on novel by Zane Grey
Additional Dialog Harrison Jacobs
Featured: Donald Woods, Evelyn Venable, Russel Hayden, Robert Barrat, Sidney Toler, C. Henry Gordon, Willard Robertson, Paul Guilfoyle, Paul Fix, John Miller, Reginald Barlow.
Photographer Russell Harlan
Musical Score Victor Young
Art Director Lewis J. Rachmil
Film Editor Sherman Rose
Time 73 Minutes

"Heritage of the Desert" will be compelled to stand on Zane Grey's name and its box office draw, and that has its values. In addition, after you get them into the theatre, they will find an outdoor picture with most of the values of outdoor subjects, plus an intelligence

in direction and writing that lift it just a bit for your program purposes above a routine western booking.

They will also find good performances from Donald Woods and Evelyn Venable in the romantic roles, with a picture stealing performance contributed by Sidney Toler in the comedy part. Robert Barrat is happily a bit more restrained than usual as a stern Simon Legree sort of father to Miss Venable while the always reliable C. Henry Gordon contributes a good heavy performance.

Woods is cast as the tenderfoot going to the desert to learn what is happening to a cattle ranch which he has inherited and which represents his only remaining possessions. There is the usual encounter with the heavy in which he is left for dead, and the expected situation follows in which Miss Venable nurses him back to health. From there on things start happening in approved action fashion.

It is the treatment by director and writer, plus an outstanding job of photography by Russell Harlan that creates an atmosphere and a climax for the entire production, which count in the picture rather than the routine elements of plot.

Associate Producer J. D. Trop has turned in a good contribution for the Sherman-Paramount subjects. Les Selander and Norman Houston did the directing and writing jobs, respectively.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: "Here is a picture whose production manifestly, from the outset, was aimed at a new approach to the western theme, the injection of a quality of depth and significance. So thoroughly was this achieved that it emerges as an outdoor drama of the top rank."

VARIETY: "Combining believable drama with an abundance of thrilling action, the whole mounted against natural beauty of Arizona wastelands, 'Heritage of the Desert' will more than satisfy sagebrusher enthusiasts."

"Danger Island" Above Average Mr. Moto

20th CENTURY-FOX
(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer John Stone
Director Herbert L. Leeds
Screenplay Peter Milne
Story Ideas John Reinhardt, George Bricker
Novel John W. Vandercook
Character created by J. P. Marquard
Star Peter Lorre
Featured: Jean Hersholt, Amanda Duff, Warren Hymer, Richard Lane, Leon Ames, Douglas Dumbrille, Charles D. Brown, Paul Harvey, Robert Lawery, Eddie Marr, Harry Woods.
Photographer Lucien Andriot
Art Director Richard Day, Chester Gore
Musical Director Samuel Kaylin
Film Editor Harry Reynolds
Time 64 minutes

With Warren Hymer moved into the front line trenches for full spotlighted exposition of his comedy talents, "Mr. Moto on Danger Island" takes rank as one of the better numbers of this series. Peter Lorre is his usual

capable self, but the combination with Hymer takes away some of the necessity of high pressure melodramatics, and the laughs help the audience values.

Also present, is a good script job by Peter Milne, from a story idea provided by John Reinhardt and George Bricker. Add to this the direction capably handled by Herbert Leeds and the picture ranks as extremely satisfying in its class.

This time it seems that the United States Government is having a tough time stopping the smuggling of diamonds by way of Porto Rico, with the Diamond Dealers Association also worried. Uncle Sam lets the Association put Mr. Moto on the case, following the murder of one investigator.

About everything that could happen in an action way follows, from fights to chases via motorboat, before Jean Hersholt is unmasked as the villain. Since no one should suspect

Doctor Dafoe as a heavy, the solution comes with its share of surprise.

In addition to the presence of Hymer and Hersholt—the latter playing his final role on the Twentieth Century contract—balance of the cast is also well above previous Moto standards. All in all, a good job from the production hands of John Stone, in the Sol Wurtzel unit.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:
REPORTER: "Twentieth has cut down its quota of murders for Mr. Moto to solve in 'Danger Island' and, as a result, the picture shapes up as better than average in the series. Its lack of complicated plot structure and intelligent handling of situations makes it very interesting fare."

VARIETY: "Moto series takes on new significance with this one, which is laid against Porto Rican background. Guttier by far than its predecessors, current offering hits new high in action, comedy and performances."

"I'm From Missouri" Okay for Burns

PARAMOUNT
(EST. 90%)

Producer Paul Jones
 Director Theodore Reed
 Screenplay John C. Moffitt, Duke Atteberry
 Stories Homer Croy, Julian Street
 Star Bob Burns
 Featured: Gladys George, Gene Lockhart, Judith Barrett, William Henry, Patricia Morrison, E. E. Clive, Melville Cooper, William Collier, Sr., Lawrence Grossmith, George P. Huntley, Doris Lloyd, Tom Dugan, Dennie Moore, James Burke, Ethel Griffies.
 Photographer Merritt Gerstad
 Art Director Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick
 Dances LeRoy Prinz
 Film Editor Archie Marshek
 Time 77 minutes

Paramount is having a difficult time establishing Bob Burns as a solo star, and "I'm From Missouri" is not exactly the answer.

There are plenty of laughs in the picture, particularly when Bob Burns is on the screen. There are other laughs when the producers reach for the slappiest of slapstick hooley.

But weakness of story basis, and a limping screenplay put a severe burden on Producer Paul Jones and Director Ted Reed. Every time they seem to get started someplace, one of the three near plots in the picture gets in the way

of the laughs and they stumble around for awhile.

The story is a combination of the rural stuff for which Bob is best fitted, the wife with social ambitions formula, and several reels of "So This Is London." Principal interest should concentrate on Bob Burns, anxious to save the mule industry of Missouri. For some reason or other there is a boy and girl love story entering and occasionally taking space, and when all else fails there is always good old slapstick.

The picture will satisfy in a general way, principally because Director Reed must have realized what he had, so he skillfully pounded home all the laughs he could get. He gets plenty. But Paramount will have to try again to find the correct Bob Burns formula, and the next time at least get a script that does not stutter.

The story starts in a rural Missouri county where Burns, local banker, is the sole hope of his neighbors to save them from bankruptcy as the result of a falling market in mules. After an episode in Kansas City, where Burns presents his own prize mule, we shift to London because Bob has been informed he can unload all the mules in Missouri on the British Army.

Gladys George does a very capable job, playing Burns' wife who goes society. We then get the expected gags in the clash between the social climber with a mule loving husband and her aspirations for British society. Every now and then we must come back to plot because Bob must sell those mules. Every now and then we are also reminded that a girl, Bob's daughter, and a boy are present in the story.

Reed has handled individual scenes, particularly Burns, for top laughs. E. E. Clive is a standout in support and a great help to the proceedings. The balance of the cast is excellent.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The picture will head into good business, for it has plenty of so-called production values and enough humor to win laughs from the average crowd. And it introduces enough of the hokey stuff to keep things moving briskly to the end."

VARIETY: "A Missouri yankee goes to the equivalent of King Arthur's court for a heavily farced and amusing variant of the Mark Twain fable. Homespun stuff with a slapstick flourish done to order for the Bob Burns brand of drollery."

"Sudden Money" Satisfactory Dualler

PARAMOUNT
(EST. 70%)

Associate Producer William C. Thomas
 Director Nick Grinde
 Screenplay Lewis Foster
 Based on play by Milton Lazarus
 Featured: Charles Ruggles, Marjorie Rambeau, Charley Grapewin, Broderick Crawford, Billy Lee, Evelyn Keyes, Philip Warren, Joyce Matthews, Richard Denning, Mary Parker, Richard Tucker, James Burke, Charles Halton, Ethel Wales, Alex Melesh, John Kelly, Homer Dickinson, Joe Yule, Billy Engle, Douglas Wood, Eddie Marr, Mack Gray, Donald Kerr, William B. Davidson, Stanley Price, Dick Elliott, Robert Brister.
 Photographer Henry Sharp
 Art Directors Hans Dreier, Robert Odell
 Dances LeRoy Prinz
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Film Editor Ellsworth Hoagland
 Time 60 minutes

With Charles Ruggles and Marjorie Rambeau teamed, Paramount delivers one of those family pictures in "Sudden Money" which will fill a satisfactory spot on any double bill.

It has all the tried and true family humor, with a good proportion of slap-stick that will not be objected to in this type of picture.

Direction by Nick Grinde and screenplay by Lewis Foster are at their best in keeping the action bubbling and getting the best from a group of troupers who know what farce is and how to deliver it. Ruggles runs the full gamut of his dependable mannerisms. Miss Rambeau makes an effective partner and Broderick Crawford is present for a very meaty role as the uncle of the family. A youngster, Billy Lee, turns in a good job while adequate romantic interest is supplied by Evelyn Keyes and Philip Warren, with Charley Grapewin a laconic grandpa.

The story has a good spring board in that it takes one of the usual screwy screen families and dumps in their lap a large sweepstakes prize. Immediately the family is reorganized along lines catering to the suppressed desires of each member. Papa Ruggles had always hoped to cultivate his talents as a trap drummer, Mama

was certain she had the artistic touch for painting, and Crawford has been making paper bets on the horses for years and has found a system which he has never been able to play with real cash. They all go to town with the expected results that the house of cards tumbles and then that cheerful moral that so many pictures give us today, they discover they were better off when they were poor. So all ends happily.

Associate Producer Bill Thomas has put the elements together in Nick Grinde and the present cast to have what can probably prove a very satisfactory series.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Designed for second position on dualers, 'Sudden Money' satisfactorily fits that niche. It's good clean fun, ably constructed, and dotted with lines and business that open gates to well-spaced laughs."

REPORTER: "Paramount's 'Sudden Money' begins as hilarious slapstick and is nicely on its way, but it makes an unfortunate switch and tries to deliver farce in a subtle manner."

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BOX OFFICE Says You Are Worth!

«

—and the only service in the industry which gives you the authentic box office value of every individual associated with the making of motion pictures is the

»

DIGEST'S BOX OFFICE ANNUAL



Warner

Baxter

A TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX PRODUCTION

'Wife, Husband and Friend'

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 8.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, MARCH 27, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 10 CENTS

"STAGECOACH" TOPS WEEK AT BOX OFFICES

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REVIEWS: "WUTHERING HEIGHTS" WEEK'S LEADER

SEE PAGE 11

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NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

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THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **UNITED ARTISTS** Wins With
"STAGECOACH"—130%

Story
ERNEST HAYCOX

Screenplay
DUDLEY NICHOLS

Photographer
BERT GLENNON

Art Direction
ALEXANDER TOLUBOFF

Musical Direction
RICHARD HAGEMAN
FRANK HARLING
JOHN LEOPOLD
LEO SHUKEN

Film Editors
DOROTHY SPENCER
WALTER REYNOLDS



Producer-Director
JOHN FORD

Featured

ANDY DEVINE

JOHN CARRADINE

THOMAS MITCHELL

GEORGE BANCROFT

LOUISE PLATT

DONALD MEEK

BERTON CHURCHILL

TIM HOLT

CHRIS MARTIN



Producer
WALTER WANGER



CLAIRE TREVOR



JOHN WAYNE



NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

AMERICAN FLAG NOSEDIVES

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

A few pictures, currently showing up in the box office reports, may be pointing a very important lesson and warning to Hollywood production executives.

The principal surprise is "Let Freedom Ring."

It is doing terrifically disappointing figures when one considers what should be the standard box office draw of Leo the Lion in any seven reels of semi-epic celluloid. Not to forget, Nelson Eddy.

Other pictures of the same type are proving equally disappointing, and they are pictures that have that star without price—THE AMERICAN FLAG.

* * *

When the American Flag does a nosedive at the box office it is time to do a little checking up.

Can it be possible that Hollywood does not know how to wave the American Flag — that Hollywood technique is such that the Flag gets in the customer's hair?

Or is there a possibility that, since the nation is not yet at war, the box office customers are still attending picture theaters in search of ENTERTAINMENT? — and do their own Americanizing at home, without the cost of a theater ticket?

Or—

Is it just possible that the cash customers of the nation at large, always jealous of publicized Hollywood high salaries, of its swimming pools, race horses, and convenient divorces—

Is just a bit resentful of being told in dumb, dull, dugger phrases by that same Hollywood how to be a patriotic AMERICAN?

Could there be any possible chance that most of our cash customers already consider themselves pretty good Americans?

* * *

Think it over boys, and watch your step.

Warner Brothers secured almost a monopoly on Americanism on the screen—by

being FIRST. As they have been on so many trends.

But Warners confined their semi-educational Americanism to their short subjects, and let the features ride as entertainment. In other words, if a "Wings of the Navy" gave you an American thrill, so much the better, but no one told you off that screen that YOU should be an American.

Warners made Americanism popular, but—as with followers in the creation of women's fashions—the second division of the parade is not marching as smartly.

Too many of the lame brains are saying, when stuck for spot on a story, "Let's put some Americanism in here."

Sometimes it finishes as in "Zenobia" with "Let's have a colored boy recite the Declaration of Independence. That will wow 'em—and make all those hilly billys east of Santa Anita better Americans."

Yes—it will wow them, and make better Americans of the exhibitor's cash customers in Savannah, or Atlanta, or Charleston. Huh?

Maybe *The Digest* can save this industry untold headaches and a few millions if we sound the warning:

Keep on making ENTERTAINMENT!

Even the American Flag won't save you if you don't give the customers ENTERTAINMENT.

And—

Even an American Flag can HURT—if it is rubbed in your hair, and your nose.

There is a lot of Americanism scattered over these United States. It is not confined to Hollywood. (God help us, if it was.) Let's give the rest of the nation a break—

let's give them a grudging admission that maybe they are Americans too. Without needing our pap and pabulah.

Besides—they are our cash CUSTOMERS. If they stop spending the cash with us, how well will our Americanism stand the strain?

Maybe it isn't a question of our Americanism—but rather of our intelligence. Huh?

Distributors Batting Average For 1939

		Releases	%
1.	M. G. M.	45	103
2.	20th Century-Fox	52	92
3.	United Artists	17	92
4.	Paramount	40	88
5.	Warner Brothers	53	87
6.	R. K. O.	39	83
7.	Columbia	33	80
8.	Universal	39	77
9.	Republic	25	73
10.	Monogram	14	69
11.	Grand National	4	66
12.	Gaumont British	10	59

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: "ALEXANDER BELL" GOES RAGTIME; DIRECTORS CINCH THE THRONE

Darryl Zanuck Leads A Parade

Definitely, to us, the Highlight of this week is Darryl Zanuck's trek to the San Francisco Fair at the head of a parade that includes the column filling press of the nation—and many foreign ports, including the Scandinavian. We say this without concern as to the obvious importance of the picture "Alexander Graham Bell," which is the reason for the trip, without regard to the glories of the Fair. We say it is a Highlight because it gives such concrete evidence of SHOWMANSHIP—of an executive not satisfied to merely make the product, but ready to go to bat with every possible angle of SHOWMANSHIP to pre-sell the product. . . . We are trying to crowd a lot of sense into a few words, so maybe we can put it better by starting primer wise:

These Are The Days For SELLING

So, primer-wise, we begin this way: Picture business in general domestically is not healthy, and abroad, except for England, it is mummified. Now there are two ways of meeting that condition if you are a Hollywood executive. You can sit back and say, "Well, we'll give them the best pictures we know how to make—and if they can't sell 'em, that's their fault." And there is another way. Another executive can start out with the same phrases about making the best pictures he can, but he might follow up somewhat like this: "But, hell, conditions are tough this year. Let's see what we can do to PRE-SELL the show—build-up before the picture is even started; ballyhoo every day it is in the works; a grand slam when it is finished. And all from some different SHOW angle, not just a lot of hooey about our master minded epic makers." . . . Those are the two attitudes. The difference in results is just the difference in the method used. When general business is on such thin ice that a blizzard in New York or a headache in Chicago can mean a difference of two, three, or more hundred thousands to a gross, surely the handwriting on the wall is a twenty-four sheet. . . . And apparently this Zanuck boy is not going to be caught napping. He pushed Technicolor into "Jesse James," "Kentucky," and "The Little Princess"—and all for the purpose of SELLING. He built up a pre-production campaign on "Jesse James" that had a ticket sold in every hamlet. He brought the Governor of Kentucky with accompanying newspaper, magazine and newsreel space to Hollywood for "Kentucky." That's playing ball with the exhibitor by socking a three-bagger to start each inning. It then remains for the picture and the exhibitor to bring the run home. . . . We know that a director with Irving Cummings' consistency will have a picture in "Alexander Graham Bell." So that brings it down to the exhibitor. . . . The current expe-

4 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was	Now
1. The Beachcomber	PAR	109	111
2. Topper Takes A Trip	UA	103	105
3. Off The Record	WAR	83	85
4. North of Shanghai	COL	69	71

dition to San Francisco will blast newspaper and magazine columns the world over for "Alexander Graham Bell." Well, as one exhibitor to another, what will you give for a picture that has a pretty good block of seats sold in your town even before you know the booking date?

The Director Wins His Points

That able group of skippers who cluster on the Screen Directors Guild bridge has steered the craft to an amicable settlement of differences with producers and we now understand all is hunky dory. A satisfactory solution was found for the status of the assistant directors and unit managers, whom the big boys took under their wing, and a definite understanding was reached about the part the director plays in the preparation, casting, and final editing of his picture. . . . A happy result, but not surprising. The top executives realize that the director is making the pictures these days; the directors realize that the top executives are supplying the ideas, the material, the showmanship, and the money needed to make the pictures. Some companies were wrong because, after paying a director good money and getting all he had to make a picture, they treated him like a case of leprosy when his infant got to the cutting room. Some organizations have associate producers whose incompetence builds up a wealth of funny fables for after-dinner telling, but which don't hearten a director squeezing his cardiac organ to get a picture up there on the screen in spite of hell-anhighwater. Intelligent maneuvering on the part of both sides brought the proposition to a "Happy Days" conclusion. . . . Now for more better pictures. We need 'em. And if we are going to get 'em it will only be through that combination of the real top executives and the real top directors. They are the boys who really worry.

9 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

		Was	Now
1. Idiot's Delight	MGM	138	136
2. Cafe Society	PAR	102	97
3. Let Freedom Ring	MGM	111	92
4. Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	91	86
5. Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	79	76
6. Boy Slaves	RKO	78	75
7. Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	77	75
8. Disbarred	PAR	76	73
9. Boy Trouble	PAR	67	63

Too Much Of A Very Good Thing

The industry is going to be sorry about that move of Sam Goldwyn's which brought Jimmy Roosevelt into a vice president's chair just in time to find it labelled "Defendant" in the Government anti-trust suit. . . . There are a million political hawks around the country just waiting now for any sign of conciliation on the part of the Government, any sign that maybe Uncle Sam and the industry can get together and settle the problem without court action. At any sign of intelligence these hawks will just jump to the letter-writers columns of the papers with loud haw-haws about how the picture business gave the Duce's son a job to save itself. Funny part about the whole thing, is that Sam is very seriously suing United Artists himself right now. And funnier still, is the fact that Sam is the industry's prize individualist, and has fought and ranted more against mechanistic selling methods than any man in the industry—that is, any man spending his own good coin. (We remember one 2 A.M. session when Sam wanted us to blast the Reporter headlines the next morning with the fact that he was buying tents to show his current picture, rather than knuckle under to monopoly. Gosh, he really bought some tents, too). But try and get those aspects of the case to the public.

Rambling Around The Studio Corners

We should hear any day now that Harry Cohn has closed his option on Howard Hawks services as a producer-director for next year's line-up. Then, with Wes Ruggles, Frank Lloyd and other producer-director set-ups planned by the wily Cohn, he can sit back and smile at the world. Incidentally, the underground says that Hawks has quite a picture in the one just completed. . . . Speaking of the underground, the boys who saw sneak previews of "East Side of Heaven" in the north in the past two weeks are reckless in their enthusiasm over this David Butler-Bing Crosby picture. If this is correct, what a break for Universal to have "Frankenstein," "You Can't Cheat an Honest Man," "Three Smart Girls," and now another top one all in a row. Sort of belated justice from the gods. . . . E. B. Derr is winding up his Monogram distribution deal, and signs point to his taking the Crime Club spot on the Universal list. Derr, with an able production unit headed by Frank Melford, has done wonders with a short-short budget—because he knows stories and the "intelligent" touch, no matter what the budget. He could fill a good spot up there at the "U" with a little more money to spend. . . . George Yohalem joins the "U" on an associate producer tag. We worked close to George long enough to be able to put our pontifical okay on that one.

JOHN FORD'S "STAGECOACH" RIDING HIGH AS BOX OFFICE DISAPPOINTS ON MANY PICTURES

By NORMAN WEBB

U.A.—2 New Releases

United Artists have two new releases this week, one truly a box office sensation while the second is just getting by.

John Ford's "STAGECOACH" has opened in over 35 key city situations from coast to coast and is doing exceptionally fine business at 130% average, which is very unusual indeed for what is essentially a western, on its first runs, and also considering that there are no outstanding marquee names in the cast.

John Wayne plays the male lead in this, his first big epic, and Claire Trevor, who was featured by Fox for over six years, comes into her own as the feminine lead. John Ford, long one of the screen's foremost directors, certainly deserves considerable credit for bringing this picture in under \$700,000 when it is already estimated that the picture will gross approximately twice that amount on its domestic returns alone.

"STAGECOACH" is one of the few pictures with western atmosphere ever to be booked into the Radio City Music Hall, where business was so outstanding that this picture was held for a second week, which has also been the case in many other key cities. Needless to say, if "STAGECOACH" is running 130% on its first runs, it will climb considerably higher when it hits the "nabes" and smaller towns, where this type of picture is so popular.

United Artists' other release this week, "KING OF THE TURF," 80%, is the second production to come from the newly acquired Edward Small unit, and like his first one, "THE DUKE OF WEST POINT," is only doing fair business, because of the lack of marquee names. The other United Artists producers, Goldwyn, Selznick, Wanger, Roach, etc., stress more the importance of stars in their casts. On the other hand, Eddie Small is endeavoring to sell his production value and story, and while his pictures have been well received by the critics, still they are not good seat-sellers because there are no big star names to bring the ticket buyers in.

"KING OF THE TURF" is really one of the season's best horse racing pictures, but aside from Adolphe Menjou and Dolores Costello, who are both only fair draws, the balance of the cast is practically unknown. Al Green very capably directed this human interest story from George Bruce's original screenplay.

WARNERS—1 New One

Warner Brothers new release this week is another glorified western, "THE OKLAHOMA KID," starring James Cagney. This picture has opened in a number of first-run spots and is only running around 113%, which is considerably below Cagney's recent pictures.

While this picture has been produced on more or less of an epic scale,

Of Ten New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%; Three Were Okay; and Four Average.

still the story is loosely jointed, and thus fails to hold interest. However, this one will probably do much better when it hits the stick houses as it is not particularly a good first-run attraction, because of its lack of feminine appeal.

Sam Bischoff produced and Lloyd Bacon is responsible for the loose direction.

MGM—1 New Release

MGM also has one new release this week, "THE ICE FOLLIES OF 1939," which serves as Joan Crawford's latest starring vehicle. Due to the fact that Miss Crawford's popularity has waned considerably in the past year, her footage has been reduced in this one, with other members of the cast being played up stronger, yet the picture is only averaging around 109% on its first bookings.

James Stewart, Lew Ayres, Lewis Stone, Lionel Stander, and the skating stars of the International Ice Follies make up the balance of the cast. Harry Rapf produced and one of MGM's new directors, Reinhold Schunzel, handled the megaphone. Leonard Praskins wrote the original and also collaborated on the screenplay with Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf.

RKO—1 New One

RKO's famous Doug Corrigan picture, "THE FLYING IRISHMAN," has finally been released and so far is just getting by at around 82%, which is considerably below what the RKO officials had estimated.

When Corrigan made his famous hop across the Atlantic some eight or nine months ago, he was front page news and if Pan Berman had put the picture into production on Corrigan's return to Hollywood, this picture would undoubtedly have gone over much better, but now that Corrigan is yesterday's news, the parade is passed and we doubt if this picture will do any better on its future bookings. Naturally, in aviation centers, exhibitors can

expect a little better business on this one. The picture is good entertainment.

Due to the fact that "THE FLYING IRISHMAN" is more of a man's picture, exhibitors should book it with another picture that has considerable feminine appeal.

Besides Wrong Way Corrigan, others in the cast are Paul Kelly, Robert Armstrong, and Eddie Quillan. Leigh Jason directed capably from Ernest Pagano and Dalton Trumbo's script.

PARAMOUNT—1 New Release

Paramount's only new release this week is a fairly amusing comedy, "NEVER SAY DIE," 81%, which will probably get by in those houses where Martha Raye still means something at the box office, which according to recent figures, are not so many.

Realizing that Miss Raye has slipped considerably during the past year, Paramount has backed her up with a good supporting cast in this one, including Bob Hope, who is co-starred, Andy Devine, Gale Sondergaard, and Sig Rumann. But as these names are not particularly strong, "NEVER SAY DIE" will probably have to be double billed in most instances. Paul Jones produced and Elliott Nugent directed.

COLUMBIA—1 New Release

Columbia this week has a new Larry Darmour production, "WHISPERING ENEMIES," 78%, which is the latest in the Jack Holt starring series. In western or action houses, this one will probably do better, while in other houses it will stand up double billed with a stronger feminine attraction.

Dolores Costello and Addison Richards top the supporting cast and Lew Collins directed.

FOX—1 New Release

Twentieth Century-Fox has another routine programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, entitled "INSIDE STORY," 75%, which is the last of the Roving Reporter-Michael Whalen series. Jean Rogers, John King, and Jane Darwell are featured. Howard Green supervised and Ricardo Cortez directed.

MONOGRAM—Also 1 Release

Fay Wray, long absent from the screen, returns in a new Monogram programmer, "NAVY SECRETS," 71%, which is just a fair picture that may get by on the average double bill, on account of its timely title. Grant Withers and Craig Reynolds head the supporting cast. William Lackey supervised for Scott Dunlap and Howard Bretherton directed.

UNIVERSAL—1 Weak One

Universal Pictures have delivered their weakest picture of the year in "THE SPIRIT OF CULVER," which

(Continued on Page 11)

10 New Releases Not In Last Issue

3 Over 100%.....3 O. K.....4 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Stagecoach	UA	130	120
2. Oklahoma Kid	WAR	113	115
3. Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	109	120
4. The Flying Irishman	RKO	82	90
5. Never Say Die	PAR	85	90
6. King of the Turf	UA	80	90
7. Whispering Enemies	COL	78	80
8. Inside Story	FOX	75	75
9. Navy Secrets	MONO	71	75
10. Spirit of Culver	UNIV	64	85

The Digest Announces . . .

A NEW FIELD SERVICE

THE DIGEST is happy to announce the closing of contracts by which Harry E. Nichols will join its organization as a Field Investigator.

Harry E. Nichols has been talking to—for—and with—exhibitors for twenty-five years. Starting with a great old publication long deceased—“MOTOGRAPHY”—and continuing on through twenty years with Martin Quigley’s organizations—EXHIBITORS HERALD and MOTION PICTURE HERALD—he has travelled the country listening to exhibitors.

He can tell you more reasons why your picture is getting top money, medium money or flopping—RIGHT FROM THE CASH TILL—than most company accountants. He hears the dirt from the Dust Bowl.

He is one of those fellows who can meet Jack Warner and finish with reminiscences about Youngstown, Ohio, or this or that Pittsburgh town; who can meet Louis Mayer and have a laugh over the first interview he had with an aspiring new partner in a First National franchise deal in Boston. He can—well, he can’t hit a town in this country without meeting an exhibitor friend. FRIEND!

He is now starting out, as chief of The Digest’s field staff, on a cross country trip that will bring back to Hollywood a lot of low down information on why

pictures, stars, and companies click—or fail to click. He is primarily working on The Digest Box Office Report Service, but will additionally send back many pertinent editorial ideas.

Harry—who travels with his own trailer-deluxe-office—told us why he wanted to join THE DIGEST organization: He said:



“I have just covered six thousand miles by trailer and good luck, talking to exhibitors. I have had so many independent exhibitors, exchange bookers, and circuit heads ask me what I knew about this DIGEST that it got in my hair, and I decided to investigate. Listening to them I decided it must be the only publication in the industry which is talking the exhibi-

tor’s language. Since I got to Hollywood I found out that it apparently also talks the picture-maker’s language.

“Well—that’s the paper for which I am going to go out and service on the highways and the byways. There are so many things that the exhibitor would like to tell to Hollywood, and so many things Hollywood would like to hear in straight from the shoulder language from the exhibitor—that THE DIGEST is the spot for me.”

So—we give you—exhibitors and picture makers—Harry E. Nichols. You’ll be hearing from him.

Robert E. Welsh

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

John Ford

D i r e c t e d

A WALTER WANGER PRODUCTION ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ for release by United Artists

“STAGECOACH”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK



Claire Trevor

plays
"DALLAS"

Management HARRY WURTZEL Agency

A WALTER WANGER PRODUCTION ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ for release by United Artists

"STAGECOACH"

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK



John Wayne

My sincere thanks to Mr. Wanger and Mr. John Ford for the opportunity of playing the Ringo Kid in "Stagecoach."

plays
"THE RINGO KID"

Exclusive Management LEO MORRISON, Inc.

A WALTER WANGER PRODUCTION ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ for release by United Artists

"STAGECOACH"

"Hound of Baskervilles" Standard Thriller

20th CENTURY-FOX

(EST. 90%)

Producer Darryl Zanuck
Associate Producer Gene Markey
Director Sidney Lanfield
Original Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Screenplay Ernest Pascal
Stars: Richard Greene, Basil Rathbone, Wendy Barrie.

Featured: Nigel Bruce, Lionel Atwill, John Carradine, Barlowe Borland, Beryl Mercer, Morton Lowry, Ralph Forbes, E. E. Clive, Eily Malyon, Nigel de Brulier, Mary Gordon, Peter Willes, Ivan Simpson, Ian MacLaren, John Burton, Dennis Green, Evan Thomas.

Photographer Peverell Marley
Art Director Richard Day, Hans Peters
Musical Director Cyril J. Mockridye
Film Editor Robert Simpson
Time 78 minutes

There is an inherent eerie quality about Conan Doyle's "Baskerville" story that would inevitably make any picture based upon it a fairly safe bet as program thriller entertainment. American exhibitors however, will have to sell the fact to adolescents that "Baskervilles" means Sherlock Holmes—and then emphasize Sherlock Holmes for all they are worth.

As a picture making job "The Hound of the Baskervilles" comes as close to being a good London-made picture as any American studio is apt to turn out this year. In stodginess of screenplay construction and static talkiness of many scenes it measures up with London's best.

So the exhibitor will also have to figure that he is selling a British picture made in Hollywood, with marquee names not much stronger than the average British picture would give him.

The tip-off on the story construction is that

CURRENT REVIEWS				
	2 Over 100%.....	1 O. K.	2 Weak	Est. %
1. Wuthering Heights				UA 100
2. Hound of Baskervilles				FOX 90
3. Society Lawyer				MGM 80
4. On Trial				WAR 75
5. Almost A Gentleman				RKO 70

"The Vanishing Lady," a Gaumont-Fox picture, has already played Eastern houses, so an estimate is unnecessary.

if the Conan Doyle story had anything, it had two stars. One was the "Hound," the other was "Sherlock Holmes." The Hound doesn't get enough footage to realize half of his possibilities, while Sherlock Holmes is off the scene for at least two and a half reels in the middle portion of the picture, while we keep in touch with him by means of printed inserts. And so little use is made of Sherlock's immortal astuteness in the solving of the mystery that we don't really think they had to call him in on the case—a dog catcher would have done just as well.

But Twentieth Century has given the picture impressive atmospheric production, and that production quality plus the basic chill of the theme, will carry it through for fair audience satisfaction. Peverell Marley's photographic achievement will help as much as any other factor.

Performances are top hole, as is to be expected from the group of troupers listed in the credits above. Basil Rathbone may be more Basil Rathbone than Sherlock Holmes, but then, every individual is entitled to his own conception of Sherlock Holmes. (In our humble opinion, though, it is a mistake trying to get anywhere with Rathbone in straight roles. For audience purposes he has to be a rat—

whether it is a butler rat, a royal rat, or a relative of Frankenstein's.)

Nigel Bruce, Beryl Mercer, and E. E. Clive—the latter in a small bit—highlight the support, though it is unfair to mention any names in a skilful trouping cast. The picture won't do Richard Greene any good, or any particular harm. Wendy Barrie does the best she can with nothing. Director and scripter are good in spurts.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Play the words "Sherlock Holmes" and the shocker angle on the title and you'll get the customers who buy that. They won't complain.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Hound of the Baskervilles' makes few compromises in establishing itself as an unblushing 'chiller.' It hews straight to the line and spares no bone-rattling in striking out to the end. What few compromises it makes are expressly in the interests of artful performances and somewhat impressionistic scenic embellishments. It thus attaches to itself a Class A feeling throughout, while exerting a sustained appeal to 'horror picture' addicts.

VARIETY: "In eerie atmosphere, mystery, suspense and the promise of goosefleshing melodrama widely associated with the title of Conan Doyle's tale, 'The Hound of Baskervilles' amply fulfills its entertainment expectations."

"On Trial" Okay Dual Fodder

WARNER BROTHERS

(EST. 75%)

Associate Producer Bryan Foy
Director Terry Morse
Dialog Director Ted Thomas
Screenplay Don Ryan
Based on play by Elmer L. Rice
Featured: John Litel, Margaret Lindsay, Edward Norris, Janet Chapman, James Stephenson, Nedda Harrigan, Larry Williams, William Davidson, Earl Dwire, Gordon Hart, Charles Trowbridge, Sidney Bracy, Kenneth Harlan, Vera Lewis, Nat Carr, Stuart Holmes, Cliff Saum, Jack Mower, John Dilson, Loia Cheaney, Edgar Edwards, John Harron.

Photographer L. Wm. O'Connell
Art Director Esdras Hartley
Film Editor James Gibson
Time 62 minutes

Placed in the capable hands of Brynie Foy and his mechanized cavalry, "On Trial" manages to come through as fair satisfactory program fodder, without any more creaking noises than one should expect.

In connection with this pseudo-success, the surprising fact is that Brynie Foy and Company stuck pretty close to the original play, both in plot structure, and in method of treatment.

You will probably remember that this was Elmer Rice's first play which achieved sensational Broadway success because of its flash back method of story telling. If our own memory is any where near correct, we think it was Mary Nash who was the girl on the spot as the revolving stage—a considerable novelty back in 1917—unfolded the story of why a man had confessed to the charge of murder and of the things that had led up to his peril. You will probably also remember that when the jury is dead-locked—bang-bang comes the surprise climax.

The old piece still has its values, the same

audience values that made it a million dollar grosser on the stage. And you can trust the Brynie Foy unit to retain anything good that they can in any of these salvage jobs that they do.

Director Terry Morse turns in a workmanlike job, aided by the presence of that standard home-run brigade of Warner stock players, headed by John Litel.

Summing it up: nothing extra for box offices, okay for audience satisfaction in its proper spot on the bill.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just a run of the mill B drama.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Several items of stellar trouping give 'On Trial' a strong emotional backbone to compensate for its timeworn thematic trappings and dramatic method, and the once sensational Elmer Rice play emerges again as fairly solid top-bill fare."

VARIETY: "When Elmer L. Rice's stage play, 'On Trial,' was harnessed for screen purposes way back in 1927, it was considered great drama, and customers were convinced the cinema actually was moving forward. But when it was remade in 1928, it was looked upon as just another film. Now, in its 1939 version, it comes through merely as mediocre entertainment, suitable only for filler purposes."

THE DIGEST'S
PREVIEWS REALLY

SAY SOMETHING!

"Wuthering Heights" Prestige Picture

UNITED ARTISTS

(EST. 100%)

ProducerSamuel Goldwyn
 DirectorWilliam Wyler
 Screenplay...Charles MacArthur and Ben Hecht
 Based on the novel by.....Charlotte Bronte
 Stars: Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, David Niven.
 Featured: Flora Robson, Donald Crisp, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Hugh Williams, Leo G. Carroll, Cecil Humphreys, Miles Mander, Romaine Callender, Cecil Kellaway, Rex Downing, Sarita Wooton, Douglas Scott, Mme. Alice Ehlers.

PhotographyGregg Toland
 Time110 minutes

"Wuthering Heights" has in its favor that usually hidden ticket buying public that remembers and reveres the near classics of its high school years; it has even more helpfully in its favor, a consummately skilful job of direction by William Wyler. It has, as its handicap, the trite but unavoidable fact that Charlotte Bronte is not living in 1939, nor was her story written for 1939.

So the exhibitor can weigh the factors up according to his own knowledge of his own public. The picture will be a sensational money-maker in England, and wherever the British flag flies; it will be spotty in the United States, and in great measure depend on the exploitation that the exhibitor gives it to uncover those hiding ticket buyers.

But aside from the crudely commercial aspects of an exhibitors review, it is a pleasure to touch on "Wuthering Heights" solely from the viewpoint of its merits as a picture-making job. Which gives opportunity at the outset to say that the genius of young William Wyler as a director is just coming to full flower—and the future glows with marvelous promise.

Wyler takes the archaic Bronte yarn, digs down into its psychopathic phases, and comes up with a love story that holds, and will sell to women. He takes a rather static bit of story exposition, and with deft skill seems to give it motion; he takes a fine group of players and with something of a touch of genius fires them to greater heights than the material warrants. He uses impressive photographic angles, tricks of atmosphere, and every string on the violin.

Sam Goldwyn must be given credit for the intelligent decision to make "Wuthering Heights" closely enough to "Wuthering Heights" so that you won't have to apologize when you dig up those customers from the public library alcoves. If he had tried otherwise he wouldn't have got either the class or the mass audience. But while giving that credit, it must be recorded that the Hecht and MacArthur team didn't turn in anything inspired in the way of a dialogue job. Wyler's treatment keeps the scenes moving, but there are many corny speeches that the playboy twins will probably shrug off on Charlotte Bronte's shoulders. And she, poor gal, is dead.

Performances are great. Laurence Olivier has one of those Victorian age heroic parts that in the hands of less competent a director and less capable an actor could have been one of those "omigosh" parts. But he sells personality off that screen and actually has you watching him while you are not caring an awful lot about just what the story is telling. Merle Oberon is cameo-cut and capable in her role, but the surprise of the picture is this Geraldine Fitzgerald girl whom Warners recently introduced in "Dark Victory." That gal can troupe, and sell.

Other parts are in equally good hands. As a matter of fact, it is a gem of a cast, and one in which no names should be mentioned. And as you watch their performances you just mentally add more and more pounds sterling to the gross from the British market. (You are not supposed to make any deductions for domestic dollars.)

No review would be complete without a deep bow to Gregg Toland's cinematography. He makes those moors a part of the picture; he gives Oberon and others photography that is portrait-like. In fact, it is the "simpatico" between Toland and Wyler that makes the picture's quality. Aided, in good measure, by Arthur Newman's fine music score.

In case you want to know what the story is all about, with apologies to Bronte-MacArthur-Hecht, we'll just tell you that it seems that once a stable boy loved a lady, and when they both grew up he kept on loving her even though she married a gentleman. So he went away from home for a long time and came back with a lot of money just in time to worry the poor girl to death. Yep—that's true. The story must inevitably end with two ghostly figures striding majestically off into nothingness.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: There are spots, particularly New England, where this can go for the extra days—if you put the effort behind it to stir up your local book rememberers. For general runs, watch how you balance the bill. It's heavy.

("What The Other Fellow Said" is omitted because this review has been put in type before the other papers appear. For purposes of record, Variety and Reporter opinions will be given next week.)

"Society Lawyer" Entertaining 'B' Pic

M. G. M.

(EST. 80%)

ProducerJohn W. Considine, Jr.
 DirectorEdwin L. Marin
 Screenplay: Frances Goodrich, Walter Hackett, Leon Gordon, Hugo Butler.
 Based on story by.....Arthur Somers Roche
 StarsWalter Pidgeon, Virginia Bruce
 Featurel: Leo Carrillo, Edward Ciannelli, Lee Bowman, Frances Mercer, Ann Morriss, Herbert Mundin, Frank M. Thomas, Ed Brophy, Tom Kennedy, Clarence Kolb, Pierre Watkin.

PhotographerGeorge Folsey
 Time85 minutes

John W. Considine, Jr., has delivered a neat piece of entertainment to the MGM list in "Society Lawyer." Its box office value will, of course, be set by the pulling power of the top names. And that is not so hot, though we know few featured players who get better audience reactions than Virginia Bruce and Walter Pidgeon. And few supporting players are getting the attention that is being given Edward Ciannelli and Lee Bowman. And then, we also have Leo Carrillo playing Leo Carrillo. Which is pretty good, too.

The picture is a neat blend of underworld, upperworld, and a few dabs of acceptable music. Director Ed Marin has handled it with a skillful hand, keeps it moving, socks it home when he has a top scene to play with.

The story starts somewhere about the point where inserts and flashbacks tell us that Walter Pidgeon has successfully defended Leo Carrillo in the sort of criminal trial on which his staid legal firm—founded by father, and all that, you know—frowns very heavily. Argument over his acting in a criminal trial gets so hot that he resigns, but worse than that, he suddenly loses his fiance. The truth about that gal is that she is not so worried about his dignity, but she has fallen for a boyhood chum, Lee Bowman.

The plot sort of starts stepping on its own toes about this point. (It took four writers to manhandle a screenplay, and you can't be blamed if you feel it should take four reviewers to tell just what did happen. Even-stephen.)

But Marin and a good cast keep it moving, so you don't care an awful lot. And you end very well satisfied. Incidentally, Herbert Mundin helps a lot.

Just in case you might wish to know more of the Arthur Somers Roche pulp yarn we will try to give it in a hurry: Bowman, the rat, has a former girl friend who is sticking around in the wings. Ciannelli, the top rat, has ideas about that girl friend. So on a night on the terrace when all the rats are going to

wash up, Bowman is framed on a murder charge. Pidgeon becomes his lawyer. From there on—

But you don't really care about any more of the story, do you? It is an entertaining, classily made, satisfactory job of program picture making. That's what you wanted to know all the time.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Very acceptable in its proper spot on the program.

("What The Other Fellow Said" is omitted because this review has been put in type before the other papers appear. For purposes of record, Variety and Reporter opinions will be given next week.)

RELEASES of the WEEK
 (Continued from Page 5)

is flopping so badly that it is being cut short on many of its bookings and cancelled in others, with the results that this "special" is only averaging around 64%, which is bad news.

Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew are co-starred. The picture is best suitable for booking on Saturday kiddies' matinees. In the cast are Tim Holt, Henry Hull, and Andy Devine, none of whom sell tickets.

"The Lady Vanishes" Possible Sleeper

GAUMONT BRITISH

Director Alfred Hitchcock
 Screenplay Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder
 Continuity Alma Revelle
 Based on the story by Ethel Lina White
 Featured: Margaret Lockwood, Michael Redgrave, Paul Lukas, Dame May Whitty, Cecil Parker, Linden Travers, Naughton Wayne, Basil Rexford, Mary Clare, Emil Boreo, Catherine Lacey.
 Photographer Jack Cox
 Musical Director Louis Levy
 Film Editor R. E. Dearing
 Time 87 minutes

Alfred Hitchcock is one of the mysteries of this picture business. They were trying to lure Hitchcock from England ten years before his "Thirty-nine Steps" proved such an unusual box office picture. Dave Selznick has him now.

"The Lady Vanishes" is his latest British production. It has no stars or cast names that will mean a nickel to American box offices.

However, the picture has broken already in Eastern cities and is doing a very healthy 90% or so on practically all engagements. So we come back to the mystery, "What has this Hitchcock got?"

As a picture, "The Lady Vanishes" doesn't completely measure up with Hitchcock's "Thirty-nine Steps." It is again a transparent mystery—with all the lack of logic and mechanical contriving that the usual mystery story has—but it keeps moving. And maybe that is the answer to Hitchcock.

This time it is the spy plot, and the plot crosses itself up so often that no one should bother to tell it to any one. But while you are looking at it, Hitchcock keeps it moving, keeps it suspenseful, and a fine cast of British troupers almost make it believable.

Hitchcock uses the "Blue Train" story basis, in which most of the action takes place with a "Grand Hotel" effect in one of those cross Europe expresses that we mystery addicts know so well, because it seems that never does one

of them leave a station without a murder on its time table.

The Hitchcock skill keeps suspense and straight hokum-juggling moving for most of the footage and then climbs up to a bang-bang finish.

All in all, a bet worthwhile for exhibitors to consider. As we have said, there are no American marquee names in the cast, but the picture is already selling itself in Eastern cities. So you can use your own judgment, since you know your city better than we do.

Booking suggestion: You probably get this at a price and it has entertainment values to hold up a stronger marquee picture.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is a very British affair of the international spy mystery school, with a definite question mark as to the extent of its appeal to American audiences as a whole."

VARIETY: "Another British triumph from the directorial and photographic standpoint, but just how it will fare with American audiences is problematical."

"Almost a Gentleman" Has a Dog

R. K. O.
(EST. 70%)

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
 Producer Cliff Reid
 Director Leslie Goodwins
 Screenplay David Silverstein, Joe Pagano
 Story Harold Shumate
 Featured: James Ellison, Helen Wood, Robert Kent, June Clayworth, Robert Warwick, Leonard Penn, John Wray, Brandon Tynan, Earle Hodgins, Harlan Briggs, Ace, the Wonder Dog.
 Photographer J. Roy Hunt
 Art Director Van Nest Polglase
 Film Editor Desmond Marquette
 Time 64 minutes

Strictly for the Saturday matinee trade, "Almost A Gentleman" will be okay for the exhibitors looking for pictures to fill that spot. Because the star is a dog and the dog is a star.

For regular booking purposes its only spot is when the top picture on your bill is so good that you are not very much concerned about what the adults think of the other picture.

There are humans in the cast, but they get little opportunity trying to keep pace with Ace, a police dog who has what it takes. Particularly for you to get some extra nickels from those Saturday kiddies.

The spring board for the story is in the rescue of Ace from pending death in a city pound by a human being who is also in danger of death because of a framed up charge of murder. The boys who did the script turned in a pretty good job with this basis, for action that finds the dog running gangsters down, digging up evidence, and even settling a few human-being quarrels. Director Les Goodwins had a tough assignment, particularly for a modest budget picture, but came through with all the law and the idea would allow.

It hasn't got the thrill of those "Rin Tin Tin" stories that a fellow named Darryl Zanuck used to make for Warner Brothers twelve years ago, but it has got a dog and there are lots of you boys with marquees who know

what you can do with a dog—bought cheaply.

James Ellison and Miss Wood turn in capable performances, carrying the romantic interest, with support from the pretty solid Radio stock company. The script shows evidence of David Silverstein's hand, both in the fact that he knows his dogs and also knows his dialogue.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just routine, but okay for the Saturday kid show because of the dog stuff.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Almost a Gentleman' will pass muster as filler, and then only because of the natural affection of man for his best friend, the dog."

VARIETY: "Given plot responsibility and sympathetic hokum, a dog always has an appreciable h. o. value. In 'Almost a Gentleman' Ace, a well trained and attractive police dog, is a decided asset, contributing more than his share of entertainment to satisfy the neighborhood trade."

Yes . . . We ARE Growing . . .



Not only is The Digest growing in exhibitor appreciation, but the organization behind it is growing. This week saw the installation at our printing plant of some of the latest gadgets to come west of Chicago for turning out 1939 printing for 1939-minded customers. . . . And, on top of that, The Digest Press now gives you the cooperation of Orrin B. Hovig—(all Hollywood calls him "Butch")—to see your job through from start to finish. . . . Color? Class? Quantity? Price? Service? We know all the words, and The Digest Press also knows what they mean. . . . Call us now at WEBster 5375.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASES IN 1938

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	180
Gunner Din	RKO	179
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136
The Little Princess	FOX	130
Statecoach	UA	130
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	121
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	113
Made For Each Other	UA	111
Honolulu	MGM	111
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	109
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	103
Zaza	PAR	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Wines of the Navy	WAR	99
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	92
Talsprin	FOX	92
Three Musketeers	FOX	85
St. Louis Blues	PAR	85

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pygmalion	MGM	131
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	125
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	112
The Beachcomber	PAR	111
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	105
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	101
Cafe Society	PAR	97
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	93
Fast and Loose	MGM	93
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	92
Four Girls in White	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
Let Us Live	COL	85
One Third of a Nation	PAR	83
The Flying Irishman	RKO	82
King of the Underworld	WAR	82
Never Say Die	PAR	81
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81
King of the Turf	UA	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	78
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	76
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
Smiling Alone	FOX	71
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	64

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	86
Devil's Island	WAR	80
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Society Smugglers	UNIV	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Twelve O'Clock Hours	RKO	75
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	75
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	75
Boy Slaves	RKO	75
Persons in Hiding	PAR	74
Disbarred	PAR	73
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73
Lone Wolf's Spy Hunt	COL	73
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	73
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	72
Ambush	PAR	71
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGH	70

D. BELOW \$100,000

Whispering Enemies	COL	77
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	72
Navy Secrets	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71
Torch Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fleeting Throneholders	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Forced Passport	REP	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
Lone Star	GN	67
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Boy Trouble	PAR	63

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

LOYALTY NOTE: Just when Louis B. Mayer had to get laid up for the privilege of the medicos, Howard Strickling also caught a dose of that mysterious California Flu. We think that is loyalty. . . . But while we are speaking about loyalty maybe we should say something about the enthusiasm with which Norman McLeod signed his MGM contract the other day, knowing that he would be associated with Milton Bren on his first picture for Leo. . . . Not that we want to worry too much about problems that even the big shots can't solve, but what is it that Hal Roach hasn't got?

* * *

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE: The last week had so many big parties that no one would ever have thought income tax day had arrived in the middle of the week. But you have read about all the semi-society parties so we will tell you that you would have had some real fun if you had seen the "Three Burbank Bachelors," Eddie Norris, Dick Purcell and Anthony Averill, putting away corned beef and cabbage at Bob Murphy's as a stabilizer before Eddie and Dick took off on their plane trip to New York. There was another party during the week at the Cafe LaMaze, the reason for which we do not know yet, and probably none of those who took part know any more than we do. But it was at least a \$4.40 show when George Burns, Jack Benny and Bert Wheeler put on an impromptu olio with the help of Dick Powell and Jane Wyman, and it was a \$10.00 audience when you consider that the on-lookers included Jock Whitney, Paulette Goddard, Andrea Leeds and Jimmy Bryant and the eternally, sour-

facéd Cary Grant along with Phyllis Brooks.

* * *

YOUTHFUL NOTE: The younger crowd, probably tired of looking at the headline hunters seen all around them in other places, have found their own spot, it is the La Conga and almost any evening you will find them doing their best at the Rumba in tribute to Eduardo Chavez and the La Conga band. To tell the truth some of their elders are also sneaking in for a chance to retaliate to Eduardo's rumba rhythms. The whole idea is building up so well that the LaConga will probably crown it with a rumba contest and some laugh-getting prizes. . . . It is a rather sedate crowd that is responding to Dick Barrie, who has just arrived in the Florentine Room of the Beverly Wilshire, but his musical friends did not forget him, for the opening night saw among others, David Broeckman, Ben Pollack, Phil Harris, Hal Borne, and song writers Johnny Burke, Jimmy Monaco, and Gus Kahn.

* * *

COMPLAINT DEPT.: Something is wrong with this picture business when none of our hefty minded producers can find a picture spot for Joe Frisco. . . . But at least Joe can have one satisfaction in the fact that he has had a lot to do through his work at the Grace Hayes Lounge in being the good luck charm for Grace Hayes who already has a good MGM contract and a very good proposition from Paramount on a term contract deal. Gosh, when we kept company with the termites at the Palace Theatre at 47th Street and Broadway, New York, one of the things that kept a young fellow going was being able to walk in back of the orchestra rail and get

a dose of Joe Frisco in an afternoon. . . . Some of our highbrow pictures writers can talk longer and say less about how to time a line of dialogue and get the laughs than Joe Frisco knew in his cradle and most of the time he didn't need dialogue, just a cigar.

* * *

HOMESICK NOTE: It reminded us of the early 1920's in New York at the Screen Club—just in the shadow of the Columbia Burlesque House, when John Barrymore, Jim Kirkwood, David Griffith, and others could always be met discussing the possible future of this great moving picture business—to see Maurice Costello having a good time at Peggy Perrins' Club last week. Peggy calls the place "The Strip on The Strip." When the singing started Maurice and Ann Ritchie were vocally prominent. Dolores Costello was having a good time. . . . George Marshall and frau went all the way up to the Grand Canyon last week for a vacation, but George was so full of pep out on the Twentieth-Century lot last week that we will have to figure that maybe he was homesick for the studio. . . . Mark Sandrich is another director who went vacationing since we last went to press, Mark having picked out Palm Springs for a restful spot, after what all the operatives tell us is one of his best jobs "Man About Town." . . . Speaking about being homesick, what about being just plain lonesome. Only last week Buster Keaton sat alone at one table at the Hawaiian Paradise, while Wallace Beery was alone at another table. The boys could have had a good party if they had only spoken to each other. For that matter they could have had a grand party if they had barged in on Warren Hymer, who was present

the same evening at Bill Calhoun's dinner guest. Just why Warren Hymer rated the honor of being a dinner guest has not been explained to us.

* * *

KIDDING NOTE: We think some one is kidding us. Margaret Ettinger sends us a note for release that at the new Derby House almost any evening we might find Stuart Erwin — with June, of course — the Walter Connollys, Walter Kane and Lynn Bari, the Arthur Sheekmans, the Ronald Colmans, sitting around a fire in the new Derby House while they absorb the atmosphere of early American etchings and antiques. It just doesn't make sense, but Margaret does cinch it with this phrase, "they toast their ankles while they sip iced cocktails." . . . Just to keep up to date with things, Lupe Velez is still batting over three hundred in the Shipwreck Kelly league. When Lupe is with him it is always the Brown Derby, and when it is not the Brown Derby, Shipwreck must be with some one else. . . . Dudley Field Malone is moving into the Hollywood set with a vengeance and threatens to make his home here. Strange that so many of our loudest Americans have returned from Paris since the exchange ratio went bad and even a Paris divorce mill couldn't compete with Reno. . . . Marlene Dietrich may be having her troubles getting back on the screen, but she is still the best bet for candid camera copy that Hollywood can supply. You should have seen her last week at the Brown Derby, hatless, but so very smart in a superbly tailored black suit and an eggshell chiffon blouse, that she captured the show. To the chagrin of some other stars who always complain nasally about the darn public.

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Volume 9, No. 9.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, APRIL 3, 1939

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"LOVE AFFAIR" WEEK'S WINNER AT BOX OFFICES

SEE PAGE 5

ZANUCK HAS SMASH HIT IN "ALEXANDER BELL"

SEE PAGE 10

ASTAIRE-ROGERS AT THEIR BEST IN "CASTLES" STORY

SEE PAGE 11

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THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **R. K. O.** Wins With
"LOVE AFFAIR"—130%



Producer-Director
LEO McCAREY



IRENE DUNNE



CHARLES BOYER

Screenplay

DELMAR DAVES
DONALD OGDEN STEWART

Original

MILDRED CRAM
LEO McCAREY

Featured

MARIA OUSPENSKAYA
LEE BOWMAN
ASTRID ALLWYN
MAURICE MOSCOVICH



NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

KEEP ON YOUR TOES!

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Box office reports as they come in to The Digest office often tell more interesting stories than the actual figures display.

Naturally, there are the factors on which we can take immediate account in a picture's rating: A few weeks of blizzard weather in Eastern cities; an unusually sensational run in some city which, on checking up, we discover to have been running a local super Home Week that was packing all theaters; a lull that comes on as Lent approaches its closing weeks.

Those are the elements to which an intelligent statistical service is expected to give full cognizance.

But they are not the lively items about which we started out to talk.

The real point comes when a busy exhibitor takes a few minutes off, after writing his report, to mention PERSONALITIES.

* * *

And then the interesting part starts. Interest? Well, how about this extract from a letter received last week:

"I suppose I will have to sign for the So-and-So product next year as I have for years—I don't want my competitor to get it. But there is Miss Such-and-Such on that list for two top money pictures and right now I am figuring when are the best days or weeks to shove the picture off. Why can't the studio induce her to go to Honolulu, or better still, Gaum, and forget to come back."

Then we get lines like this: "Maybe the folks in my city are different—but the women who buy the tickets for me just don't like that guy So-and-So—and I don't know the answer. He seems to me to be a good actor—but the women must think he is not the sort of fellow they would like to meet after dark—because I could just as well put up a smallpox sign as his name on the marquee."

That's the sort of language they use. And sometimes worse.

* * *

You wonder why we don't print these letters week by week, as we receive them?

It is not entirely because most exhibitors do not wish to have their names appear in print, for the fundamental reason that the exhibitor is daily engaged in a life and death struggle with the distributor — with all the cards stacked against him—and he feels he would rather play his hand out himself than have us kibitz.

Our reticence is due to the fact that we are trying to be FAIR.

So it is not until a preponderant flood of such opinions come in on a particular individual that we let the trend reach the dignity of consideration in figures.

We realize that, such are the vagaries of human nature, a player might be an SRO sign incognate in Boston, and a pestilence tag in Omaha. So it isn't fair to producer, exhibitor or player to run such thoughts just as Uncle Sam delivers them in his mailbag.

You wonder why we mention this today at all—since we say it isn't something to talk about haphazardly?

We will tell you:

* * *

This message goes from the dollars and sense of box office reports to the biggest of Umpty-Ump agents in Hollywood, and their properties, the players.

Keep on your toes!

Get off the high horse that has you turning down stories and directors because the agent's secretary read the script yesterday and her blonde haired wisdom didn't like it, and besides she didn't like the way that director parted his hair.

Get off the high horse that has you magnifying

(Continued on Page 6)

Distributors Batting Average For 1938

			%
1. M. G. M.	45 Releases	103	
2. 20th Century-Fox	52 Releases	92	
3. United Artists	17 Releases	92	
4. Paramount	40 Releases	88	
5. Warner Brothers	53 Releases	87	
6. R. K. O.	39 Releases	83	
7. Columbia	33 Releases	80	
8. Universal	39 Releases	77	
9. Republic	25 Releases	73	
10. Monogram	14 Releases	69	
11. Grand National	4 Releases	66	
12. Gaumont British	10 Releases	59	

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: SALES MEETINGS IN FULL SWING; SELZNICK REMAINS WITH UNITED

The convention season is on in full swing, and along with the conventions the all important announcements of next year's productions, announcing the big news during the past week. The Fox announcement covers fifty-two pictures, of which twenty-four will be Darryl F. Zanuck productions, with the Sol Wurtzel unit taking care of twenty-eight. The list is headed by such specials as "Stanley and Livingstone," "Little Old New York," "Brigham Young," "Drums Along the Mohawk" and "The Rains Came." The strength in the Wurtzel list is in the successful series pictures including, Charlie Chan, Mr. Moto, and Jones Family. For icing on the cake there are always the popular number of pictures from Sonja Henie, Alice Faye, Don Ameche, Shirley Temple and Tyrone Power.

Twentieth Century-Fox is announcing its program at a Chicago Sales Convention at which Herman Wobber will tell the boys that the European market has disappeared, so it is now up to them to pay the freight.

Universal's Boys Are Happy

Universal is also swinging into stride with three regional sales conventions which will get under way April 15 in Cincinnati. After three days there, Sales Manager Billy Scully will move on to Chicago and from there to San Francisco. The Universal boys are happier than they have been at the opening of a season for some time. The studio came through with some box office productions for the second half of the current season and the producer-director and star lineup for the next year has them all pretty happy.

Selznick Decides To Stay At Home

Your High-Lighter ventured the statement several weeks ago that there was no particular reason to get excited over the headlines to the effect that David Selznick and his pictures were going to RKO. Contracts signed during the week settled a one-year deal by which David will remain at the old homestead—U. A. It just looks as though David Selznick and Jock Whitney on one side of the fence, and Murray Silverstone on the other side have been engaged in a good trading deal. And the pleasant part about the conclusion is that all concerned seem to be happy . . . A Hollywood paper headline says, "Wobber Pledges No Chiseling by 20th." Since when is that news? . . . William Anthony McGuire and Metro are washing up their deal, with the finale curtain dropping when McGuire delivers the script for his original story "Ziegfeld Girl." We think both parties are going to be a little bit sorry about that. McGuire has the uncanny luck in stage shows and pictures of never having been associated with a flop; and MGM has the facilities to benefit by the McGuire imagination . . . While in

7 FEATURES 'GOING UP'

	Was	Now
1. Pygmalion	MGM 131	135
2. Stagecoach	UA 130	134
3. Huckleberry Finn	MGM 125	128
4. Oklahoma Kid	WAR 113	118
5. Made For Each Other	UA 111	116
6. Topper Takes A Trip	UA 103	108
7. St. Louis Blues	PAR 85	92

town that busiest individual, Murray Silverstone, also closed a deal with David Loew for the delivery of two pictures a year for three years. But this time David is going after million dollar productions and we don't know of anyone in the industry with more goodwill and fine fellowship behind his new effort. And by the way, if you check enough on what this fellow Silverstone did in his few weeks on the Coast, you will find that in the midst of all the turmoil and internal squabbles he ran up close to forty pictures for next year's United Artist list.

Hathaway-Cooper Get Under Way

Samuel Goldwyn can take more time making up his mind to start a picture than anyone we know of, but the results always seem to prove that Sam knew what he was waiting for. So it is good box office news to hear that Sam has set an April 10th starting date for "The Real Glory," in which Gary Cooper will be featured with Henry Hathaway directing. Hathaway has waited a long time for a screen credit since "Spawn of the North." But our chips are down on the statement that the Hathaway-Cooper combination will pay plenty dividends for the long time spent in preparation.

Home Town Boy Makes Good

There is interest to us in the modest little news item which says that Ben Goetz is on the ocean on his way to New York and Hollywood. . . . Someone will some day write a real story about what Ben Goetz has done for MGM and for British production. There are so many angles. At a time when some bad

financial mix-ups had caused production in England to hit a new low of energy, at a time when any observer would lay you ten to one, or better, that the only sensible policy for American producers making English pictures was to stick to the short budget quota idea, Ben Goetz went over with the load of Leo the Lion on his shoulders. . . . There were so many ways in which he could have made mistakes. . . . But instead, he gave to Leo and to the credit of British picture-making possibilities, "A Yank at Oxford," and "The Citadel." Now he is returning with the print for "Mr. Chips" under his arm. And they have given up betting about Ben Goetz by now. They know he will have a picture. . . . You can't do any better in any league than bat 1000%. . . . The reason we used that "home town boy" phrase to start these thoughts off, is the fact that Ben Goetz went to his London task without any pretensions other than his admitted record as a big time business executive. He didn't adopt an accent, he didn't go Mayfair, he didn't patronize or beg. He just made pictures.

Rambling Around The Studio Corners

So now it is Clark Gable who will be seen as a priest. Well, at least this will give Pat O'Brien and Spencer Tracy a rest. . . . Which reminds us that we have been wondering for a week or so what Director John Farrow, who hit literary heights with his biography of Father Damien, the priest who loved lepers, thought of the announcement that Warners would present Pat O'Brien, with his physique and throaty Irish tremulo, as Father Damien, the latter a Belgian "practical ascetic" who wasted away to bones in the service of his cause. . . . But something must have happened, because the announcement was quietly forgotten within a week, and we hear that Pat will play Father Duffy, wartime chaplain of the Fighting Sixty-Ninth. Which is a darn good assignment. . . . Harry Gould is suing RKO and a half dozen others for plagiarism on "Gunga Din." We are surprised at you, Harry, for not digging up Alexander Dumas to join in the suit, along with every other writer who has given the world great entertainment on that "Three Musketeers" theme.

Labor Troubles East and West

Back in New York there are possibilities of a theater shutdown because the projection operators' chiefs hit on the clever expedient of hitting the industry where it is weakest—instead of calling out the operators in theaters, they gave the word to the boys who work in the film exchanges. Because the exchanges supply the pictures to the theaters with whom there is a quarrel. When you hit the exchanges you smite Sidney Kent, Al Lichtman, Nate Blumberg, Ned Depinet, et al, and the finan-

(Continued on Page 5)

11 FEATURES 'GOING DOWN'

	Was	Now
1. Honolulu	MGM 111	107
2. Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR 112	106
3. Ice Follies of 1939	MGM 109	97
4. Wings of the Navy	WAR 99	94
5. Cafe Society	PAR 97	92
6. Let Freedom Ring	MGM 92	90
7. Fast and Loose	MGM 93	88
8. Never Say Die	PAR 81	77
9. King of the Turf	UA 80	74
10. Society Smugglers	UNIV 76	72
11. Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM 70	65

RADIO'S "LOVE AFFAIR" HITS AT BOX OFFICE; PARAMOUNT'S "MIDNIGHT" IN SECOND SPOT

By NORMAN WEBB

RKO—2 New Releases

RKO-Radio Pictures has two new releases this week, one a big box office hit and the other a very sick program picture.

"LOVE AFFAIR" has been booked into over 20 first-run situations in the past few days and in most cases is doing so well that it has been held for a second week. The fact that this picture is averaging 130% during the Lenten season is certainly remarkable, considering the fact that national box offices are 15% below this same period in 1938.

Evidently the public approves of the new co-starring team of Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer, who carry most of the footage in this outstanding love drama. Maria Ouspenskaya, Lee Bowman, and Astrid Allwyn head the supporting cast. Leo McCarey produced and directed for RKO as well as collaborating on the original with Mildred Cram. Delmar Daves and Donald Ogden Stewart wrote the screenplay.

Close on the heels of "GUNGA DIN," "LOVE AFFAIR" marks the second big box office hit for RKO in 1939, and exhibitors will do well to give this one extended playing time, but should bear in mind it is strictly an adult picture.

RKO's second release this week, "BEAUTY FOR THE ASKING," 68%, is another "weakie" from the Lee Marcus program unit. The picture has a good theme and a fairly good title, but producers will some day (when block booking is nullified) have to learn that exhibitors can't get cash customers in to see these pictures that are entirely lacking in marquee names—and as for big houses, they never have and never will book this type of product.

Lucille Ball and Patric Knowles, who handle the romantic leads, are capable players, but have had so few parts of any importance that their names are little known when you get 50 miles away from Hollywood. There are several very competent players in the supporting cast, including Donald Woods, Frieda Inescourt, and Inez Courtney. Benny Fineman supervised and Glen Tryon directed.

PARAMOUNT—Also 2 New Ones

Paramount, like RKO, has two new releases this week, one also a good box office attraction and the other a fairly entertaining programmer.

Claudette Colbert and Don Ameche are presented in "MIDNIGHT," which opened up fairly well at a 111% average, yet this is considerably below what we had estimated, for what reason we can not understand, unless the fact that John Barrymore is in the supporting cast and is prominently billed in all the ads.

In spite of Barrymore's very outstanding performances, exhibitors still insist he is box office poison, so much that he is detrimental to any picture in which he appears. Furthermore, Paramount has added insult to injury,

Of Six New Releases in the Past Week, Only Two Rated Over 100%, and Four Were Very Weak.

by adding Mrs. Elaine Barrymore ("How To Undress in Front of Your Husband") to this one.

Arthur Hornblow, Jr. very capably produced this French romantic farce, with Mitch

TOWN," 74%, which is the latest in the Anna May Wong series. Miss Wong has a strong supporting cast, and while this picture is only doing so-so, on its first runs, it will probably do much better in the "nabes," particularly where action pictures are popular.

Among those featured are Akim Tamiroff, J. Carroll Naish, Sidney Toler, and Tony Quinn. Stuart Walker supervised and Nick Grinde directed.

U. A.—1 New Release

United Artists Corporation have a new English-made picture this week, "PRISON WITHOUT BARS," which, like many of the other Korda-London Films, is doing very poorly at the American wickets, because of the lack of exploitation and a foreign cast that is unknown to American audiences. According to the first figures we have received on "PRISON WITH BARS," it is only averaging around 72%.

This French prison story introduces Korda's new find, Corinne Luchaire, who is a very new, beautiful and talented star, but entirely unknown to American audiences, as she has only been sold over here in the trade papers and not in the fan magazines and to the general public. Therefore exhibitors will have to double bill this one with a real strong "A" attraction, as the balance of the cast are also all English players. Irving Asher supervised and Brian Hurst directed.

MONOGRAM—Also 1 New One

Monogram's new release this week is the second of their Boris Karloff starring series, "THE MYSTERIOUS MR. WONG," 72%. Exhibitors who have been running Boris Karloff's Warners, Universal and Monogram pictures will know best where to spot this one, and about what to expect. Like its predecessors, there are plenty of thrills and action, but in most cases it is not strong enough for top billing.

A NOTE ABOUT CURRENT BOX OFFICES

For a few seasons, many showmen have been reaching the conclusion that Lent no longer affected box offices. It must be reported that Lent is definitely showing its influence at the ticket windows this year. Pictures reported on last week, this week, and probably those coming up next week, are definitely, according to the exhibitors who write us, from ten to fifteen per cent better box office pictures normally than under this year's Lenten conditions.

Maybe it is the war, or the talk of other wars, that has brought Lent back into fashion. At any rate, it is something to think about.

R. E. W.

Leisen doing a fine directorial job. Charlie Brackett and Billy Wilder wrote the fast-moving screenplay.

Paramount's second release this week is a better than average programmer from the Harold Hurley unit, "THE KING OF CHINA-

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

jections will get action. . . . Out here in Los Angeles each day brings its new development in the effort of the Screen Writers Guild and the producers to get together. . . . We have been asked a few times why we have never commented on this producer-writer battle, since we are brash enough to talk about almost everything else, including the weather. . . . Our only answer is that we can't keep up with it. No publication appearing only once a week could possibly give intelligent analysis to the day to day twists and turns of that argument between the Guild and the producers. . . . And where angels fear to tread, we don't rush in.

6 New Releases Not in Last Issue

2 Over 100%.....4 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Love Affair	RKO	130	120
2. Midnight	PAR	111	120
3. King of Chinatown	PAR	74	75
4. Prison Without Bars	UA	72	75
5. Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	72	75
6. Beauty For The Asking	RKO	68	70

THE SECOND GUESSER TALKS ABOUT WARNER'S NEW CONTRACT AND SOME RECENT PICTURES

The Second Guesser stole into the office last week and whispered: "This isn't exactly a Second Guess thought I have, in fact I'm better than a First Guesser this week, but I thought maybe your exhibitors would like to hear about that Warner contract for this year, as it is being presented to Los Angeles exhibitors."

* * *

We stopped him quickly: "What do you mean, Los Angeles exhibitors? Aren't picture contracts just the same the country over?" His smile was more of a smirk. From the corner of his mouth came this: "Did you ever ask a New Orleans exhibitor to write a Portland, Oregon, exhibitor about booking terms on 'Snow White'?"

* * *

We confessed that we had never asked that question, so we still haven't got the answer. But we were defeated to the point of being compelled to let him keep on talking:

Was he happy? He started out areeling:

"This new Warner contract is the first in the field for the new selling season and it has a lot of the boys talking. In the first place, the percentage terms do not ask for the theatre man's eye-teeth, and secondly, a guarantee is not demanded.

"It breaks down this way: Two pictures at 35% and a split; six at 35%; twelve at 30%; twelve at 25%; and the balance at 20% or on flat rental.

"That's a deal that interests the picture buyer. Of course, there is a catch in it: This deal is being offered only in A situations—in other spots it is catch as catch can, on flat terms. This same differentiation between the A spots and the other zones is what took the edge off Jack Warner's announcement that his firm would kill double bills. He also tagged on to that statement a qualifying phrase that there were situations where competitive reasons would delay the execution."

* * *

We asked The Second Guesser how exhibitors in general were reacting to the first flush offers of new contracts for next year. Here is the way he sees it:

"It is going to be a late buying season. More and more of the sharpshooters are saying, 'I can wait until August. These distribution execs have the panic on because of the loss of that foreign market and they are trying too many fancy ways to get the lost dollars out of this one. In that frame of mind, they will make mistakes, and I can afford to wait.'"

Second Guessing On The Pictures

The Second Guesser is happiest when he is talking about pictures that he has caught with the cash customers, and several weeks after their impressive previews. So we maneuvered over to that subject. He had plenty on his chest, and was willing to relieve it. We let him proceed: "That picture 'Ice Follies' has been intriguing me. I have been trying to figure how it was possible to find so many ways

to go wrong. I got one answer one recent evening when I saw the last two reels again. Did they ever stop to think that a lot of the cash customers around the country, paying their money to see a picture billed as 'Joan Crawford in Ice Follies,' would faintly expect that Miss Crawford was going to skate during the picture? And then the entire last reel finds all the principal characters kidding each other about the fact that Joan Crawford does not skate. Isn't it sort of rubbing it in on the cash customer to tell him, after the expenditure of his money and seven reels of waiting, that it has all been an April Fool joke? . . . The Second Guesser also had some cheerful thoughts. He continued: "I've caught most of that Sol Lesser-Bobby Breen picture, 'Fisherman's Wharf' a few times recently. And while the reviewers all said it was a good job, I'm afraid that I, for one, have to admit that I didn't get the full enthusiasm into the review that the picture's audience values deserve. It clicks very effectively with the regular folks who pay their money, and has many directorial angles that are even better the second time you see it. But I do wish they would let Bobby Breen get a few freckles, or maybe even a wrinkle. It would help his reality. As it is now, the kid's ability is hampered by his being a make-up man's delight."

More Criticism From Our Severest Critic

We knew The Second Guesser could not be cheerful for more than a moment or two at a time. Therefore, we were not surprised when he fixed the evil eye on us with a personal glint in its expression. "You know," he said, "While I appreciate the fact that a paper can't get around and cover every last thing that happens in this industry—I think you owe it to your exhibitors to occasionally hit the highlights on the good shorts. Finding the right short subject, or having the liveliest newsreel, is often one of the exhibitor's chief worries. And the average review of a short subject doesn't put it in words that help his booking. . . . For example, I caught a Movietone single reeler, 'The Vikings,' at the Chinese last week. Now the ordinary review would just say that this was a well conceived and excellently executed travel subject from the group that keeps that Movietone on its toes. But it is only a Second Guesser who could tell you that what might be only a good travelogue, has the qualities of photography and editing that actually got applause from a hard-boiled audience that was not applauding any personal friends. If my memory is right, the cinematographer's name was Jack Kuhne, and he probably lives in Norway, and I will be darned if I can remember the very intelligent commentator. It was probably Lowell Thomas. But I do remember the picture."

Some Problems On Ticket Selling

The Second Guesser asked us a question, which was at least a compliment. He queried:

"Why does that fine Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire picture have to go out with the lumbering title, 'The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle,' when after all, the folks will be buying tickets to see Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire." We attempted to interrupt but he would not give us the opportunity. He snapped at us: "Don't tell us it is biography. After all, with all our admiration for the Castles, it is not saying in selling type, 'The Story of Mr. and Mrs. Pasteur,' or 'The Story of Mr. and Mrs. Zola.' Nor even, 'The Story of Alexander Graham Bell,' because Bell did invent the telephone. And the telephone IS something. Besides, what a burden that title is putting on the advertising boys at Radio—East and West—when they try to devise selling posters." . . . By that time The Second Guesser had exhausted his slight supply of breath, so we meekly explained to him that there were some legal complications in the contract with Mrs. Castle that made all these things necessary in order that Mrs. Castle could be happy, and Radio and exhibitors fretful. . . . We almost had The Second Guesser calmed down when he happened to pick up a syndicated column by Hedda Hopper which insinuated politely that Mrs. Castle should have played herself in the picture, and in which Hedda didn't seem so happy about the Ginger Rogers' performance. . . . The Second Guesser climbed on top of the desk and said: "That's the sort of stuff that keeps picture people heating up hot water for columnists. I have been able to face on a return engagement any exhibitor to whom I have ever sold a picture. And I'll face any one of them tomorrow with the statement that Ginger Rogers does the most sincerely appealing acting job of her career in this picture. Even with the handicaps of biography and some other things." . . . The air in the office was getting too warm at this point, so we managed to show The Second Guesser where the exit was located. . . . After all, he will always come back in a week or so.

KEEP ON YOUR TOES

(Continued from Page 3)

your salary demands according to the size of your fan mail—because the fan mail is the nuts to the practical exhibitor who PAYS you. (He learned long ago about the fan mail racket, because he got his fingers burned trying to sell tickets to those invisible men.)

Get off your high horse on the thought that you are ordained to sell your ideologies to the world, and a hundred girls in Omaha are going to get down on their knees and murmur, "Yes, Muh Lord, you have spoken." (Trouble is, when they get down on their knees, they can't rise again in time to get to a picture theater with cash for a ticket.)

Get off the high horses—and when you land on the turf of good solid payroll ground—KEEP ON YOUR TOES!

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	180	%
Gunna Din	RKO	179	
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136	
Stagecoach	UA	134	
Love Affair	RKO	130	
The Little Princess	FOX	126	
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121	
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	121	
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	118	
Made For Each Other	UA	116	
Midnight	PAR	111	
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	108	
Honolulu	MGM	107	
Zaza	PAR	102	
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102	
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	97	
Wines of the Navy	WAR	94	
Tails'n	FOX	92	
St. Louis Blues	PAR	92	
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	90	

Three Musketeers FOX... 84

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pyramation	MGM	135	%
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	128	
The Beachcomber	PAR	113	
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106	
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	101	
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	94	
Cafe Society	PAR	92	
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92	
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	92	
Fast and Loose	MGM	88	
Four Girls in White	MGM	86	
Off The Record	WAR	85	
One Third of a Nation	PAR	82	
The Flying Irishman	RKO	82	
Kims of the Underworld	WAR	81	
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81	
Let Us Live	COL	80	
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	78	
Never Say Die	PAR	77	
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76	
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74	
Kims of the Turf	UA	74	
Prison Without Bars	UA	72	
Smiling Along	FOX	71	
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	66	

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	83	%
Devil's Island	WAR	78	
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77	
Inside Story	FOX	75	
Pacific Liner	RKO	75	
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	75	
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	75	
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	75	
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	75	
Boy Slaves	RKO	75	
King of Chinatown	PAR	74	
Persons in Hiding	PAR	73	
Disbarred	PAR	73	
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	72	
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72	
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72	
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	71	
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71	
Ambush	PAR	70	
Beauty For The Asking	RKO	68	
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65	

D. BELOW \$100,000

Whispering Enemies	COL	77	%
Pride of the Navy	REP	74	
Homelike Bureau	COL	74	
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	72	
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	72	
Woman Doctor	REP	71	
North of Shanghai	COL	70	
Tough Kid	MONO	70	
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70	
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69	
Fighting Thunderbolts	REP	69	
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69	
Conville's Code	MONO	69	
Navy Secrets	MONO	68	
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68	
Lone Shot	GN	67	
Forged Passports	REP	66	
Boy Trouble	PAR	65	
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64	

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

Leo McCarey

PRODUCER-DIRECTOR



AN RKO-RADIO PRODUCTION

“LOVE AFFAIR”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

My Sincere Appreciation

to

LEO McCAREY

Charles Boyer

Exclusive Management
CHAS. KENNETH FELDMAN CORP.

AN RKO-RADIO PRODUCTION

“LOVE AFFAIR”

"Alexander Graham Bell" Is Triumph For Zanuck, Cummings and Ameche

20th-FOX-COSMOPOLITAN

(The Digest Estimates: 140%)

Producer Darryl F. Zanuck
 Director Irving Cummings
 Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan
 Original Ray Harris
 Screenplay Lamar Trotti
 Star Don Ameche

Featured: Loretta Young, Henry Fonda, Chas. Coburn, Gene Lockhart, Spring Byington, Sally Blane, Polly Ann Young, Georgiana Young, Bobs Watson, Russell Hicks, Paul Stanton, Jonathan Hale, Beryl Mereer, Harry Davenport, Elizabeth Patterson, Charles Trowbridge, Jan Duggan, Claire Du Brey, Harry Tyler, Ralph Remley, Zeffie Tilbury.

Photographer Leon Shamroy
 Time 97 minutes

Darryl Zanuck seems destined to set a pace this year that will result in all the industry making a lot more money than could be normally expected. He has already given to box offices, "Jesse James" and "The Little Princess" to start the year off, and "The Life Story of Alexander Graham Bell" is a surprise package that he has had up his sleeve.

Irving Cummings comes into his own with "Alexander Graham Bell." Cummings, over a long period of picture history, has been one of those fellows who worked for the front office and the exhibitor, and who must have frequently smiled as the other fellows took the artistic kudos. Irving can now bow his head and tell them all to go see this picture.

His timing on scenes, his—well, his everything—makes romance out of a piece of copper wire, and suspense out of a law suit.

Don Ameche, with one of the best fan followings in the country, has for a long time had half of that following saying "Why doesn't he get a real part?" This time Don gets a part, and in the vulgar language that we used to use in the Lamb's Club, he puts his teeth into it. What a job he does! I guess he has been waiting for this part for a year or so, and when

"The Kid From Texas" Okay Dualler

M. G. M.

(The Digest Estimates: 65%)

Producer Edgar Selwyn
 Director S. Sylvan Simon
 Screenplay: Florence Ryerson, Edgar Allan Woolf, Albert Mannheimer.

Original Story..... Milton Merlin, Byron Morgan
 Stars Dennis O'Keefe, Florence Rice
 Featured: Anthony Allan, Jessie Ralph, Buddy Ebsen, Virginia Dale, Robert Wilcox, Jack Carson, Helen Lynd, J. M. Kerrigan, Tully Marshall.

Photographer Sidney Wagner
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Musical Score Dr. William Axt
 Film Editor Frederick Y. Smith
 Time 70 minutes

"The Kid From Texas" is an MGM "B" picture. Which means that more money has been spent than other companies could afford on some "A" picture. But the final result is that it is still a "B."

We are just a little surprised that a chap with the stage experience of Edgar Selwyn

CURRENT REVIEWS

3 Over 100%..... 1 A Dualler

		Est. %
1. Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	140
2. The Story of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle	RKO	140
3. Broadway Serenade	MGM	120
4. The Kid From Texas	MGM	65

Zanuck decided the time was right for Ameche, they jointly went to town.

There is another top light in the picture. Loretta Young. After a number of years being just a leading lady for this and that male star, Loretta also gets a part. It has sympathy and she gives everything needed to make it seem she is everyone's wife and everyone's daughter.

About this time you will probably imagine that your reviewer is a little bit enthused about the picture. Maybe more so. And that is the truth. If we started to go through the cast we would get more paragraphs than this page would hold. Charles Coburn—"Ole Bill" to a lot of us folks who remember that sensational stage hit of the 1920's—has a character part that stands out because he makes it so human. He was probably in his element, with a grand trouper like Gene Lockhart sharing most of the scenes.

Henry Fonda does the same fine job that he did in "Jesse James." He is so darn good as Ameche's assistant that when he disappears a reel or so before the picture is ended everybody is wondering what happened to him. There is also the capable Spring Byington present, and if you wish to really go to town and shed tears, all you must do is wait for a scene in which a deaf and dumb youngster, Bobs Watson, discovers that he can say the word "Father." And for that matter, since we are talking about players, no one who is fair could forget spot scenes by Russell Hicks, nor Berle Mercer's "Queen Victoria."

As a matter of fact, the picture is so darn good that if you start talking about it you

makes his picture production bow with a picture which exhibitors will just slide along on greased skids.

There are some fine performances in the picture, but they are not for the marquee. Dennis O'Keefe and Florence Rice turn in some very fine work and the supporting cast includes such safe troupers as Buddy Ebsen, Jessie Ralph and others.

Director S. Sylvan Simon does the best he can with the material and every now and then gets a very interesting moment. But it all adds up to the fact that a "B" picture is a "B" picture, regardless of the trade mark.

Since you probably would like to hear about the story, we will tell you that it is a combination of cowhand and polo, that is so tempting as an original idea that one wonders why the total result was not better. It is Dennis O'Keefe who is the cowhand and Anthony Allan and Florence Rice who are the contrasting society people in the polo set. One of those

want to keep on talking. So for the sake of some extra money for ailing box offices, we are really anxious to tip exhibitors off not to worry about the staid note indicated in the title. Go out and sell this for the best days and the extra days, knowing that before the run is over—provided you have sense enough to let it run long enough—you will have everyone in the family, from grandmother on down, paying money through that wicket.

One of the surprising things about the picture is that the writer credits contain only two names. Ray Harris did the original story; Lamar Trotti did the screenplay. The result is a corking job—the foundation on which all the entertaining moments we have mentioned are based. If we could be a little bit out of line we would say that we would like to go to heaven with the story and script of this picture on our conscience.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Forget your worries about the business sound to the title, and go the limit.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "As a piece of documentary celluloid story-telling 'The Story of Alexander Graham Bell' is unquestionably epochal. As drama, the 20th-Fox picture succeeds in making much of minor story incident and builds to needed climaxes with irresistible effect. It is outstanding theatre-fare which copiously lives up to its 'must see' insinuation as history in the making."

VARIETY: "A major scientific event is fascinatingly humanized and the life and love of the inventor of the telephone presented as a thrilling narrative in 'The Life of Alexander Graham Bell.' It ranks among the best pictures of any season. And of biographical drama there has certainly been no better example."

usual love stories happens in which cowhand reaches the point where he decides the society girl has just been kidding him and then things bounce around to allow some very lavish polo production while the story was doing the best bouncing.

There are five writer credits on this picture. Leo the Lion usually tips his mitt in almost any picture, because the moment the writers go over two, you know that there was something wrong somewhere along the line. Leo didn't fail us this time.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Nothing for the marquee but B plus production class.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'The Kid From Texas,' MGM has won itself quite a picture and some new and promising talent. It's a 'B' story and an 'A' performing cast and production, which will do alright on any bill."

VARIETY: "Parading comedy, action and heart interest, but unable to bring them to a happy blending, 'The Kid From Texas' emerges from mill as filler material."

Astaire-Rogers Duo Hit High B. O. Mark in Story of "The Castles"; Potter Scores

R. K. O.

(The Digest Estimates: 140%)

Executive Producer **Pandro S. Berman**
Producer **George Haight**
Director **H. C. Potter**
Screenplay **Richard Sherman**
Adaptation: **Oscar Hammerstein II, Dorothy Yost.**
Based on stories by **Irene Castle**
Stars **Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers**
Featured: **Edna May Oliver, Walter Brennan, Lew Fields, Etienne Girardot, Janet Beecher, Rolfe Sedan, Leonid Kinskey, Robert Strange, Douglas Walton, Clarence Derwent, Sonny Lafont, Frances Mercer, Victor Varconi, Donald McBride.**
Photographer **Robert de Grasse**
Special Effects **Vernon L. Walker**
Art Director **Van Nest Polglase**
Musical Director **Victor Baravalle**
Dance Director **Hermes Pan**
Time **89 minutes**

Exhibitors and the public will be wondering about the Astaire-Rogers team in their latest picture. We are happy to report that there are so many audience elements which parallel the values of "Alexander's Ragtime Band" that it is difficult to restrain one's enthusiasm.

The picture has that nostalgic feeling which helped a lot in "Alexander," giving the older generation the thrill of hearing songs and seeing things which happened in their own life, giving the youngsters all they can ask for in modern appeal.

The director and pair of stars must have

liked the job they were doing. Director H. C. Potter does everything with every scene that anyone could do, and Astaire and Rogers have never been better. We have the feeling, just as a reviewer, that Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers enjoyed playing their parts. The picture will give that impression to any cash customer.

The producers tell the life story of Vernon and Irene Castle, with the top scenes naturally coming when Vernon crashes his plane in Texas. The biography note has its strength, but it also has its weaknesses. Biography means sticking fairly close to facts, and the facts of the case do not allow a story that builds to a great dance number for the finish.

Some of these angles will worry exhibitors. But it is our opinion that when they sell past the first hurdle on the title and the biography note, the picture is good for extra days and for anything that could be given to it. We know that the year will not see any better job of entertainment than three people named Potter, Rogers, and Astaire turned in.

Ginger Rogers proves the fact that she doesn't need a tap dance routine to sell herself. Fred Astaire, with a dramatic part to give to the audience, not only plays that part but manages to do enough dancing that most of the audience will wish he had done more.

To help everything out there is a very exceptional supporting cast. All of the supporting players are so well known for their ability

that you can look at the credits above and need no adjectives from us.

Oscar Hammerstein, II, and Dorothy Yost put their heart and their show business training into the adaptation of Mrs. Castle's theme; Richard Sherman turned in a gem of a screenplay and dialogue job.

In the story we meet Fred Astaire first as a hooper, with Lew Fields his manager, and then get acquainted with a girl named Irene, who later becomes Mrs. Castle. Up to that point Fred can do a few tap dance routines. After the marriage the story moves to Paris. We see the outbreak of the World War. The picture shows how the Castles started the bobbed hair craze and at least a half dozen dance fads, and behind it at all times is the fact that the war has come. So it must end when Fred Astaire goes to his death in a plane in Texas.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: This has been sold in most situations on last year's contract. You have a chance, therefore, to pay off the mortgage.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The ingratiating lyrical charm which one has grown to expect from Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' vehicles is again screened with telling effect in "The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle." It is splendid entertainment and a sure-thing for strong box office.

VARIETY: "The romantic story of the Castles and their influence upon modern popular dancing makes exhilarating entertainment and should repay RKO handsomely for the effort it represents in production care and initiative."

"Broadway Serenade" Disappointing

M. G. M.

(The Digest Estimate: 120%)

Producer-Director **Robert Z. Leonard**
Screenplay **Charles Lederer**
Original: **Lew Lipton, John Taintor Foote, Hans Kraly.**
Star **Jeanette MacDonald**
Featured: **Lew Ayres, Ian Hunter, Frank Morgan, Wally Vernon, Rita Johnson, Virginia Grey, William Gargan, Katherine Alexander, Al Shean, Esther Dale, Franklin Pangborn, E. Allyn Warren, Paul Hurst, Frank Orth, Esther Howard, Leon Belasco, Kitty McHugh, Kenneth Stevens.**
Photographer **Oliver T. Marsh**
Musical Director **Herbert Stothart**
Music **Herbert Stothart, Edward Ward**
Time **114 minutes**

Robert Leonard has so much that is entertaining in this picture that one is inclined to give the picture an A vote on the strength of straight directorial skill. But while there is so much that is entertaining; there is so much that is not. And that is where the trouble begins.

Probably the trouble has something to do with the writing. There are four writers listed on the credit sheet, and one can not escape the feeling that it might have been a better picture if three of them had been lazy. A great bunch of troupers and Bob Leonard's audience knowledge spark the picture frequently and scenes lift and sell themselves to the audience, and then all of a sudden the next sequence dies because the writers were busy writing. Too much straining for sophisticated wit.

It is another backstage story, with Miss MacDonald the girl who goes on with her career, and Lew Ayres the fellow who pines and pines. Lew Ayres carries most of the load, but there is a certain point in the plot when the load gets too heavy and he just has to look pathetically negative for the last couple of reels. It is to the credit of Ayres that he even comes through under this burden.

As a matter of fact the Leonard skill with players, and the ability of the players themselves keeps the picture so entertaining in intermittent spots that when all is through you wonder what it is that is missing. And I suppose we will just have to come back and say "they forgot to write a story."

Look at the list of troupers: Miss MacDonald sings and sings and sings—and as a matter of fact she sings too often. Ayres puts soul into a sheet of mimeograph paper, a fellow named Frank Morgan lifts every scene in which he appears and it is not until the next morning that a spectator recalls that Frank Morgan has not been in the last two reels. A comedian who can go places on the screen, Wally Vernon, is planted for a running gag early in the picture, but then someone forgot the gag and the only time that he is seen later is in a banquet scene with a hundred others. Al Shean puts over scenes that with Leonard's direction and Shean's ability actually received applause from the cash section of the house, but when the scenes are all over nothing has happened.

Then we meet Busby Berkeley, for one of those finales that the mind of man has never seen on stage or screen and that Warners eliminated about two years ago. In other words, we mean that the \$100,000 or so spent on the last reel is just so much extra footage.

The troupers are so darn good that one has a desire to keep on talking about them at the same time wondering why their efforts are wasted. Rita Johnson just needed four more speeches and she could have stolen the picture from Miss MacDonald. Leonard also got performances out of Franklin Pangborn, William Gargan and others that made for momentary entertainment. The only trouble was that the story kept limping.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Rates whatever break you usually give Jeanette MacDonald; but don't go overboard. It won't stand up for extra days.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Broadway Serenade' is a lavish musical, and as such falls quite snugly into formula pattern. . . . It is doubtful that the familiar format will endear it to its audience, however, or that it may hope for more than average patronage in the top budget class."

VARIETY: "For outstanding musical artistry, for sheer beauty in production, for smooth blending of song and story, 'Broadway Serenade' takes rank with any tunefilms of past. It combines brilliant producer-director effort with indelibly-etched portrayals by a strong cast."

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Mr. Robert E. Welsh,
National Box Office Digest,
5373 San Vicente,
Los Angeles, Calif.

15th March, 1939

Dear Bob:

I was very much surprised the other day when a British exhibitor handed me some copies of the National Box Office Digest and I saw that you were the publisher of it.

Frankly, I had never until that time heard about your publication, but it appears to me that it is quite a good one and I find that a considerable number of exhibitors in this country are guided to a great extent by what transpires in respect to pictures in America and the reports which your paper gives them.

Would you be so good as to enter a yearly subscription for me, and if possible, send me the back copies beginning with September of last year. I know that the rate for America is \$10 per year but I do not know what the extra postage is, so if you will send me a bill, I will be pleased to forward you a cheque by return.

Sincerely yours,

JOSEPH FRIEDMAN
Managing Director

PAPER IN THE INDUSTRY

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

TRAVEL DEPT.: Most of the "Here and Thereabouts in Hollywood" last week happened out of town. To start the week off there was the 20th Century-Fox San Francisco trip to see "Alexander Graham Bell." And then to finish for the fellows who weren't too tired after that trip, there was the Dodge City excursion. Everyone is deciding that these location previews may become a habit, but we are going to serve warning now. No one will ever top the efficiency and all around perfection of Harry Brand and his crew on the San Francisco jaunt. . . . The crankiest individuals in the world, when they are getting something for nothing, are newspaper people. And so well organized did Harry Brand have the trip that it is a definite and absolute report that the entire affair was run off without even a newspaper man to complain.

* * *

FROM THE CITY DESK: The secret was that Brand ran the affair as a good city editor gets out tomorrow's paper. He had Joe Reddy for the grief-bearer on the train, Troy Orr in advance at Frisco, and then he had every fellow on his big staff—Jim Denton, Milt Howe, Phil Gersdorf, and a half dozen others of that good crew of his all with definite assignments to carry through for individual worries. The result is that word we have already used, 'Perfection.'

* * *

POPULARITY RATING: Both Hollywood and the exhibitors will probably be interested in the reaction of a cold city like San Francisco to the various stars. We trotted around with all of them in the course of the day and a night and are willing to make our report. Sonja Henie was the one whom you could hear the fans calling 'cute' and rushing here and there to see;

Don Ameche had a solid following that ran him ragged all day but which must have done his heart a load of good because it was so real and sincere; Sally Eilers got a great play, which may be a tip-off to RKO, because she was not putting herself forward but the autograph hounds showed up from here, there and everywhere saying, "Please Miss Eilers sign our book," and the surprise to us, was to discover the popularity that a newspaper person can achieve. Louella Parsons is the person who gave us the surprise. Louella's rating with the autograph brigade will stand up with quite a few of the players. . . . To a sideline observer, one of the freak things of the day was the proportionate mild enthusiasm given Tyrone Power and Annabella.

* * *

LET'S GET BACK HOME: Meanwhile of course, we should report that there are people who live in Hollywood and that not everyone is in San Francisco or Dodge City. . . . Sad news to hear on our return from the North was that Billie Burke is at the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital with a broken ankle that is causing a lot more trouble on recovery than an ankle should cause. . . . And incidentally we should use three question marks to express our wonder about the unknown patient whom Cary Grant is seeing at the same Cedars of Lebanon Hospital.

* * *

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN: With the old haunts closed after two A.M., we have learned that the hottest place in town is out of town. . . . We refer to the S.S. Rex, which the courts have now decided is out on the high seas. . . . The boys and girls of movieland are discovering that it is one place you can go after 2 A.M., as the swank gaming house

is now open 24 hours a day. . . . They even start the race track service at 9 A.M. for those who can't give up since Santa Anita is closed. . . . And of course, after 2 A.M. there is everything except the curfew. The boat really opened Thursday and is getting a heavy play. Incidentally our old friend Hi W. Hoffman, is in charge of dishing out the victuals. Hi is the fellow who used to worry about your having a good time at the Trocadero and the Vendome.

* * *

LONESOME PEOPLE: The day that found Natalie Draper serving her divorce papers on Tom Brown also saw Tom at the Seven Seas Cafe all by his lonesome. . . . And on the same evening Paulette Goddard appeared a bit lonesome as she listened to Bruz Fletcher's songs at the Club Bali. . . . Charley was not there, but John McLain was doing his best. . . . People who did not look lonesome at the Club Bali on the same evening were Miriam Hopkins and Anatole Litvak who were entertaining a party of eight. . . . And a nice little girl who was far from lonesome was Peggy Fears who received a heart-warming reception on her return engagement to the Versailles, within not so many hours after her departure from the hospital. . . . And some of our best Russians, including Gregory Ratoff, are going to be very, very lonesome from April 10 to 21st while Bublichki closes for alterations. . . . The La Conga put on an evening when the 'Oomph' girl, Ann Sheridan, crowned Eduardo Chavez King of the Rhumba. Ann is doing all right by herself because folks still like her even with all the new publicity she is getting.

* * *

HIGH BROW NOTE: The dean of New York dons, Alexander Woolcott lunched at the Vine

Street Derby on four consecutive days and here is the intellectual company he had: Jimmy Roosevelt one day, Maureen O'Sullivan the next, Groucho Marx on the third day and Constance Collier on the fourth. . . . There are so many important titles in Hollywood these days that you can hardly take a step without tripping up over a baron or two. Just look at the folks who graced the table at the Beverly Hills Brown Derby one day last week: Countess di Frasso with Princess Karpenola, Douglas Fairbanks Sr., and the former Lady Sylvia Ashley swapping conversation with the Earl of Warwick, and the Countess of Jersey (Virginia Cherrill) with her mother. . . . Which is considerable royalty to have in one eatery on a single evening. . . . The same day that we were reading in the local papers that Warner Brothers were having a tough time finding Errol Flynn, so that they could start the Dodge City train, we saw him present for the benefit of all the cash customers at the Beverly Tropics . . . or maybe the fellow has two or three stand-ins.

* * *

SHOWMANSHIP: John Steinberg has those impromptu shows at the Victor Hugo hitting on high. The last one we saw had such a top money cast as: Edgar Bergen, Ken Murray, Eleanor Powell and Rodney Bell who stepped out on the floor and gave all they had under the direction of Arthur Lake as master of ceremonies. It was a great night and among those who enjoyed it noticeably were the Eddie Robinsons, the Charles Bickfords, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and most of the other real people who used to meet at the Trocadero when Steinberg was handling that spot. Biggest thrill of the evening was the willingness

(Continued on Page 15)

CHAVEZ

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"SPIKE" FEATHERSTONE
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Fox San Francisco Preview Steals The Limelight

(Continued from Page 14)

of the players whom we have mentioned to give encore after encore. . . . Czechoslovakia is really looking to British support, because at the height of last week's headlines Francis Lederer and Margo had their dinner at Marcus Daly's. . . . The latest news we hear is that a Hollywood commentator will broadcast from New York. George Fisher is going to do it and he starts his "Hollywood Whispers" program from New York on April 8th. . . . Someone tells us that it isn't so that Dick Purcell and Vicki Lester are to be married in New York while Purcell and Eddie Norris, in the latter's plane, go East. We are merely passing on the information. . . . It is tough keeping up with your geography in this business. The same night that we read a Miami dispatch telling of something or other that Claude Stroud and his bride of a month, Gloria Brewster, were doing down there under Florida palm leaves, we saw them at the Beverly Tropics in Hollywood, and enjoying themselves very much. . . . Apparently quite a number of the folks have discovered the Delhaven Restaurant in Beverly Hills, because on one evening's encounter we were able to spot: Rouben Mamoulian, Wallace Beery, Anita Loos, Aldous Huxley, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Earl Carroll, Arthur Lubin, Jerome Kern, Walter Jurmann, Burton Lane, and Bobby Jordan.

* * *

REUNION NOTE: Mrs. Jimmie Cagney and Charlie Foy held a reunion at the Grace Hayes Lodge that was a pleasure to watch, and must have been more than enjoyable to those concerned. . . . And here is why: Mrs. Jimmie and Charlie remembered a vaudeville act that they did many years ago, and in which they toured the country for one of those good old United Booking Office forty week contracts. They put the show on for the customers, who enjoyed it so well that we think if Messrs. Albee and Murdock had been present there would have been another forty week contract in the signature stage. . . . Wally Ford is breaking out as a stage producer with the Coast rights to "Of Mice and Men," and we can't help thinking that he is doing a lot of that "up-the-sleeve" smiling at Hollywood producers who let him get away to New York and London. And the top hit of a season. Ford has been

so darned busy that it is not entirely fair to report that he takes out time to eat, but we did see him at the Vine Street Brown Derby one day last week talking over the production with the play's author. . . . Equally good news about the "Mice and Men" casting was the item that Creighton Chaney would do the part that Broderick Crawford played so long on Broadway. Lon's son is another one of those assets just waiting around for discovery in his home town, Hollywood. Maybe he should go to New York.

* * *

WHO WANTS TO BE HITLER? . . . Eugene Frenke was all set to start his next production, "Anschluss," which he wrote in collaboration with Otis Garret, and even had his space rented with a starting date at the General Service Studios. . . . Then he found that he and Otis had written a scene which shows the entry of a chap named Hitler into Vienna after the rape of Austria. . . . Now Director Frenke is up against a problem about his starting date. Because he cannot find an actor willing to play Herr Hitler. . . . We can't blame the players. The most inno-

cent trouper in the world might do a good job for the scene, and the better the job he does, the more people will be remembering for years to come that he was the fellow who was Hitler.

* * *

JUST REPEATING OURSELVES: We have been talking about Wally Ford going all the way to New York and London to have the satisfaction of being an actor, and the thought occurred to us that we had forgotten to mention Lee Tracy, who also found London appreciative. . . . On top of that regret, we recalled that we met Jack LaRue last week, returned from his London success in the gangster role in "Golden Boy." . . . There's a player who never turned in a poor performance, but the casting directors got him typed some half dozen years ago, and—well, he also had to go to London. . . . Maybe the whole problem could be solved if we kept the actors home and sent the casting directors to London.

* * *

SCOOP! SCOOP! . . . No newspaper man rating our acquaintance

has in years used the word "Scoop" to describe an occurrence in which he gets a story into print before his colleagues. . . . But it is the only word that tells what Louella Parsons must have done to the world on the marriage of Clark Gable and Carole Lombard. . . . Particularly tough on the representatives of London's important papers who had to receive the news by cable from Fleet Street while on Mr. Zanuck's San Francisco trip. . . . Chief worry concerned the proper way to explain to an editorial czar back in London that San Francisco is a little more than commuting distance from Hollywood.

* * *

Peggy Perrin's club, "The Strip on the Strip," was dignified last week by the legal authority of Sam Wolf, who was escorting Kay Sutton. . . . Others seen during the evening included Guy Rennie, with Mrs. Warren Hymer, and Mary Casiday traveling with Bentley Ryan. . . . Nor should we forget the applause that Paul Benson was giving to red-headed Mary Trent's songs. Or should we have said: "Mary Trent's red-headed songs?"

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DEADLINE!

Statistical material and other text sections of The Digest's BOX OFFICE ANNUAL are now on the presses . . . Color forms for the advertising sections will follow during the week.

So this is the deadline hour for representation in the industry's Blue Ribbon Annual—if you have not made your reservation, or desire some change in your copy, please get in touch with us immediately.

Our representatives, Mr. Carberry and Mr. Gaines, will cover all studios during the week and are at your service.

THE DIGEST

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ANNUAL

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 11.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, APRIL 17, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"ALEXANDER BELL" TOPS AT BOX OFFICES; MANY HOLD-OVERS

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SEE PAGE 4

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Screenplay

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Photography

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DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

THEATRE PRICES WAVERING

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Out here in Los Angeles Fox West Coast has recently cut admission prices to fifteen cents in six of its neighborhood houses, with the company's position summed up by Daily Variety in these words:

"The reduction was prompted solely because of heavy inroads made by promiscuous theater building of independent operators in those areas, which made it necessary for F-WC to drastically slash gates in order to protect theater investments."

Back of the action by so important a circuit, and back of the explanation offered is an interesting theater development which has until now been going almost unnoticed.

* * *

This is the erection of new and finely appointed theaters of modest seating capacity in big city neighborhoods that have an appeal of their own difficult for the more unwieldy circuit palace to meet.

First, there is the appeal of price to the family trade. This means something to the Mr. and Missus who would like to take the youngsters to a show, but can't quite stand the strain on a five dollar bill.

Second, there is the appeal of convenience, as many of these theatres, erected in more recently developed residential sections, are handier for an after dinner walking visit than the nearest big circuit house.

Third, there is frequently the appeal of more comfortable surroundings—no one needs to be reminded that many of the nation's palaces built ten years or more ago could do with a job of re-seating and other refurbishing to match the fine work being done by architects today.

True, the new "small de luxe" house must give ample clearance on pictures to its bigger competitor; frequently must shop at different exchanges. As against this is the fact that the smaller man intelligently operating can often book more closely to

the desires of his particular patrons than the circuit manager, receiving his pictures in routine.

It is all interesting, and may mean a lot to the development of the industry in the next few years.

* * *

Overseating has always been the worry of the big theater man in any territory. But truth to tell, it has never been overseating caused by live independents that has been the real evil in a given city. It has been the overbuilding splurges indulged in by the big fellows themselves when they plant three thousand seat elephants on every downtown corner.

The big houses are leading a pretty hectic existence nowadays. There aren't enough top money pictures to go around fifty-two weeks a year and make every week a healthy week for the vast yawning amphitheatres.

It takes pulling and tugging, and every last possible ounce of showmanship to merely stay in the black. It takes herculean production enterprise and ever-growing budgets.

This new tendency, which is merely repeating the story of the foundation days of the industry, may have far reaching effects.

More houses that do not have to take in the national mint's reserves each week to show a profit, may easily mean more money for producers—since it will mean a greater spread of revenue on a greater number of pictures—which means a greater number of profitable pictures, instead of the spectacle we have now of practically all companies depending on two, three, or four outstanding shows in a year to show a profit.

There is something wrong with an industry whose manufacturers have to turn out thirty, forty or fifty articles of merchandise a year in order to make money on two, three or four of the items.

We don't suggest a return to the horse and buggy, but maybe those bonanza early days of the nickleodeons have some lessons worth studying.

Distributors Batting Average For 1938

	Releases	%
1. M. G. M.	45	103
2. 20th Century-Fox	52	92
3. United Artists	17	92
4. Paramount	40	88
5. Warner Brothers	53	87
6. R. K. O.	39	83
7. Columbia	33	80
8. Universal	39	77
9. Republic	25	73
10. Monogram	14	69
11. Grand National	4	66
12. Gaumont British	10	59
	371	

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: STRIKE THREATENS; MAYER TELLS 'EM OFF ABOUT INCOME TAXES

Strike Talk Fills The Air

As we go to press, the Highlight of the week is, of course, the threat of a theater tie-up because of union difficulties in Hollywood. Our own hunch is that the battle will be settled while our presses are running. . . . But we may be wrong. Because both sides are at such varying poles at this moment, that one gasps at the effort to consider a middle ground. . . . On the one side, the producers have faced a steadily mounting production budget, and the dreary prospect of diminishing markets; on the other side, the union ultimatum is said to declare for immediate wage tilts and still shorter working hours. . . . Maybe the breaking point has been reached. . . . But we still have a lot of confidence in the ability of Pat Casey and Victor Clarke on one side of the fence, and George Browne and Harold Smith, on the other, to find ways out of arguments that do not spell war. . . . It is unfortunate that the issue is beclouded by local internecine strife in the ranks of the IATSE. . . . But there are rumblings of extreme radical influences that do not desire any settlement. . . . Those things don't help. . . . Grand jury investigations are proposed. . . . Could it be possible that all the steam is up to force someone with influence to call off the Grand Jury dogs?

Louis B. Mayer Tells His Story

We think another Highlight of the week was the clear-cut manner in which Louis B. Mayer and his aides met the issue created by the Congressional publication of income tax figures. . . . This was a serious matter, and not alone to Mr. Mayer—his worry was probably the least—but to the industry as a whole. . . . Publication of the figures of all high bracket incomes was apparently well timed by certain people for certain political reasons. . . . The follow-up might well have been calculated to make the voters forget unemployment, the re-recession, the European near-wars, and even the weather. . . . Quick action, a candid statement by Myron Fox, handler of the bank accounts and income statements, efficient timing and placing by Howard Strickling and efficient crew, killed a smelly bud before it started to flower. . . . It turned out that Mayer's income tax paid the salaries for the Senate of the United States—96 of them—last year. . . . If you don't think this skilful handling was important to you, Mr. Fellow Producer and Mr. Exhibitor, we would hate to start picturing for you what the crackpots would be doing to picture and theater taxes as the next election approaches.

Busy Days For Top N. Y. Executives

Companies which haven't already held their sales conventions are having their own share of excitement these days in Hollywood, where

		Was	Now
1. Midnight	PAR	111	113
2. Honolulu	MGM	103	105
3. Tailspin	FOX	92	94
4. Wife, Husband & Friend	FOX	88	90
5. Three Musketeers	FOX	84	86
6. Arizona Wildcat	FOX	78	80
7. Mysterious Mr. Wong	MOND	72	75
8. I Was A Convict	REP	70	72

the top New York executives are gathering with studio chiefs to lay the campaign plans. . . . Paramount has Barney Balaban, Neil Agnew, Stanton Griffis, Russell Holman and Bob Gilham among the Eastern delegation, while RKO-Radio has George Schaefer, Ned Depinet, and S. Barrett McCormick on the ground. . . . Plenty of rumors about both companies and their future policies, but not too many that you should take too seriously. . . . It seems certain, for example, that Schaefer will maneuver a compromise on the intolerable situation by which Pan Berman shared in all the profits, chose his own worries, and disdained the losses. But that isn't news, because a compromise had to come some day. . . . There are always rumors about Paramount, but we don't think any bombs are going to burst now that the calm hand of Y. Frank Freeman is on the throttle. This Freeman boy, even back in circuit operating days, always worked slowly but surdly his ends to achieve. Not with firecrackers. . . . Speaking of theater operations, John J. O'Connor, chief of RKO picture buying for the theaters, is also in town. . . . There's a boy whose hard-boiled, practical picture sense could give any producer or director in Hollywood a post-graduate course in what to make and what not to make. . . . Would be a great idea for the Screen Directors Guild to invite Johnny for a closed-door session some night, and prime him to talk turkey.

No Reviews And Plenty of News

The same week that sees only two pictures shown for preview by the local press, also sees a very good sprinkling of news happenings around the studios. . . . William Anthony Mc-

		Was	Now
1. Little Princess	FOX	126	117
2. Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	108	106
3. St. Louis Blues	PAR	92	90
4. The Lady Vanishes	FOX	92	89
5. I'm From Missouri	PAR	86	83
6. One-Third of a Nation	PAR	80	78
7. King of the Turf	UA	78	75
8. On Trial	WAR	80	74
9. Boy Slaves	RKO	75	70
10. Secret Service of the Air	WAR	72	70
11. The Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	72	68
12. Spirit of Culver	UNIV	69	65
13. Within the Law	MGM	68	64

Guire is away from Metro just long enough to set a deal with Twentieth Century-Fox. . . . After ten years at MGM, John Meehan moves over to join Walter Wanger. Ten years in one studio! Boy, that's a spell. . . . Ed Ludwig moves over to Columbia to direct one picture. Ludwig lost considerable time off the credit sheets after making "That Certain Age" waiting for Universal to settle its Danielle Darrieux troubles. Which was a tough break for him so we hope he gets a crack at a real piece of material in his Columbia opus. . . . It looks as though Lester Cowan has something in that tie-up with Sinclair Lewis for joint production of the latter's latest play. The publicity breaks come easy. . . . MGM is at last clear of its earlier cartoon worries, with the Harman-Ising organization now having command of the situation so as to guarantee steady release date meeting. . . . Dave Hempstead has a chance at quite a bit of box office when he has Alice Faye and Don Ameche as a team in "Falling Star." Ameche is hitting his real money stride with "Alexander Graham Bell." Alice has never had to worry about hers, regardless of "Tailspin." Remember, that one also had to carry Constance Bennett.

Nate Blumberg Lays Down A Policy

Nate Blumberg, Universal chief, said a mouthful when he laid down a Universal policy for the coming year in a brief off-hand talk last week. . . . Nate says his desire is to keep Universal's production policy "liquid"—that is to avoid handcuffing commitments, while remaining free to grab the right thing at the right moment. . . . It is the ideal policy for a company in Universal's position, and it will pay out for Universal and its customers. . . . We are reminded of the varieties of advice given New York executives—both picture veterans and newcomers—when they come to Hollywood. . . . Most of it from agents whose chorus is "Grab this star, that star and the other star." . . . Suddenly the visiting executive finds himself loaded up with commitments for twelve months—sometimes longer—that his sales organization cannot possibly meet. Particularly when some of the stars that bloom in Spring fade in the Fall. . . . By that time you must decide to wait another year to start all over again. . . . Nate Blumberg has something in that phrase: "Liquid." . . . He should be plenty liquid and happy these days with the new Bing Crosby, the latest Durbin and the W. C. Fields going out to market. . . . MGM hands out a three-year contract renewal to Pete Smith. Heck, we thought Pete had passed the days of contracts. He is the nearest thing to a short subject institution—aside from the cartoon field—that this industry possesses. And he built it all up himself from a little acorn of an idea, plus some wholehearted support from certain sections of the front office. . . . Henry King and Darryl Zanuck are in the

(Continued on Page 5)

"ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL" HITS HIGH MARK OPENING HOLY WEEK; HOLD-OVERS SOARING

By **NORMAN WEBB**

FOX—2 New Releases

As Holy Week brought Lent to a close, we find six new releases in this past week, only one of which, "ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL," is a stand-out. The other five being very weak programmers.

"ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL," which is the first Cosmopolitan production for 20th Century-Fox, has opened up in several key cities and in spite of Holy Week averaged around 136%, with the after-Easter figures consistently building, proving that Darryl Zanuck has another big box office winner in his biographical picture of the famous telephone inventor.

To give the picture a good start, Mr. Zanuck arranged with Cosmopolitan for a big press preview of the production at the San Francisco Fair on Treasure Island, and the same night the picture was also previewed for the elite and government officials in Washington, D. C. All of this advance publicity has undoubtedly helped to get this picture off to a good start as the first box office returns definitely show.

Kenneth Macgowan acted as associate producer to Mr. Zanuck and Irving Cummings handled the very outstanding direction of this screen masterpiece.

Don Ameche and Loretta Young are costarred as Mr. and Mrs. Bell, and others prominently featured are Henry Fonda, Charles Coburn, Gene Lockhart, Spring Byington and Loretta Young's three sisters: Sally Blane, Polly Ann, and Georgianna.

While this is a rather difficult title to sell, still Cosmopolitan in cooperation with 20th Century-Fox have waged such a big advance exploitation campaign that the picture will undoubtedly draw from the very beginning. Furthermore, this is the type of story that word of mouth advertising will build considerably and therefore exhibitors should plan on giving this picture additional playing time.

Twentieth Century-Fox's second release this week is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, "MR. MOTO IN DANGER ISLAND," which, like the rest of the series, is just getting by at around 70%, and therefore will have to be spotted as the lower half of a double bill program.

As usual, Peter Lorre is starred and other featured players include Jean Hersholt, Amanda Duff and Warren Hymer. John Stone acted as associate producer and Herbert Leeds directed.

COLUMBIA—1 New Release

The most outstanding program picture of the week is Columbia's "LADY AND THE MOB," starring the recent Academy Winner, Miss Fay Bainter. The theme of this one is rather unusual and while it is rather weak on its first runs, it is the type of picture that will do much better in the nabes with theaters catering to family trade.

Other than Miss Bainter there are

Of The Six New Releases in The Past Week, Only One Rated Over 100%, And The Other Five Were Very Weak Program Pictures.

no real marquee names in the cast. The romantic leads are carried by Ida Lupino and Lee Bowman, with Henry Armetta and Warren Hymer also featured. Fred Kohner and Ben Stoloff directed.

MGM—Also 1 New Release

MGM's only new release this week is a new programmer, "SOCIETY LAWYER," with three marquee names that is drawing very poorly, either because of Holy Week or a bad title, which we will be able to decide later when we receive figures on future bookings of this picture.

In "SOCIETY LAWYER," Walter Pidgeon, Virginia Bruce and Leo Carrillo are featured and these three names combined should certainly draw more business—but maybe the public isn't interested in society lawyers. John Considine produced and Eddie Marin directed.

UNIVERSAL—1 Release

Universal has a fairly good programmer this week in their new comedy drama entitled the "FAMILY NEXT DOOR," 74%, which will probably serve as an excellent filler with a big dramatic production. Joy Hodges, Hugh Herbert, Ruth Donnelly and Eddie Quillan are featured. Max Golden produced and Joe Santley directed.

RKO—Also 1 New Release

RKO's new release this week is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit, "THEY MADE HER A SPY," 72%, which is one of the many new spy and espionage pictures on the market today. Other than the star Sally Eilers, there are no names of importance in the cast and thus this one is just getting by.

Allan Lane, Fritz Lieber and Theodor Von Eitz are among the more important supporting players. Robert Sisk produced and Jack Hively directed.

Exhibitors might do well to pass this one up for the time being and run Warner Brothers' "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" first as it is bound to be a box office sensation—and then use this one as a follow-up picture.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

cutting room stages on "Stanley and Livingstone." We've heard enough to make us entirely brave in telling you to watch for this one. . . . Twentieth is going to increase the number of Terrytunes that will carry Technicolor. A wise move. Technicolor, properly used, is red hot as showmanship these days. . . . Speaking of the wisdom of Nate Blumberg, as we were a few lines above, we forgot to mention our belief that he has also pulled a ten strike in lining up Frank Tuttle with his directorial organization. Frank is a director-creator. By which we mean a picture maker with story sense. He will make the "U" happy. The picture will present George Raft. . . . Republic has a good bet in that remake, now in serial form, of "Tillie The Toiler." The comic strip has always been good, the original feature with Marion Davies has a money memory in the minds of exhibitors. And Columbia's "Blondie" is showing that there is a spot for series ideas that do not need murder and rapine, or family ideas that work the kitchen sink overtime.

Sam Goldwyn in His Element

When Sam Goldwyn starts a fight—he wants a fight. When the lawyers discovered that the crowded court calendars of New York would delay action on his suit against United Artists to an indefinite period, Sam merely quashed the suit and moved it over to Delaware. . . . Like two alley cats adjourning to another backyard, without cessation of hostilities. . . . Pretty tough to express an opinion on a suit like this because there are two fundamentally correct viewpoints colliding head-on. . . . Sam is the individualist, in his picture making certainly, and he desires to be the individualist in the selling of his pictures. . . . But United Artists has suffered in recent years by not preparing a fair volume of product for the selling season. . . . Overhead is overhead, and play dates must be stalked, snared, and set to maintain distribution efficiency. . . . So United is spreading out for volume, while Sam likes the idea of going along paddling his own canoe, with the other canoeists to be approved by him. . . . So, there you are. Sam makes such darn good pictures, as and when he does make them, that he can build up a case for himself. . . . United has the economics of the distribution business to face. . . . Two well-liked casting directors shift a bit this week, and no particular reasons given. Charles Richards leaves his Selznick-International post, while Fred Schuessler moves over from Paramount to the S-I spot. . . . Looks as though Harry Edington is putting an organization together for his Universal unit, with the veteran D. A. Doran taking over the story spot.

6 New Releases Not In Last Issue

1 Over 100%.....5 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	136	140
2. Lady and the Mob	COL	76	85
3. Society Lawyer	MGM	74	80
4. The Family Next Door	UNIV	74	75
5. They Made Her A Spy	RKO	72	75
6. Mr. Moto In Danger Island	FOX	70	75

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

IRVING
CUMMINGS
DIRECTOR

20th Century-Fox

“Alexander Graham Bell”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



DON
AMECHE

20th Century-Fox

“Alexander Graham Bell”

SECOND GUESSER HEARS CHARLES SKOURAS HONORED BY INDIES; HE ALSO HAS SOME TIPS

The Second Guesser received quite a thrill last week. He saw the lion and the lambs, not lying down together nor lying to each other—but feasting together and tossing verbal bouquets back and forth. The occasion was the Independent Theater Owners welcome home banquet to Charles Skouras, just returned from European wanderings and a sentimental journey to his native Greece. . . . It was quite an occasion. There is probably no territory in the United States where it would surprise you more to see the independents and the local big circuit factotum engaged in a love feast. . . . Because Fox West Coast is powerful out here, almighty powerful, and power breeds its own problems. . . . But you would never have suspected that there ever have been competitive problems were you present at this Elks Club affair.

Dr. Giannini Sets The Keynote

The very fact that a banking and executive figure as prominent as Dr. A. H. Giannini was toastmaster gave a keynote to the affair. For those with memories and acquaintances with many of the inside workings of this industry over a twenty-year span, also like to think of the Doctor as a conciliator. . . . He has done unpublished yeoman service in that characterization. . . . So who better fitted for the toastmaster spot at an affair that was a welcome home handshake from competitors to the competition. . . . The Doctor was in his usual good form, and incidentally, we think he worked Euripedes, Aristophanes, and a few other Greek immortals into the Skouras family tree before he got through. . . . Albert A. Galston, president of the Independent Theater Owners, talked from the heart in straight exhibitor language, George Smith, western district sales manager for Paramount, spoke for the distributors, with remarks on behalf of the local exchange men from Jack Brower, Warner manager. And then Charlie Skouras gave an account of his trip that contrasted the exhibitor's lot here with theater operating conditions as he found them throughout Europe, together with his studied opinion that television is not a menace to exhibitors, but will find its niche in the showmanship of our present motion picture theaters.

Maybe Dynamite In The Territory

The Second Guesser looked sad. We prodded him, and he finally broke into words. "Just after that wonderful love feast—right smack I run into the fact that there is a rival independent exhibitors organization under way in the Southern California field. Yep—you guessed it. That militant Allied group is invading the field. First I thought it was just the sort of talk you hear anywhere around the picture field for months before anything happens—but gosh, if I didn't run into the offi-

cial Board of Directors list just yesterday. That means the boys have been holding meetings. So now there is an Allied unit in the L. A. territory. That Board looks interesting too: President, Seth Perkins; Vice-President, Jules Wolk; Treasurer, Fred Hershon; Secretary, James C. Quinn; Board Members, J. J. Bard, B. J. Leavitt." . . . The Second Guesser tells us it looks like a pretty shrewd Allied move to finally land itself in the territory closest to the chest of the picture-making colony. . . . Almost anything might happen from now on. . . . And probably will.

The Second Guesser Gets A Call Down

From Lynn Farnol, Director of Advertising and Publicity for United Artists, comes a gently phrased call down for The Second Guesser which he figures he can handle best by reprinting as it came. Says Mr. Farnol: "Someone is kidding you about the figures on 'Prison Without Bars.' It's the surprise picture of the year. Frankly we did not expect it to be box office dynamite. Nobody could have been more surprised than we at the Albany opening. And the record has been consistent ever since. Two themes—'Dead End Girls' and 'Women Without Men' have been consistent box office naturals." . . . The Second Guesser has sent out some wires and letters to check up still further, because if he is wrong, he always likes to be at least the second person to say so. . . . From an enclosure in Mr. Farnol's letter The Second Guesser learns of an unusually successful opening at the Warner house in Albany, and reports of other fine engagements in half a dozen other spots. . . . The double checking is now in progress. . . . Speaking of call downs, The Second Guesser also got one from an exhibitor last week for not tipping him off more strongly to the imported picture, "Grand Illusion." . . . Complainant says it has been a surprise hit in many spots in his territory. . . . The Second Guesser pleads guilty to not having reviewed the picture for The Digest, because it had been playing numerous Eastern spots before available for review in Hollywood. . . . Guess we'll have to hire that New York reviewer who has been coaxing for a chance to work on a paper that says things. . . . And maybe that's enough recorded call downs for one issue.

He Has A Few Mild Peeves

Inasmuch as The Second Guesser had been put on the pan for a few turns of the griddle, we thought it only fair to let him get a few of his own pet peeves off his chest. He had one minor one which has been worrying him no end. Sez he: "Will someone please talk to those exhibitors who have developed the cute trick of sandwiching their trailers in the middle of the news reels? It's not good selling—it is tough on the trailer, and tough on the audience. The unique feature of a news reel is that it represents—whether in comedy, trag-

edy, or fascinating interest—real things of life. And what break does a trailer get when it is plopped unannounced between a historic Presidential message and a Florida holocaust? Or between some really pretty Florida homegrown and homefed cuties and the latest additions to Lew Lehr's monkey family?" . . . We couldn't keep The Second Guesser consistently peeved, however, because talking of newsreels reminded him of something that brought a smile. He asked us: "Did you tip the exhibitors off to one of the greatest high spot audience moments of the year—that Movietone clip on the Sweepstakes winners? If you haven't seen it yourself, go chase it down at the second runs. And you'll find some first runs actually repeating it. It is one of the most human documents that newsreel boys have given the screen. Something you laugh at—and laugh with. We take too many newsreel surprises for granted. Some wise boys are going to spot this Sweepstakes bit for a world of extra audience satisfaction." . . . Then another peeve just had to come. "Can't someone, Hays office or other authority, issue a blanket order to preview ticket holders to smother the claque applause that ruins the first half reel for the critics and the cash customers? It doesn't flatter the producer, director, or player, anymore—because each one of them knows to whom he gave a half dozen tickets. And it does play hell with many a fine line of characterization dialogue that some author has sweated over in the writing, some director in the staging, and some player in the delivering. More than once we have had our eyes opened to some deft bit of characterization at the second view of a picture. We never heard the line of dialogue at the first preview because the 'friend of friends' were anticipating it with their thunderclaps." . . . At that, The Second Guesser may have something here. It isn't entirely a Hollywood problem if the nuisance throws national reviewers off stride.

The Second Guesser has been doing a lot of running around the twenty-five and thirty-five cent houses the past few weeks and one thing has him worried. That is the print condition. He worries this way: "I hope the economy waves haven't got the distributors cutting down on print replacements, or inspection service too much. But something like that must be happening, judging by some of the recent shows I have caught. You would hear wails to high heaven if some of our production executives and top cinematographers were to catch these prints right in their own Hollywood. Apparently if a few feet more or less are lost from a sequence replacements are slow in coming and the print keeps on working, regardless of whether the footage lost ruined the top line of a scene, and the feeling of another one. Has anyone investigated whether new wage and hour standards have some exchanges undermanning on inspection service? It might be worth while." . . . We promised to turn Operative K9 loose on the trail, and meanwhile are open for any exhibitor or exchange opinions on the matter.

"Hardys Ride High" One of Series Best

M. G. M.

(The Digest Estimates 140%)

Director George B. Seitz
 Screenplay: Agnes Christine Johnston, Kay Van Riper, William Ludwig.

Based on characters created by Aurania Rouverol.

Featured: Lewis Stone, Mickey Rooney, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, Sara Haden, Virginia Grey, Minor Watson, John King, John T. Murray, George Irving, Halliwell Hobbes, Aileen Pringle, Marsha Hunt, Donald Briggs, William Orr, Truman Bradley.

Photographers Lester White
 Musical Score David Snell
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor Ben Lewis
 Time 75 minutes

"The Hardys Ride High" will take strong rank in the list of Hardy Family pictures. In this reviewer's opinion it is far superior to the last release, and bows only to "Love Finds Andy Hardy," because that earlier subject caught the psychological moment when the public discovered Andy Hardy. Also, the earlier subject arrived before we had become overly acquainted with the family's ways.

But, comparisons aside, "The Hardys Ride High" can stand on its own feet, even if it were not part of a pre-sold series. For its story basis, it has the ever-human dream that someday some unknown relative will pass in his chips and a bewhiskered lawyer will arrive at our door with the news that we have inherited a million or so.

CURRENT REVIEWS

1 Over 100%.....1 Weak

	Est. %
1. The Hardys Ride High	MGM.....140
2. Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR.....70

From there on, plot and actions are just an audience dream. The effect of the news on the Hardy family that they have supposedly inherited two million is played out in the individual reactions of each member of the family. For picture purposes these reactions may be exaggerated, but they are exaggerated to the successful point of many fine laughs and continuing interest.

Mickey Rooney, of course, gets the best opportunity to take advantage of this choice trouser's spot. But each member of the cast is given a moment of sharp delineation, and all come through successfully. Good basic story values, good human dialogue writing, and skilful direction are responsible.

For the benefit of exhibitors who may fear that the Hardys from now on will be a two million dollar family, we had better report that there comes a question of honesty in the course of the plot, and the sturdy Judge Lewis Stone Hardy must make his choice. He gives up the fortune rather than soil his conscience—and so varied and rough have been the experiences

of the family in their brief excursion into wealth, that everyone in the family—and the audience—is tickled to death that they are not going to have that nasty two million.

This is what can be called "family Cinderella." It is great audience stuff, turned out by one of the most consistent production units in the business—the family behind the Hardy family.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: They'll like it better than the last Hardy, so you can put the pressure on again.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The exhibitor can stack his chips on No. 6—which in theatre parlance means that the sixth of the MGM series, 'The Hardys Ride High,' is right in the groove that leads to high stakes at the wicket.

VARIETY: "The Hardy Family continues to wield its entertainment and money-making sock. 'Ride High' in every way sustains the standard of the series and will cinch even more soundly its popular favor, cultivated now in six successive hits."

"Secret Police" Okay Drummond Yarn

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer Edward T. Lowe
 Director James Hogan
 Screenplay Garnett Weston
 Original H. C. (Sapper) McNeile
 Star John Howard

Featured: Heather Angel, H. B. Warner, Reginald Denny, E. E. Clive, Elizabeth Patterson, Leo Carroll, Forrester Harvey, Clyde Cook, David Clyde, Neil Fitzgerald, Elspeth Dudgeon.

Photographer Merritt Gerstad
 Art Director Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick
 Musical Director Boris Morros
 Film Editor Arthur Schmidt
 Time 55 minutes

Paramount goes straight cliff-hanger in this issue of the continuing adventures of Bulldog Drummond, and a capable cast in the hands of a capable director bring it through for standard program entertainment. Where they like Drummond, they will like this one; where they

are superior to the wild and woolly adventures of Sapper McNeile's two-fisted character, they wouldn't care for it if it were twice as good.

This time it seems there is treasure to be found in the secret devious tunnels of a certain castle. There is a murderer on hand, there are dark passages that go this way, that way, and all ways. Atmosphere has been creepily handled by the technical department and the cinematographer, with James Hogan pacing his action for speed and gasps.

The same good cast that Paramount has supplied to this series is again seen going through its paces with aplomb and apparent relish. John Howard has a little less opportunity as Drummond than in previous numbers of the series, but continues to sell a likeable personality. Heather Angel is again the girl whose marriage is frustrated by the pressure of melodrama. Reginald Denny hits the farce note at

which he is so skillful, E. E. Clive and Elizabeth Paterson carry on with their usual scene-stealing ability. Two top spot performances are given by Forrester Harvey and Leo Carroll, the former a screwy professor, the latter the fellow with murder in his eye.

Edward H. Lowe produced, with good results for this type of picture.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will satisfy followers of the series.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police" will fit smoothly into the series. It has plenty of exciting effect, moves rapidly, draws its portion of laughs but on the whole simmers down to brightly handled potboiler stuff budgeted and conditioned for the secondary spots."

VARIETY: "Bulldog Drummond's secret police come off second best in this go with the adversary, and the picture is one of the lesser Drummonds for the trailer spot in the neighborhood bills."

You Are Only Worth What the
BOX OFFICE Says You Are Worth!

«

—and the only service in the industry which gives you the authentic box office value of every individual associated with the making of motion pictures is the

»

DIGEST'S BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

BAD NEWS NOTE . . . You probably read in the sport pages of most local newspapers last week the news that Nick the Greek had made a sensational clean-up aboard the Rex. Most estimates gave his winnings on a single night as \$30,000. . . . Well, it was bad news for Nick. For since then about everybody in Southern California who claim the slightest past acquaintance has been besieging Nick with the old toucheroo. . . . Some are modest, however, and merely want an explanation of his system along with a stake with which to start playing it. . . . At that you would be surprised to know how many Hollywood big names are trying to win by following his supposed system. . . . It remained for one smart movie executive, who has plenty of nickels himself, to get Nick to play for him, with the result that after ten hours at Thoroughbank Nick gave the executive a \$13,000 profit for the evening. . . . Just adding nickels to nickels.

DANCING FOR CHARITY . . . Quite a turn out last week when the Motion Picture Artists Committee took over the La Conga for the evening and gave a dinner dance for the benefit of the Spanish war refugees. . . . Gertrude Neissen led the Conga serpentine, squired by Jack Smart. . . The Jimmy Cagneys, Joan Blondell and Dick Powell, Ralph Bellamy and Geraldine Fitzgerald were among those whom we glimpsed in a crowded house. . . . Also in the cause of charity is an affair which the Dominoes gave Saturday evening, with Fritzi Ridgeway hostess at her Hollywoodland home.

FRONT PAGE STUFF . . . The European war fears came right home to Janet Beecher last week when she received a letter from the British War Ministry requesting her to sell her property in Sussex so that the grounds may be used for military purposes. . . . Speak-

ing of the British—have you heard about the menus prepared for the British United Services Embassy Ball at the Victor Hugo, on April 22nd? . . . They very blandly state: "Floor show by famous stars—WE HOPE." . . . And while we are with the British, let's report a very attractive — and gay — couple glimpsed at the Hawaiian Paradise Isle the other evening when Bruce Lester, English actor, squired Miss Jackie Templeton, who is in Hollywood from Washington, D. C. for a whirl at pictures.

HAPPY COUPLES . . . Just to prove that all two-somes are not confined to the unattached, we should list some of the happily married couples glimpsed at night spots during the week. . . . There was the Irene Hervey-Allan Jones duo at the Seven Seas Cafe. . . And by the way, did you see Irene's swell performance in "East Side of Heaven" . . . Glimpsed at the

Seas the same night were Mr. and Mrs. John Carradine. . . Olympe Bradna entertained the patrons with an impromptu rumba while Mickey Rooney came in stag. . . . And, oh yes, speaking of happily married couples, Mr. and Mrs. Clark Gable were seen dining at the Beverly Brown Derby and in quite animated conversation with Harry Carey on the problems of ranch owners.

JOYFUL YOUTH . . . The old world atmosphere of the new Gourmet on Sunset Boulevard, with its paved court and an actual wishing well, has started a new trek of the younger romantic couples to the spot. . . . They are never any too anxious to tell just what they wish for—but superstition has it many of the wishes come true. . . . Among the comely lads and lassies glimpsed on successive evenings recently were: Ann Sheridan with David Niven; Jane Bryan with Joe Brissac, Kay Linaker with Eddie Burns, Anita Louise with Buddy Adler, Glenda Farrell with Tom Lewis, and Ida Lupino with Louis Hayward. . . . Quite a bunch of healthy youthful romance in that listing, eh?

YOUNG AND HOPEFUL . . . Speaking of youth and romance, Jack L. Warner is throwing a party this Wednesday for a young and hopeful aspirant for stage and screen fame. . . . All who have seen her predict a great future for this vivacious youngster. . . . A bundle of pep and vivacity. . . . She may have to change her name for screen purposes before the associate producers get through with her, but at present she is known as May Robson. . . . There is no truth in the reports that Jack's attachment to the gal is anything more than a recognition of possible merit. . . . While looking at our Wednesday calendar, we also are reminded that Buddy and Hope Lighton are hosting at the Victor Hugo. Reason for the celebration not stated in our memo book, but there are hints of a surprise.

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MONTE CARLO and CANNES Surpassed

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By Surveyor for the
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Anchored in Calm
Waters, Three Miles
Off Santa Monica

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	180
Gunna Din	RKO	179
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	138
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	136
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136
Stagecoach	UA	134
Love Affair	RKO	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	121
Little Princess	FOX	117
Made For Each Other	UA	116
Midnight	PAR	113
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	112
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	108
Honolulu	MGM	105
Zaza	PAR	102
Paris Homeymoon	PAR	102
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Tallspin	FOX	94
St. Louis Blues	PAR	90
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	90
Three Musketeers	FOX	86

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Huckleberry Finn	MGM	125
Pyemalion	MGM	135
The Beechomber	PAR	113
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Sergeant Madden	MGM	93
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	89
Hound of Baskervilles	FOX	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Cafe Society	PAR	85
Of The Record	WAR	85
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Tim From Missouri	PAR	83
Let Us Live	COL	82
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81
On Trial	WAR	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Never Say Die	PAR	80
One-Third of a Nation	PAR	78
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
Lady and the Mob	COL	76
King of the Turf	UA	75
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
Prison Without Bars	UA	72
Smiling Alone	FOX	71
The Flying Irishman	RKO	70
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	65

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	75
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	75
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	75
On Trial	WAR	74
Society Lawyer	MGM	74
Family Next Door	UNIV	74
King of Chinatown	PAR	74
Persons in Hiding	PAR	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Mr. Moto In Danger Island	FOX	70
Boy Slaves	RKO	70
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	70
Inside Story	RKO	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	70
Ambush	PAR	70
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	69
Beauty For The Asking	RKO	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Sudden Money	PAR	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	66
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Risky Business	UNIV	64
Within the Law	MGM	64
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Blondie Meets The Boss	COL	81

D. BELOW \$100,000

Mysterious Mr. Wong	FOX	74
Homicide Bureau	COL	74
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	72
Whispering Enemies	COL	72
I Was A Convict	REP	72
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	REP	71
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Lone Shot	GN	67
Forged Passports	REP	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	66
Risky Business	UNIV	64
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.



*The Fastest Growing
Paper in the Industry*

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

D I G E S T



NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 12.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, APRIL 26, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"DODGE CITY" AND "THE CASTLES" SHARE THE HONORS

SEE PAGE 5

THEATER CLOSES FOR LACK OF PICTURES!

SEE PAGE 3

SECOND GUESSER COMPLAINS ABOUT NEW CONTRACTS

SEE PAGE 6

●
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THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **WARNER BROTHERS** Wins With
"DODGE CITY"—154%



Executive Producer
HAL WALLIS



Associate Producer
ROBERT LORD



Director
MICHAEL CURTIZ

Featured

BRUCE CABOT
ALAN HALE
JOHN LITEL
FRANK McHUGH
GUINN WILLIAMS

Original Screenplay
ROBERT BUCKNER

Photography
SOL POLITO

Film Editor
GEORGE AMY



ERROL FLYNN



OLIVIA DeHAVILLAND



ANN SHERIDAN

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

LET'S SELL AMERICA

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

We read of the woes and grief of distributors who have lost Czechoslovakia and Austria from their geographies, we hear of new Columbuses who are just discovering the Latin-American market.

And we pause to wonder why some of the wizards haven't discovered the United States.

There are many opportunities being lost within an hour's ride of any Hollywood studio that would buy round trip Grace Line tickets to South America for an entourage of experts on selling. The funny part about it is that in many cases it would mean MORE money from the exhibitor than he is apt to pay for next year's product, but in ALL cases it might mean more satisfaction for the exhibitor.

* * *

Take a concrete example that broke into newspaper space last week.

A fourteen hundred seat house, favorably located in its zone, closed last week in Long Beach, FOR LACK OF PICTURES.

If you are laughing, we are laughing along with you. You folks in Hollywood who write, act and direct pictures may think the problem is just to give a salesman a three-colored brochure and your own photograph. Maybe he also should have pictures.

Well, the State Theater in Long Beach closed last week in order to let the pictures catch up with it!

It seems that Long Beach, twenty-three miles from Los Angeles by the speedometer, and twice that by traffic conditions, hasn't clearance over the bigger city on the theaters that buy from the same exchanges.

The State must wait. And when one of the companies supplying these theaters gets a hit picture—and a hold-over results—the State is just out of luck until the hold-over runs its course in Los Angeles.

Now, for the benefit of

exhibitors unfamiliar with the local geography, we must express the frank opinion that if there are many cash customers in Long Beach who will brave the rigors of auto driving, the costs of gasoline and parking space, the loss of sleep through late home-coming, to go up to a Los Angeles house to see any picture now current—then there are customers there who would just as soon travel to San Francisco.

We mention this Long Beach condition because it is more than an incident.

There are clearance conditions in many sections of the country that are archaic—sometimes because no one has ever thought they could be changed, at other times because there is a local czar or pooh-bah who insists on what was good enough ten years ago.

* * *

And it is our contention that an intelligent attempt to re-analyze these conditions can result in getting as much increased revenue out of the American market as Czechoslovakia, Austria, and a half a dozen other Hitler tidbits ever paid.

Why not try it?

Why not try it before the Neely Bill or some other nuisance gag rides through to actual law on the strength of some sudden headline?

There is no way to lose—because in the first place a lot of expensive Washington lobbying will be saved; and in the second, a square deal for all exhibitors in the matter of clearance is bound to bring more revenue on all pictures.

This industry today sees very expensive, intelligent and widespread national advertising campaigns on its real attractions.

Why slice the theatre map up according to some clearance habit formed ten years ago so that in much of the territory where you are buying good newspaper, magazine and billboard space the

(Continued on Page 6)

Distributors Batting Average For 1938

1. M. G. M.	45 Releases.....	103%
2. 20th Century-Fox.....	52 Releases.....	92
3. United Artists	17 Releases.....	92
4. Paramount	40 Releases.....	88
5. Warner Brothers	53 Releases.....	87
6. R. K. O.	39 Releases.....	83
7. Columbia	33 Releases.....	80
8. Universal	39 Releases.....	77
9. Republic	25 Releases.....	73
10. Monogram	14 Releases.....	69
11. Grand National.....	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	10 Releases.....	59

371

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: PARAMOUNT SHOWS ITS FAITH WITH CASH; STRIKE TALK PERSISTS

Balaban Says: "Let's Talk With Cash"

The item we have chosen for the top line in this week's Highlights may not, at first glance, seem so important to exhibitors three or five thousand miles away, so we should probably start by explaining. . . . That's like starting an argument with an apology. . . . But it is not that difficult. Our choice is the announcement by Barney Balaban that Paramount will shoot twelve millions of dollars in the erection of a new Hollywood studio. . . . First, we will beat the distant reader to the punch and agree that maybe it will only be nine million dollars, or seven or eight. . . . Okay—but even eight million dollars buys a lot of coffee and cake these days. . . . Second, we will explain some basic facts to the American and British exhibitor. . . . The present Paramount studio, in the heart of commercial Hollywood, is a pretty good plant. . . . No one would turn it down in favor of a house and lot. . . . If Paramount did not have a lot of CONFIDENCE IN ITSELF and confidence in the picture business,—your business and my business—they could go on making all the pictures you could conceive at the present mammoth plant. . . . But there is a new highly competitive day in the picture business. A studio needs the last thing in scientific knowledge, it needs acres and acres of land to build Himalaya mountains, or Oklahoma gopher hills. . . . And two canny fellows like Barney Balaban and Y. Frank Freeman, who have never spent a cent in their lives in any other cause than the selling of theater tickets, have okayed this vast expenditure in this year, age, and calendar month. . . . It means something, boys. It is the old Paramount coming back to vigor again. . . . We can't ask you to read between the lines, because if we did we would have to confess that an honest editor would print between the lines. But we can say—A tip is a tip.

Strikes, Strikes, And Near-Strikes

We had two exhibitors wire us last week—from points as varying as Memphis and Boston—asking if there were any real danger that all the theaters of the country would be shut down because of a Hollywood union argument that is something of a blend between a jurisdictional dispute and a wage demand. . . . Our issue was on the press, and maybe the telegraph beats the mail, so we helped the subscribers with a straight wire reply. . . . They were worried about their projectionists, who said they didn't know anything about the local fight, and besides every technical man, along with every blonde, has an idea that Hollywood is Heaven and the folks who have passed the gate should not complain. . . . Since it may save telegraph tolls, we will sum up our ideas for other distant readers. . . . Chief trouble locally is that there is an internal union fight, rather than an employer-employee squabble. . . . Best part of the whole thing is that most

7 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. Midnight	PAR	113	115
2. Sergeant Madden	MGM	93	95
3. Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81	85
4. I'm From Missouri	PAR	83	85
5. Prison Without Bars	U.A.	70	81
6. Blackwell's Island	WAR	77	80
7. Boy Slaves	RKO	70	73

of the boys involved in the arguments are skillful technicians and hard workers who can build up more worry over the fate of a picture on which they have been active than some of your thousand-a-week "writers." . . . Second best thought is the employers are not worrying to the point of arson about what happens as a result of the dispute. . . . They are being handcuffed and hamstrung by rising production costs that every top production executive in the business has grown numb from taking. . . . All he would like to see is a definite settlement that would let him know what the dickens his next morning's breakfast is going to cost. . . . If it is going to cost too much, he will take it out of the waitresses's tip. . . . Which means, a lot of writers are going to be avoided and a number of players are going to find options a trifle heavy to lift. . . . Did anyone ever stop to figure that, if all the demands all of the gaffers and grips, ever made through their unions, were to be granted, the total additional cost on a particular picture would not equal the money paid to a couple of sneering writers who had spent their four weeks contract period between the studio commissary and Racing Form? . . . ? . . . ?

Off Again On A Tangent

Shucks, The Highlighter started above to give a number of crispy news items, and then slipped over to his favorite subject—the integral importance of directors in the present motion picture set-up. . . . Now he gives you a promise that he will stop editorializing and just go on with news. . . . Well, isn't there news in the announcement that Jack Conway is going to volunteer to face the firing squad and make a Hedy Lamarr picture? . . . Here is one of the freaks of show business. . . . Lamarr, with only alleged nudity in "Ecstasy," clicks big in a Walter Wanger production, and no one in the industry recalls that you don't

6 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. Love Affair	RKO	122	119
2. Hound of Baskervilles	FOX	87	85
3. The Lady Vanishes	FOX	89	80
4. One-Third of a Nation	PAR	78	76
5. King of the Turf	U.A.	75	73
6. Persons in Hiding	PAR	73	70

have sex unless you have a man. . . . So no one remembers that a trouper like Charles Boyer was also present in "Algiers." . . . When we say "no one" we mean the columnists—they are always nine months behind their readers. . . . So then MGM tries to go to town with a Lamarr sex vehicle. And nothing happens but trouble. . . . And we can tell them that nothing will ever happen if they give her actors as they would with any routine picture production. Spencer Tracy was one of those sentenced. . . . Give her fellows like Charles Boyer—so good in their own right that you fool yourself into thinking that the girl is acting. . . . But it is not the type for Spencer Tracy, and we have a sneaking suspicion that it is not the follow up he-man build up for Robert Taylor. . . . You know there are Americans—and other likeable people. . . . And it is irritatingly unfortunate that Americans are the bricklayers who build the houses that Jack rents. . . . With a Boyer, Lamarr is worth a million dollars, with a Spencer Tracy she is just a girl out in the alley who could never be introduced to Spencer's sister. . . . Is there something in that?

Let's Talk About Interesting Things

The picture business is so full of problems and crises, that there is an enticing temptation to continually talk about such heavy-heavy subjects. . . . But let's look around the folks who make the pictures and see if there are not thoughts more easy on jaded minds. . . . For example, there is nothing but pleasure for us in the news that Sylvan Simon, a director, will get a chance at an Eleanor Powell picture for MGM. . . . Sometime or other I will probably meet this Simon chap, and the odds are even money that we won't recognize each other. . . . But twelve months ago, reviewing a Universal quickie—made between a breath and a lunch—The Highlighter ventured the opinion that this boy had something on the ball. . . . More than "something." . . . And how in heck are we going to keep this picture business going if we don't sight through the telescope the fellows who have that stuff on the ball. . . . We read that they have just concluded a Bill Heinemann Drive on the Pacific Coast for that popular Universal executive. . . . It is about time that Heinemann was given at least a "Drive" for long and valiant service in the cause of Universal. . . . Saul Rogers, one of the most astute New York attorneys, is again in the courts—this time with a stockholder suit against Paramount. . . . Why don't they just decide that a lot of picture executives made a lot of mistakes in the past ten years—and give the boys a chance to start all over again? . . . The convention of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers in Hollywood last week brought a lot of honors to blushing Major Levinson, of Warners. . . . That is decorating a violet—because since the days when they made 'em on discs the Major has been working with sound and blushing unseen.

"DODGE CITY" AND "THE CASTLES" HIT HIGH IN WEAK PERIOD AT NATION'S BOX OFFICES

By **NORMAN WEBB**

WARNERS—1 New Release

Easter week has brought many new prominent box office attractions to the front with Warner Brothers' "DODGE CITY" topping the list at 154%, which incidentally is their best box office attraction this year as well as the third biggest money-maker in 1939, only being surpassed by "JESSE JAMES" and "GUNGA DIN."

"DODGE CITY," backed by one of the greatest publicity and exploitation campaigns the industry has ever seen, has opened in over one hundred and fifty first run situations and in the majority of cases is being held over for second and third weeks, indicating that this Technicolor attraction is a definite box office hit.

"DODGE CITY" has the same co-stars as "Robin Hood," Errol Flynn and Olivia DeHavilland, and among those prominently featured are Ann Sheridan, Bruce Cabot, Alan Hale, John Litel and dozens of others too numerous to mention.

Hal Wallis was the executive producer and Michael Curtiz directed from Robert Buckner's original screenplay.

RKO—Also One Smash Hit

RKO-Radio pictures also have a big box office smash this week in "THE LIFE OF VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE" which likewise opened up in Easter week to excellent box office business, averaging 132% on its first runs. It is being held for a third week at the Radio City Music Hall as well as in many other key city houses.

"THE STORY OF VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE" is the first co-starring picture for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in some time and furthermore it is the first dramatic musical in which two popular stars have appeared.

H. C. Potter directed "THE STORY OF VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE," Oscar Hammerstein II and Dorothy Yost wrote the adaptation from Irene Castle's own original stories with Richard Sherman receiving full credit for the outstanding screenplay.

Exhibitors will do well to go the limit on this one by giving it extra advertising space and playing it up very high as this may be the final appearance of Astaire and Rogers together, since Fred's contract with RKO has expired and he is now under contract to MGM, with Ginger remaining on the home lot, RKO.

UNITED ARTISTS—1 Release

The United Artists Corporation have a new release from the Samuel Goldwyn unit this week, "WUTHERING HEIGHTS," which, on its first key city bookings is running approximately 20% higher than we had estimated. The critics all raved over the production of "WUTHERING HEIGHTS" but the majority of trade papers were not of the opinion that the picture would be such a ter-

Of The Eight New Releases in The Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%, One Came Thru Okay, and Four Were Very Weak.



rific box office attraction. However, Goldwyn undoubtedly studied the reviews over and has gotten behind "WUTHERING HEIGHTS" with one of the greatest publicity, advertising, and exploitation campaigns that has ever been given a United Artists picture and consequently the first figures on this picture are averaging around 121%; but we will have to wait until future bookings to see whether or not this picture is going to hold to such a high average.

This picture, which has an English locale in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, has an almost entire English cast and will undoubtedly do outstanding business in England and the Dominions. Merle Oberon, David Niven and Donald Crisp all have a fairly good following in the U. S. A., but the balance of the cast particularly Flora Robson, Laurence Olivier and Cecil Humphreys are better known abroad.

William Wyler very capably handled the direction of this heavy Mid-Victorian melodrama based on Emily Bronte's novel of the same name.

MGM—1 Fair Release

MGM's new release this week is Jeanette MacDonald's first solo starring vehicle in some time, "BROADWAY SERENADE." While this picture is not exactly up to the standards of the previous MacDonald-Eddy pictures we still thought her name had enough prestige to carry a strong box office—but evidently we were wrong as this picture has opened in many key houses and it is only running around a 98% average, which is approximately 35% below what the recent MacDonald pictures have been hitting. Evidently a star is as good as the story and this happens to be a weak one. We were rather surprised that a director with Robert Leonard's reputation did not pick a stronger attraction for his first producer-director job; but guess there is no use crying over spilt milk.

"BROADWAY SERENADE" has been spotted in quite a number of houses and the results, as a whole, have been very disappointing. Maybe too many writers spoiled the broth, as four of them received credit on this

one, Lew Lipton, John Taintor Foote and Hans Kraly for the original and Charles Lederer for the screenplay.

Instead of Nelson Eddy, Miss MacDonald has Lew Ayres for a leading man this time and the fine supporting cast includes such prominent names as Ian Hunter, Frank Morgan, Wally Vernon, Rita Johnson, Virginia Grey and William Gargan. To sum the situation up it looks as if Mr. and Mrs. Public are a bit tired of Broadway stories and backstage musicals; but exhibitors can count on a certain amount of business on this one and thus it is still strong enough to top the average double bill, but it should have a good supporting feature.

COLUMBIA—1 Good Release

Columbia has a much better than average program picture in their new edition of "ROMANCE OF THE REDWOODS" at 77%, which exhibitors will remember was filmed many years ago by Mary Pickford. Jean Parker and Charles Bickford are co-starred and Lloyd Hughes, Pat O'Malley and Gordon Oliver are featured.

Since this one is running around 77% on its first run bookings it will undoubtedly do much better in the nabes where this type of production has much more appeal and it should prove a success in small town situations.

Wally MacDonald supervised for the Irving Briskin unit and Charles Vidor directed.

FOX—1 New Programmer

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release this week is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, "EVERYBODY'S BABY," which like the rest of the Jones Family series is just getting by at around a 71% average. Naturally these Jones Family pictures are okay as a filler with a big double attraction, but have little marquee value of their own.

PARAMOUNT—Another Bulldog

Paramount's new release this week is another of their famous Bulldog Drummond series and this time it is "BULLDOG DRUMMOND'S SECRET POLICE," 70%. While the domestic figures on this series are not very encouraging, still Paramount gets a pretty good revenue from England on its BULLDOGS and thus this series will probably be continued on indefinitely.

John Howard, Heather Angel, H. B. Warner, Reginald Denny and the usual "Bulldog" cast is featured. Edward T. Lowe supervised for the Harold Hurley unit and James Hogan directed.

MONOGRAM—1 New One

Monogram pictures have a new programmer from the E. B. Derr unit, "STAR REPORTER," 65%, which co-features Warren Hull and Marsha Hunt, Howard Bretherton directed. This one will probably get by in the spots for which it was intended.

8 New Releases Not in Last Issue

3 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....4 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Dodge City	WAR	154	165
2. The Story of Vernon & Irene Castle	RKO	132	140
3. Wuthering Heights	U.A.	121	100
4. Broadway Serenade	MGM	98	120
5. Romance of the Redwoods	COL	77	80
6. Everybody's Baby	FOX	71	70
7. Bulldog Drummond Secret Police	PAR	70	70
8. Star Reporter	MONO	64	65

THE SECOND GUESSER TALKS ABOUT SALES CONTRACTS AND WEAK RADIO APPEARANCES

The Second Guesser was born to be in the picture business . . . Because he is a perfect Kibitzer . . . And anyone who has been in the picture business for more than a couple of summers knows that you can't make a business deal or play a hand of pinochle without the services of a Kibitzer . . . So-o-o—it was no surprise to us when The Second Guesser looked over our shoulder while the dignified words called an editorial were being written for Page 3 . . . He gave us what can only be politely called a snort.

When Is A Mile More Than A Mile

The Second Guesser was doing the talking by now. "Listen," he said, "You've missed one of the best points of that situation which saw a fine Long Beach house close for lack of pictures. Why didn't you get the map out?"

"Spots like Ventura and others, which are much handier to Los Angeles by the mileage and the gas tank, can play pictures day and date—or even ahead of Los Angeles—at their own idea of an admission price. And do you ask why? Well, the only answer I got when I asked, was that these are not "competitive situations." Which, I suppose, means that some of the Fox West Coast competition in Long Beach is without competition in these Venturas, Pomonas, etc. If you can make anything out of the explanation—you can have it. I can't take it."

Even The Second Guesser Gets Complaints

The Second Guesser perked up a bit as he proceeded: "I suppose I haven't any reason to complain about anything that happens in a paper for which I work—but maybe you will allow me to pass on complaints from another fellow. This was an exhibitor who pounced on me with these kind words: 'You've been telling what nice folks those distributors are this year, with more moderate percentage demands, with less exacting demands for preferred playing time, with fewer B pictures, and with everything but smiles and kisses. . . . Have you seen some of those new contracts being offered the big circuits in the L. A. territory?' . . . The Second Guesser paused for breath while he admitted that he may not have seen one of the documents in question. But he had heard about it, so he went on to say: "They tell me that all these gestures are a lot of gestures and nothing else. For one thing, it is true there will be fewer B pictures, for the simple reason that most of the companies are pushing up their successful B pictures into A classification—and I suppose next year's B's will mostly go where the hindmost ends . . . But, if you do not believe me let us look at an MGM deal as now presented for consideration to a fairly important theater circuit . . . Let's first get in our minds a rough idea of last year's MGM deal—there were four pictures

at the top percentage and split, two groups of eight at break down percentages, etcetera. But what is it this year? Gosh, it is figured out as though the salesman had talked to the local bank manager about the theater's business. For every thousand dollars a theater takes in—without any consideration to the mortgage or the bread and butter that any exhibitor needs—here is the way it breaks down:

Breaking A Dollar Into All Its Parts

"The way the deal has been shown to me it means that on the A pictures the distributor will take \$350 of every thousand pulled into the theater; on the B pictures he will take 35% of a lesser part of that thousand dollar gross, or—\$262.50. Then there is a C group on which the distributor will get 30% of 65% of that thousand dollar unit, or \$195. In case your producer readers are getting dizzy by this time I might jump a lot of ground by explaining that there are groups which go all the way down to an E classification." (Ye gods, our best editorial minds have been worrying about B pictures for a year or two, and no one ever told them that there were such things as D's and E's.) . . . The Second Guesser went on to talk about the Fox deal which he thinks is squeezing some B's into A money, but we stopped him by saying, "What's it all about?" And this is his answer: "In this troublesome year when we are reading about the glorious industry's efforts to pay off starving Hollywood luminaries by discovering Latin America, don't you think someone should sound a note of warning that the boys shouldn't try to slip the pay-off act over on the American exhibitor?" . . . We haven't sounded any notes of warning since our sophomore years, so the proposition is still in abeyance.

What About Those Radio Programs?

The Second Guesser moved up closed to us, with a smile that probably admitted he was in the wrong even mentioning the subject, but with a voice that had to be heard. "Why don't you go through with that idea of reviewing the top radio programs?" he said.

"TYPING" DIRECTORS

Frank Tuttle, who almost became typed as a "musical director" because of his success with such hits as "Waikiki Wedding," is to make the first George Raft-Universal picture. So some of the boys are just discovering Tuttle's record and learning that he has made quite a few melos in his life—including the one that started Raft off, the earliest S. S. Van Dine's, and so on. So maybe there should be a law against "typing" directors, along with an ordinance that will save good troupers from the casting directors.

"You would be able to do a lot of good to and for the picture industry." . . . He paused for breath. Then continued: "For example, did you hear the broadcast of 'Love Affair' from a Sunday night prize spot with the stars, Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne speaking the lines? Well, didn't the thought occur to you sometime during the broadcast that the lines and the situations were written for MOVING pictures, and that a young fellow named Leo McCarey had built them and played them for VISUAL entertainment—and here were two good troupers trying to put them over by way of the ear and static?" . . .

Supposing We Did Cover Radio Programs?

Even though The Second Guesser gets this page when he wants it, we feel entitled to a word or two. So we timidly queried: "What should an intelligent radio review say? Should it speak from a pseudo-Hollywood viewpoint, and talk about a single week's program with all the seriousness that one would treat a motion picture on which some executive has spent a year? Should it point out how many of Joe Miller's relatives have crept into the lines? Or should it take the vast mass audience viewpoint and say that most of the folks in the country probably had a good time listening?" . . . The Second Guesser replied: "There you have something. Those radio big shots know their audiences, and they know what their audiences want. Up to that point you are correct. But from there on you could point out that a number of three thousand a week picture players—in whose screen appearances picture companies invest more than a million dollars—are possibly being sacrificed each Saturday or Sunday night for a radio holiday. Huh? Maybe I have something, too? And perhaps, if you wrote radio reviews that did not attempt to argue with the likes of the radio audiences, but just pointed out where a screen asset—player or picture—was being helped or damaged, you might have something."

We are still thinking it over.

LET'S SELL AMERICA

(Continued from Page 3)

potential customer can't see the picture without paying fifty cents to the Standard Oil Company for gas before he can give you fifty cents for your million dollar attraction?

How about it?

Let's sell America!

And if we get that idea, we'll put a cautious brake on a production tendency that is gaining too much momentum for safety. By which we refer to the story and casting department idea that pictures should be made for every market in the world but the United States.

More about that anon.

The Entertainment Hit of the Year!

H. C. Potter

DIRECTED

R K O
RADIO
PICTURES

"The Story of
VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE"

The Entertainment Hit of the Year!

Ginger Rogers

A S

Irene

R K O
RADIO
PICTURES

"The Story of
VERRON AND IRENE CASTLE"

The Entertainment Hit of the Year!

Fred Astaire

A S

Vernon

R K O
RADIO
PICTURES

"The Story of
VERNON AND IRENE CASTLE"

New "Cisco Kid" Audience Knockout

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan
 Director Herbert I. Leeds
 Original O. Henry
 Screenplay Milton Sperling
 Star Warner Baxter
 Featured: Lynn Bari, Cesar Romero, Henry Hull, Kane Richmond, C. Henry Gordon, Robert Barrat, Chris-Pin Martin, Adrian Morris, Soledad Jimenez, Harry Strang, Arthur Aylesworth, Paul Burns, Victor Killian, Eddie Waller, Ruth Gillett, Ward Bond.
 Photographer Charles Clark
 Art Director Richard Day, Wiard B. Ihnen
 Musical Director Cyril J. Mockridge
 Film Editor James B. Clark
 Time 70 Minutes

You may as well get advance notice—Darryl Zanuck's showmanship is going to cause him to follow up "The Return of the Cisco Kid" with a series. The picture is that good as entertainment. And in a season that is being over-flooded with family series ideas the moment is ripe for someone to cash in on a he-man, honest-to-goodness entertainment idea.

"The Return of the Cisco Kid" can do the trick, if any picture can. We don't know what the budget was, and we care less. You exhibitors will understand what we mean when he say that in direction, writing, cinematography, it comes close to "Stagecoach." That is as broad a hint as we can give to any exhibitor who knows his audience—or his onions.

"Return of the Cisco Kid" has many surprises in it, and other good news that is not surprising. It is no surprise to say that Warner Baxter takes hold of a great part, wraps it up, and delivers it in an audience's lap, with his usual skill. It may be a surprise—but not

to us—to say that this director, Herbert Leeds, has everything on the ball that a big picture needs. And it might be a surprise to say that between director selection of angles and moments, and Charles Clark's photography, the picture takes on that aura of "class" that spells "class."

We suspect that Sidney Kent bought his Grace Line ticket for Latin America after seeing this picture. Because it is a great bet for Latin America. We meet Warner Baxter again, as the Cisco Kid, operating as a likeable Robin Hood betwixt, between, and over that mythical border line that separates Mexico and the United States. Baxter is so god darned good that he can be an English or a Mexican Robin Hood for our money any day, but alongside of him are two troupers coming into their own in Cesar Romero and Chris-Pin Martin. They eat up scenes, so that the picture suddenly becomes so bubbling and alive that you forget that there is not much more plot than Shakespeare used for most of his plays. At that, we have forgotten in our enthusiasm, that there is an actor named Henry Hull present. It is much the same part that he had in "Kentucky," but there is more meat to it. And a gal whom we have been wondering about, Lynn Bari, comes through for a one

hundred per cent score. Either the gal has had it all the time, or the current director was the one who knew how to bring it out.

This fellow Leeds even keeps Robert Barrat restrained as a pseudo-heavy, gets acting out of Kane Richmond, holds C. Henry Gordon within bounds as a Mexican heavy, and finds a laugh or two in Soledad Piminez.

All in all, Mr. Exhibitor,—if you get what we mean—this is a darned good show. We believe you may be able to make some bargain deals because we don't feel that either Mr. Twentieth Century or Mr. Fox know what they have here.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Don't pay any attention to intellectual reviews elsewhere. The picture is a sleeper and the start of another series.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Return of the Cisco Kid' is a worthy elaboration of the 'Cisco' cycle. It has loads of atmospheric charm and picturesqueness, and its name character still retains his intriguing qualities. But in the current cycle of super 'western,' with which it will be compared, it will be found wanting."

VARIETY: "Picture should leave happy box office impress. It has the ingredients for popular appeal."

Mexican-Made 'Juarez' Has Nuisance Value

(MIGUEL TORRES)

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Miguel C. Torres
 Director Miguel C. Torres
 Original Miguel C. Torres
 Screenplay Jean Bart, Jerome Chodorov, Miguel C. Torres
 Featured: Medea Novara, Lionel Atwill, Conrad Nagel, Guy Bates Post, Jason Robards, Frank McGlynn, Sr., Evelyn Brent, Claudia Dell, Gustav Von Seyffertitz, Martin Garalaga, Julian Rivero, Duncan Renaldo.
 Photographer Alex Phillips, Arthur Martinelli
 Time 95 Minutes

"Juarez and Maximilian," a Mexico City-Hollywood version of the famous chapter in history which Warners have also made as one of their big smashes for the coming season, must be given consideration. It has plenty of nuisance value.

The picture is probably a far cry from the one on the same theme which Warners will present within a few weeks. The marquee contrast is obvious, and it is inconceivable that Warners haven't had the production brains to make drama rather than history out of their subject. But you can't laugh this one off—for the simple reason that the factual story of the

tragic Maximilian and Carlotta episode in the world's history is so strong in human elements that it stands out under any set dressing.

And this must be said for Miguel Torres' production: He has treated his history with sincerity; he has had the money and production facilities to paint a pretty broad canvas when he needed size. All in all, it could be said that the picture will be a fine advance sample for the Warner production—except that there will be many spots where it will be more of a thorn. Because Maximilian is Maximilian, no matter under whose option clause he is working.

Now to the picture: It suffers as entertainment through being too obviously an historical treatise seen through Mexican eyes. The result is stodginess, even while the inherent drama of the human beings pokes its head up frequently. We see Napoleon the Third, decide—like an early Hitler—that he has an empire in Mexico, and nominate poor Maximilian and Carlotta to sit on its throne. We see Maximilian and his consort dropped into a situation where no one is their friend, and from which even Napoleon—this is the third Napoleon—extricates himself when things get too tough. We see Juarez, liberator of the Mexican na-

tion, but for some mysterious reason we see him only over his shoulder—never face to face. We imagine that Paul Muni's Juarez will be the smack face to face theme of the Warner version.

In the course of this lesson in history there is some very good acting to note—Conrad Nagel as Maximilian, Medea Novara, except for a few bad spots, as Carlotta, Evelyn Brent, Jason Robards—back to camera as Juarez—and Frank McGlynn in his latest Abraham Lincoln moment.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Factual enough to be playing the schools and churches for years to come; as for showmanship, just figure its nuisance value against the coming Warner epic.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: This presentation of the reign of Maximilian and Carlotta in Mexico as represented by Miguel Torres, takes on the most exciting periods in the history of Mexico and makes it the dulllest 90 minutes that has been put on the screen in a long time."

VARIETY: "A dull, ponderous offering that fails in every respect to capture the colorful history of Mexico's shortlived emperor and empress. Picture offers no entertainment and can only hope to find playdates in inconsequential grind houses."

CURRENT REVIEWS

1 Over 100%.....3 Okay.....3 Weak

		Est. %
1. The Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	115
2. Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	85
3. Jaurez & Maxmillian	Torres Prod.	80
4. Blind Alley	COL	80
5. Sorority House	RKO	75
6. Big Town Czar	UNIV	75
7. Stolen Life	PAR	70

Latest "Dr. Kildare" Okay Entertainment

M. G. M.

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Director Harold S. Bucquet
 Original Max Brand
 Screenplay Harry Ruskin, Willis Goldbeck
 Star Lew Ayres
 Featured: Lionel Barrymore, Laraine Day, Nat Pendleton, Lana Turner, Samuel S. Hinds, Lynne Carver, Emma Dunn, Walter Kingsford, Alma Kruker, Bobs Watson, Harlan Briggs, Henry Hunter, Marie Blake, Phillip Terry, Roger Converse, Donald Barry, Reed Hadley, Nell Craig, George Offerman, Jr., Clinton Rosemond, Johnny Walsh.
 Photographers Alfred Gilks, Lester White
 Musical Score David Snell
 Film Editor Robert J. Kern
 Time 86 minutes

We would not attempt to say how many pictures MGM can turn out on the "Dr. Kildare" theme without it becoming just a little tiresome, but we can say that with the same story and directorial skill evidenced in the first one of the series and on this one, Dr. Kildare

will always be a welcome visitor for program purposes.

Lew Ayres and Lionel Barrymore again carry the leads, as they did in the first Kildare series, and one of Metro's coming bets, Harold Bucquet, gives it the touches of directorial skill that lift it above the routine.

"Calling Dr. Kildare" also gives another opportunity for audiences to see this youngster Laraine Day, who recently received some special attention in "Sergeant Madden." It confirms the fact that apparently this girl has something on the ball. Good laugh spots are handled by Nat Pendleton while young Bobs Watson, who reaches real heights in "Alexander Graham Bell," also comes through for fine performance.

The story this time finds Lionel Barrymore again working from his wheelchair, and called upon in the action to unravel problems which concern Lew Ayres. These problems concern a murder, a vamp, and about anything else that could happen to a likeable young chap such as

Lew Ayres appears to be. Lana Turner is effective as the tempting factor of the triangle, while Laraine Day is the girl on the right side of the fence as Barrymore's confidant. That grand old trouper, Emma Dunn, is again seen as Lew Ayres' mother, and she gets an opportunity for some effective scenes.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: They will like it; particularly the days you aim at the family trade.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Plotted as a sequel, 'Calling Dr. Kildare' ably vindicates the succession and amply stands on its own feet individually. Here again is entertainment which ranges from crusty humor to tenderness with a facility which makes it understandable and appealing to any and every audience. It predicts a steadily growing impetus for future 'Kildares'."

VARIETY: "Same combination which turned in so creditable an initial picture for this intended series repeats with an even more entertaining and smartly produced second offering. Playing, direction, story telling are top rank."

"Big Town Czar" Made for the Duals

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Associate Producer Kenneth Goldsmith
 Director Arthur Lubin
 Original Ed Sullivan
 Screenplay Edmund Hartman
 Featured: Barton MacLane, Tom Brown, Eve Arden, Jack LaRue, Frank Jenks, Walter Woolf King, Oscar O'Shea, Esther Dale, Horace MacMahon.
 Photographer Elwood Brendell
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Philip Cahn
 Time 62 Minutes

In cities where Ed Sullivan's column gets a big play, "Big Town Czar" will take on extra value. For the "run of the mill" theatres where Ed Sullivan doesn't mean anything, it is merely another racketeer melodrama pro-

duced about two years after the parade has passed by.

For all around good entertainment, the story takes itself too seriously in this age and generation of racketeer stories. Several troupers like Barton MacLane and Tom Brown attempt to tell the old, old story of racketeer and kid brother, and they do it as well as anybody could be expected to do it, but it has been told too often.

No one can really find fault with Arthur Lubin's direction but here again we find a fellow sunk by formula. Just to be true to formula the picture also gives us Frank Jenks for some stooge laughs, Jack LaRue for sinister menace and Horace MacMahon for a great scene. MacMahon is getting to be one of those actors who delivers good scenes to weak pictures but never gets a full evening's part to play.

The feminine interest is subordinated in this

he-man yarn. Eve Arden carries this adequately as Tom Brown's lady love.

A bit of novelty is given to the picture with an opening which has Ed Sullivan commenting in newsreel style in order to make us properly impressed by the menace of racketeers. It is very well done.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will just get by as a programmer on the bottom end of the dual bills.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Universal's 'Big Town Czar' is a revival of the cops and robbers stuff of the slumbering gangster cycle, garnished with a sugar coating of pulpist stuff on the evils of racketeering. It can hope to give casual support, at best, in dual bills."

VARIETY: "Will fit nicely into the programs where audiences go for balanced diet of the grave and sombre with the light and giddy."

"Stolen Life" Strictly for Class Trade

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Paul Czinner
 Director Paul Czinner
 Screenplay Margaret Kennedy
 Original K. J. Benes
 Star Elisabeth Bergner
 Featured: Michael Redgrave, Wilfrid Lawson, Mabel Terry Lewis, Richard Ainley, Kenneth Buckley, Cyril Horrocks, O. B. Clarence, John Lloyd, Roy Russell, Oliver Johnston, H. Regus, Devina Craid.
 Time 90 minutes

"Stolen Life" is strictly for the carriage trade. It is a British made production, credited to Orion Productions and released in this country by Paramount. Your carriage trade will be raving about the really fine work of Elisabeth Bergner, while the rest of the cash customers will be wondering what all the excitement is about.

In most respects it is a fine picture making job. Particularly Miss Bergner's handling of the dual role which has all the contrast between a girl with a spotty past and the girl with nothing but virtue on her side. Director, scripter, and player have handled the situation with real intelligence and one can readily see how the picture can get attention in England and in Boston; at the same time you can see that Omaha will probably be wondering what it is all about.

There is a fine and interesting basis for the story. Miss Bergner—as one part of the dual role—is the girl with the possible past. That girl dies. Then Miss Bergner—as the sacrificial twin sister—takes over her identity and runs into affairs that she had never suspected. All this has audience value, because there are husbands and other interested folks involved.

The picture is definitely not a bet for the

great mass of American exhibitors, but it has so many interesting points that there are showmen in individual spots who can take it and give general satisfaction to their audiences.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good for the carriage trade, but will also make a great bit with the audiences that want to read a touch of queer sex into it.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Here in 'Stolen Life' is a hauntingly beautiful picture, which, with all its artistic feeling, succeeds still in investing the screen with a production marked for bigness at the box office."

VARIETY: "Dual love story is fascinating, beautifully presented against interesting European backgrounds, directed with unusual discrimination and taste by Paul Czinner, and its main characterizations given fine support by a capable cast."

"Blind Alley" Could Have Been Better

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Associate Producer Fred Kohlmar
 Director Charles Vidor
 Play James Warwick
 Screenplay: Philip MacDonald, Michael Blankfort, Albert Duffy.
 Stars: Chester Morris, Ralph Bellamy, Ann Dvorak.
 Featured: Joan Perry, Melville Cooper, Rose Stradner, John Eldridge, Ann Doran, Marc Lawrence, Stanley Brown, Scotty Beckett, Milburn Stone, Marie Blake.
 Photographer Lucien Ballard
 Musical Director M. W. Stoloff
 Art Director Lionel Banks
 Film Editor Otto Meyer
 Time 68 minutes

Before we get around to the picture being reviewed, let's discuss the matter of titles. In this case the exhibitor is asked to put up on his marquee "Blind Alley." We expect some \$2,000 a week Hollywood executive will get a brilliant idea in the course of the next year and make a picture which will decorate the marquee with the title "No Show Tonight." (You know that some of our best Hollywood minds have had such titles as "One Way Street" and then wondered why the people didn't come in to see the picture.)

Now we will get to the picture. It is tantalizing. It has all the intelligent strength of "Crime and Punishment" and much of the same technique so that you leave the theatre with something to talk about and apparently well satisfied, but on the other hand you wish they would send it back to the cutting room for a few days work in order to straighten out the first two reels so that you knew earlier what it was all about.

We have a suspicion that Columbia will send it back to the cutting room before you receive it, Mr. Exhibitor.

As to why it is interesting: There is a serious thought behind this treatment of Dr. Freud and his Vienna conception that most of us human beings only have bad dreams because of something that happened in our past life. This may sound like science, but we will have to report that there is enough appeal in the thought that you suddenly find the audience being very quiet and very interested.

In this case the story of inhibitions and some things that normal people are interested in is told through the career of gangster Chester Morris. For contrast there is Ralph Bellamy as a university professor who knows how to take minds apart and put them together again.

The story gets under way when Morris, who is known to headlines under the title "KILLER," escapes from what is probably an Illinois prison and decides to pick on the house of Professor Bellamy. It is never made very clear but it appears that Chester Morris and his gang are waiting for a boat which is to appear over the horizon on Lake Michigan. It is going to be just a little funny to Chicago folk who know Joliet vacationers and who also know Lake Michigan. But maybe we shouldn't have brought that up. (Nobody ever bothers to tell you why Morris should pick a house in which there were twelve guests or where the heck he is going after he sails off Michigan Boulevard.

Some very able direction and quite a few good performances help to carry the picture to the tantalizing point. But the screenplay writers fell down on the job. Because when it is all over it still remains just tantalizing and not entirely either black or white.

You had better put it down on your list as a "B plus." It can't be entirely a "B" because there are so many reels of interest; it cannot be an "A" because there are so many things

that are wrong. For example there is Rose Stradner, a European importation who is just keeping an American girl out of work while she draws money to spoil scenes. It has Melville Cooper, so well liked by audiences that he actually lifts every moment in which he is heard. There is Ann Dvorak trying to say the word "ain't" and not getting away from the impression that she is slumming in the picture.

The top stars, Chester Morris and Ralph Bellamy, work hard and deliver. Bellamy, as a psychologist who is trying to break down a gangster and convince him that he is insane, gets a real part and he comes through for all it is worth. Chester Morris wasn't quite sure whether he was still playing in "Alibi," but his trouping skill carries through so that in the end you are well satisfied.

Put it down on the list as one of those pictures that could have been so much better that it is irritating to find out where the trouble came, but at the same time so much better than the program material usually offered you that it must be given consideration.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: There is an attempt to do "something different" in this picture, and in a general way the execution is so good, that you can figure it as one of those aides to the bill that will send them away satisfied, and probably talking.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Blind Alley' is an offering that is above average cops and robbers for either end of a double bill. Although it does not boast strong marquee names, this psychological study of a criminal's mind should satisfy."

VARIETY: "While 'Blind Alley' is a crime picture based on a highly improbable story, it will make the grade as supporting fare if spotted with a top feature sufficiently light to offset its drabness."

"Sorority House" Just One of Those Things

R. K. O.

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
 Producer Robert Sisk
 Director John Farrow
 Screenplay Dalton Trumbo
 Based on the Story by Mary Coyle Chase
 Stars Anne Shirley, James Ellison
 Featured: Barbara Read, Adele Pearce, J. M. Kerrigan, Helen Wood, Doris Jordan, June Storey, Elisabeth Risdon, Margaret Armstrong, Selmer Jackson, Chill Wills.
 Photographer Nicholas Musuraca
 Art Director Van Nest Polglase
 Film Editor Harry Marker
 Time 60 Minutes

Here is good mass entertainment. Because of its marquee weight it may only rate as good dual fodder, but values in the production, direction, scripting and playing make it very healthy audience meat for almost any spot.

What makes it so is the combination of

"modern youth" effervescence in the basic story, plus direction by John Farrow which gets the utmost from the situations provided while at the same time keeping everything sincere and real. It is a college story that collegians will accept, and others will enjoy.

With personable Anne Shirley and James Ellison in the leads, the story has a theme that will be of considerable interest to your audiences of the "about eighteen" age. Anne's father is J. M. Kerrigan, a small town business man who must borrow money to send daughter Anne to the university. Anne is the girl who learns about "caste and class" when she runs up against the sorority racket. There is a college boarding house in which Barbara Read and Adele Peace are other students with their own particular social problems. Ellison is likeable in the nearest to a stereotyped role in the picture, as the understanding college hero.

And thanks to the direction it is consistently interesting and always real. Which will be

a welcome bit of information for our exhibitor readers who play to daring youth audiences. Too often, youth gives the horse laugh to Hollywood's attempts to depict its minor-major woes and tragedies.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Nothing for the marquee, but fine for the days when you play to the boy and girl crowd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Sorority House,' RKO has an offering which should fill its niche capably, and in some situations it can be successfully sold for top billing. It lacks strong marquee names, but should please the warm weather customers."

VARIETY: "Built on human, down to earth material, 'Sorority House' is bang-up entertainment that should have broad general audience appeal. It will need exploitation, but given the proper kind, it is strong enough to draw added shekles into box offices wherever screened."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	180
Gunna Din	RKO	179
Dodge City	WAR	154
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	135
Stagecoach	UA	134
Story of Vernon & Irene Castle	RKO	132
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	129
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	121
Wuthering Heights	UA	121
Love Affair	RKO	119
Made For Each Other	UA	116
Midnight	PAR	115
Little Princess	FOX	114
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	112
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	108
Honolulu	MGM	105
Zaza	PAR	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Broadway Setenade	MGM	98
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	94
Whims of the Navy	WAR	94
Talispin	FOX	94
St. Louis Blues	PAR	90
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	90
Three Musketeers	FOX	86

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pyemation	MGM	135
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	125
The Beachcomber	PAR	113
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Serenaft Madden	MGM	95
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
East and Loose	MGM	86
Hound of Baskervilles	FOX	85
I'm From Missouri	PAR	85
Cafe Society	PAR	85
Of The Record	WAR	85
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
I'm From Missouri	PAR	83
Let Us Live	OOL	82
Prison Without Bars	UA	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
On Trial	WAR	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Never Say Die	PAR	78
One-Third of a Nation	PAR	76
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
Lady and the Mob	OOL	76
King of the Turf	UA	75
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
King of the Turf	UA	73
Smiling Alone	FOX	71
The Flying Irishman	RKO	70
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	65

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal. The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	85
Blackwell's Island	WAR	80
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	75
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	75
Torchy Blaine in Chinatown	WAR	75
On Trial	WAR	74
Society Lawyer	MGM	74
Family Next Door	UNIV	74
King of Chinatown	PAR	74
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	71
Everybody's Baby	UNIV	71
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	70
Persons in Hiding	PAR	70
Buildup Drummond Secret Police	PAR	70
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	70
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	70
Inside Story	RKO	70
Winner Take All	COL	70
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	OOL	70
Ambush	PAR	70
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	69
Beauty For The Asking	RKO	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Within the Law	MGM	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Risky Business	UNIV	64

D. BELOW \$100,000

Mysterious Mr. Wong	FOX	75
Homicide Bureau	OOL	74
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	72
Whispering Enemies	OOL	72
I Was A Convict	REP	72
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanahal	OOL	71
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Lone Shot	GN	67
Forced Passports	REP	66
Boy Reporter	PAR	65
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	OOL	64

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

CONGRATULATIONS . . . A couple of very important newspaper men—one a top executive—told us the other evening that the best thing that had ever happened to the picture business in a month of January 1's was the dignified manner in which Doug Fairbanks, Jr., married his socialite sweetheart, Mary Lee Epling Hartford, and Tyrone Power and Annabella tied their knot.

. . . The hard-boiled fellow who was talking to us said that if these marriages had been sensational Hollywood affairs, on top of the W.P.A. workers' worries about Louie Mayer's \$2,000,000 income, that something might have happened which would have cost the picture business a lot of time to overcome. . . . So our congratulations to two very sensible young men—and their brides should be included, of course, on doing the thing the right way, not only for their own happiness, but for the benefit of the industry.

* * *

SAN FERNANDO NEWS . . . When Tom Brown and Natalie Draper were first married every grocer, butcher and florist in the San Fernando Valley was happy because there could not be anything more cheery in the course of a business day than the sight of this couple doing their home-like shopping. . . . Then the trouble began, and even the folks in the stores knew about it. . . . But can you imagine this? Tom and Natalie

showed up last week at the Seven Seas—even while the law reporters tell us the divorce papers are very much alive—and had a very good time for a couple of hours. . . . Do you think that the youngsters should be spanked?

* * *

IMPERSONATION . . . Every Hollywood player, and for the matter of that, almost every Hollywood worker, has encountered so many instances when perfect strangers use their names to cash checks or sign tabs, that it is no longer news. But when they start picking on the Dead End Kids that is something or other, even if it is not news. . . . Honest and truly, Leo Gorcey, who makes the real nasty faces in the Dead End Kids, has a double running around town getting away with quite a bit. He didn't get into real trouble until he boarded the S.S. Rex the other evening and the official management wanted proof that he was at least 21 years of age. Then the double produced his driver's license, in another name, to prove that he was 23 years of age. . . . And incidentally proving that he wasn't Leo Gorcey. . . . A smile to us during the evening was the sight of Carl Laemmle, Jr. conducting a sight-seeing tour to show the Rex to Man Mountain Dean. . . . If we were only real clever we know there would be some sort of sentence we could write about a mite coming to the mountain, or some-

thing or other that literature told us about if the mountain wouldn't come to Mohammed, then he would go to the mountain. . . . Incidentally, young Carl is enjoying himself these days, and on a few occasions that we have seen Mr. Laemmle, Sr., he also seems to be happy, for there is quite a load off his chest—and his shoulders.

* * *

THERE ARE HAPPY WIVES . . . While William Anthony McGuire was making his shift from MGM to 20th Century-Fox, Mrs. McGuire showed her confidence in anything Bill would do by giving quite a party at the Victor Hugo. Some of our most likeable people were there—the list including Mr. and Mrs. Otto Kruger, Hoot Gibson, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Morgan, and Ernest Truex escorting Helen Gilliland, a British actress who may crash Hollywood. . . . During the evening Harriet Caperton and Charles Columbus entertained with some of their famous dances—they have a really unusual act which starts with a dancer of 1910 and finishes with the jitterbug craze.

* * *

GOING NATIVE . . . Just in case you haven't been getting your fill of Shaslik and other mouth watering favorites in recent days, we may inform you that all will be serene when the refurbished Bublichki Cafe reopens tonight—Wednesday evening. . . . Chico De

Verde, famed violinist, is an attraction for the reopening that has helped to the sell-out. . . . Speaking of going native there was one time recently when a slip of our typewriter gave George Cukor and missus—just like that. . . . So perhaps we are just cleaning up a guilty conscience of telling something interesting, when we report that George was the host to a dinner at Del Haven's last week with Fanny Brice the guest.

* * *

POSTMAN'S HOLIDAY . . . George Marshall, who could probably tell those folks in San Francisco a few things about putting on a show, for his twentieth wedding anniversary celebration, went with the Missus to the San Francisco Fair. . . . We'll bet that Mr. and Mrs. George had a better time at the fair than most of the two-bit yokels. . . . That's the way with show folks when show folks go to a show. . . .

* * *

WHY SHOULD WE SAY THESE THINGS? . . . The only interest to us in recording the fact that Wayne Morris and his most charming wife, the former Bubbles Shinasi, were an interesting couple at John Steinberg's Victor Hugo last week, would be for the charm of the bride. . . . But while we were there, we saw other nice people. . . . And some of the notes that our scribbled notebook tells us includes the names of Tony Moreno and Velarie Whitney as a couple.

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Volume 9, No. 13.

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BING CROSBY PICTURE TOPS THE WEEK

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HIGHLIGHTS: YATES TALKS OF REPUBLIC FUTURE

SEE PAGE 4

REVIEWS: EPICS, EPICS, AND MORE EPICS

SEE PAGES 7, 10, 11, 12

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THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **UNIVERSAL** Wins With
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Director
DAVID BUTLER



BING CROSBY



JOAN BLONDELL

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IRENE HERVEY
C. AUBREY SMITH
ROBERT KENT
JEROME COWAN
"SANDY"
JANE JONES
ROSE VALYDA
HELEN WARNER
JACK POWELL
THE MUSIC MAIDS
MATTY MALNECK
and His Orchestra



MISCHA AUER

Screenplay
WILLIAM CONSELMAN

Original
DAVID BUTLER
HERBERT POLESIE

Film Editor
IRENE MORRA

Photographer
GEORGE ROBINSON

Musical Director
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Songs
JOHNNY BURKE
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**The Industry's
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A SALES MANAGER SPEAKS

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

A visiting sales manager—they all pass through our vil- lage these days—tells us that we should not have hinted that exhibitors are on a near sit-down strike.

He says: "Things are tough enough, without you talk- ing about them."

We could have made a number of fancy replies to that, but instead, we modestly contented ourselves with a query:

"What do you think is making things so tough? It can- not be new contract terms, because the exhibitor is accus- tomed to that yearly battle. He always hides his toupe and his eye teeth when Spring rolls around. What is the real trouble?"

The sales manager pondered a moment, then replied: "Well, some of the trouble is due to the fact that the exhibi- tor has got wise. He has too many syndicate columnists and trade writers like yourself telling him the day to day worries of Hollywood. He has lost his hero worship of those giant minds that create pictures, and is approaching a feeling that makes him say to the enthusiastic salesman: 'So what?'"

* * *

That enabled us to start an argument—or, rather, a dis- cussion.

We won't quote any further, but just give you our own wording of what this sales manager said.

To start from scratch:

He said that exhibitors think the industry is getting too "A and B" conscious.

By which he meant that the exhibitor thinks—and be- lieves the box office proves him out—that the top pro- ducers are happy to have one top two million dollar super A picture a year, and let the devil and the unread review- ers take the hindmost and the rest of the pictures.

The exhibitor, he said, has to work fifty-two weeks a year — while a production executive drawing a couple of thousand a week, aided by

director and writer drawing more, need only deliver ONE week a year and everything is hotsy-totsy—for Hollywood.

He told us those thoughts were creeping into the exhibi- tor mind. Then he said something even more important.

* * *

He said, with complete frankness:

"You and I know that this picture business cannot live without a healthy foreign market gross.

"You and I know that pictures can be made with a uni- versal appeal—at least universal insofar as it takes in the United States, the British zones, and Latin America. But we also know that when Hollywood hears about such things, they go hay-wire.

"The result is the American exhibitor is getting a lot of pictures which he can see were made for the British market; and a few others planned—and for which he is asked to sign on the dotted line now—are just aimed at Latin America.

"The American exhibitor is the first one to put his chin out—his rentals pay the freight and the salaries—so with all this talk you trade fellows give about the foreign market, can you blame him for wondering if he, the home town boy, must be the toll-payer?"

* * *

We never expected a sales manager to write an editorial.

But about this time we decided that everything he had said was so much to the point that it might as well be re- peated, and that it would almost fill this page.

And we also firmly made up our mind that we would not add a word of postscript to his wandering words.

But we are going to slip. Because there is a thought, a warning.

Is it possible that some of our executives may go a little scatter-minded this coming year on that foreign market problem, to an extent where they forget that there is still a cash-paying customer in the United States?

Distributors Batting Average For 1938		
		%
1. M. G. M.	45 Releases.....	103
2. 20th Century-Fox.....	52 Releases.....	92
3. United Artists	17 Releases.....	92
4. Paramount	40 Releases.....	88
5. Warner Brothers	53 Releases.....	87
6. R. K. O.	39 Releases.....	83
7. Columbia	33 Releases.....	80
8. Universal	39 Releases.....	77
9. Republic	25 Releases.....	73
10. Monogram	14 Releases.....	69
11. Grand National.....	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	10 Releases.....	59
	371	

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK: H. J. YATES HITS WITH FRANK TALK; SPRING RUMORS BUBBLE

Highlight of the week to us was a simple, unpretentious session in which H. J. Yates, pooh-bah, god-father, and the "rep" in Republic met the top boys of the trade press in an ordinary office and just told a man to man story of Republic. . . . What "Man of Conquest" was currently doing, but more importantly, what Republic has in the works for the coming year. . . . It was refreshing, because there was no bombast, ballyhoo—or even bull—if that word may be excused in polite picture circles. . . . This fellow Yates just stood on his two feet, told his story, and then said: "Now shoot questions at me." . . . That's saying something. . . . And he answered any and all questions from a sharpshooters brigade. . . . That's doing something.

It Takes A Long Time To Make A Company

Most important thing to us about the Yates talk and the Yates confidence was what could be heard between the lines. . . . You know, even top experienced exhibitors must often get the idea that all it takes to make a perfect production company is enough money and a modicum of brains. . . . They don't suspect the half of it. . . . And, of course, the proof is that if it were so easy there would be few failures in the creation of picture companies. . . . But the job is one of laying brick by brick as painstakingly as in any physical structure you could erect. . . . With a lot of starting, and stopping, and starting all over again. . . . Yates is at last happy in the feeling that the cornerstone and the foundation bricks are solidly in place. . . . He approves the aides, M. J. Siegel, Manny Goldstein, and others who have done that part of the job. And Jimmy Grainger in the selling. . . . So he is ready to go places. We can tell you he is a bearcat on wheels when he sets out for a destination.

Rumors, Rumors, And More Rumors

There is one unfortunate thing about a type of rumor that comes with each Spring in Hollywood, and which eventually finds its way across country through syndicated columns. That is the anonymity behind the statement variously phrased as "Watch for a big shake-up in a certain major lot." . . . It leaves to each reader his own guess as to what lot is meant, and no matter what happens in future months, at least enough does happen by the law of averages to make the rumor monger seem prophetic. . . . Heads he wins, tails he wins. . . . This Spring MGM has been the principle selection for the guessers when they read that mystic "shake-up" phrase. But Radio has not been neglected, nor has Paramount. . . . In the last mentioned case the boys go so far as to build up a case through the presence of Y. Frank Freeman at the studio, and thoughts of dissension in production control between the home office representative and Bill

6 Features "Going Up"

	War	Now
1. Dodge City	WAR	154 159
2. Three Smart Girls		
Grow Up	UNIV	135 142
3. Midnight	PAR	115 117
4. Let Freedom Ring	MGM	90 92
5. Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	85 90
6. I'm From Missouri	PAR	85 87

LeBaron. . . . We can tell them that in this case they are barking up a burnt tree—because Freeman and LeBaron are working together perfectly in harness, with a friendship and harmony that bodes well for production efficiency next year. . . . We like to mention these things, because few Hollywoodians realize the damage done to sales morale in any company—titanic major, medium major, or independent—when those vague rumors in which no identities are given spread around the country at this important time of the year.

Roaming Here, There And Everywhere

Lots of interesting items this week that are not necessarily of epic importance. . . . We liked for instance the move by which Darryl Zanuck and Harry Joe Brown signed Mack Sennett as an associate on the production of "Hollywood Cavalcade." . . . This is one that Twentieth is looking forward to as the real "Alexander" topper. . . . With Don Ameche and Alice Faye starred. . . . But about that Sennett acquisition. Let's look at it with crass commercialism first: There is publicity value equalling a trip to San Francisco, Omaha and Timbuctoo in what the legendary fame of Mack Sennett will do for a picture of this nature—not only here, but probably more so in Britain—where their memories are more faithful. . . . Second, there is the fact that in that canny Canuck head there is a wealth of first-person anecdote, heart throb, and plain, ordinary information. . . . Third, a reading public which has heard that Mack Sennett has had his trials and tribulations, will think more of the industry that doesn't completely discard its good men. . . . A Winchell orchid to Darryl Zanuck and Harry Joe Brown. . . . And a tip that we hear the picture is going to shoot for the moon with Big Bertha guns. . . . Remember the title: "Hollywood Cavalcade." . . . And don't let Mark Hellinger tell you we didn't tell you so.

7 Features "Going Down"

	War	Now
1. Topper Takes A Trip	UA	108 106
2. Broadway Serenade	MGM	98 88
3. Sergeant Madden	MGM	95 87
4. St. Louis Blues	PAR	90 87
5. Let Us Live	COL	82 79
6. Everybody's Baby	FOX	71 69
7. Forged Passport	REP	66 64

We Don't Get Very Far With Our Roaming

We thought the previous paragraph was going to be a quick zig-zag ten word sentence trip around the news marts. And then we got onto a subject that hit the heart and the typewriter simultaneously. . . . Let's try again. . . . We read that Herbert Wilcox is here to make "The Life of Edith Cavell" for RKO with a blend of American and British names in the cast. . . . The stories say that Wilcox made it successfully under another title, principally for British markets, but forget to mention that an American producer, Frank Carroll—one of the corner stones of the Friar's Club in New York—made it way back down the years for release by a company that by some strange coincidence was called "Selznick." . . . (Yep, the grand old daddy, Lewis J.) And the picture made a porridge pot full of money. . . . The theme has strength and it is not surprising that it has been brought up again in this age and generation. . . . But it is strange how often our great minds have to go back ten years for money-making ideas. . . . It's like Henry Ford saying, "Well, that first jalopy I made was a money-maker. I haven't any new ideas for next year, so supposing I make that old jalopy over again with a new coat of paint?" . . . Then there is interest in the news that Ed Robinson is going to journey back to MGM for another picture, this time "Blackmail," directed by H. C. Potter. Robinson made one of the best entertainment jobs of his career at MGM in "The Last Gangster," directed by Ed Ludwig, and we really believe if he had been a "home lot" star, with all the pressure that implies, the picture might have gone even further.

Who Discovered John Wayne?

RKO lines up John Wayne for "Pennsylvania Uprising," following his top hit in "Stagecoach." We wonder why, when they talk about John Wayne, no one ever mentions—or remembers—his discoverer and nurse, Trem Carr? . . . For that matter a page could be written about that modest, gray-thatched Trem Carr and his discoveries and nursing in the course of Monogram's infant days. . . . We remember a girl named Ginger Rogers, we remember—well, some week we are going to go after this job in real fashion and we will have Trem Carr blushing all over the Masquers Club. . . . Incidentally, Monogram just closed its Chicago convention days with an impressive announcement of policy and pictures from W. Ray Johnston, on behalf of the prexy's office, and Scott Dunlap for production. Thirty pictures, a greater number boosted in production costs, and a general air of enthusiasm. . . . Also, a group of John Wayne reissues. . . . Shucks, they didn't have to wait for "Stagecoach" for that—those John Waynes were Western formula at its best—and a new kid audience grows up for real bing-bang, well staged, Westerns every two years.

"EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN" TOPS THE WEEK AT BOX OFFICES; GENERAL RELEASES WERE WEAK

UNIVERSAL—2 New Releases

Universal's new Bing Crosby production, "EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN" is this week's outstanding box office attraction having opened fairly well at a 120% average and with indications of building even stronger on word of mouth advertising. Bing's contract with Paramount allows him to make one outside release a year and this year he got together with Universal and starred in their "EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN" production, as well as having a financial interest in the picture.

David Butler directed with William Conselman writing the screenplay.

Seen opposite the popular Bing is Joan Blondell, in her first free-lance role since leaving Warner Brothers. Other good marquee names include Mischa Auer, Irene Hervey, C. Aubrey Smith, and Robert Kent. And then there is also the baby "Sandy" whom the critics all agreed stole the picture and whom we understand Universal is now going to co-star with Mischa in a series of domestic comedies.

Universal's second release this week is "THE MYSTERY OF THE WHITE ROOM" which seems to be a fairly satisfactory program picture averaging around 76%. This latest in the Crime Club series co-stars Bruce Cabot with Helen Mack, with Constance Worth and Mabel Todd featured.

Irving Starr produced as usual with Otis Garrett directing.

This may be one of the 1st of the Crime Club series as it is rumored Irving Starr is moving his unit to another major lot in the near future.

"THE MYSTERY OF THE WHITE ROOM" will fit in quite satisfactorily on the average double bill particularly in houses where mystery melodramas are popular.

PARAMOUNT—1 New Release

Paramount has one new release this week, "THE LADY'S FROM KENTUCKY, 87%, which is hardly strong enough to be considered an A and yet is much better than the average program picture. It is another routine race track melodrama starring George Raft with Ellen Drew as his leading lady, (Dorothy Lamour, who was originally scheduled, stepped out of the picture.) Due to the fact that Raft is the only marquee name in the cast of any great importance not too much can be expected from this one and exhibitors know best what George Raft will do at their own box office. However, there is a strong cast of featured players which should help the picture considerably particularly the comedy team of Zasu Pitts and Hugh Herbert.

Jeff Lazarus produced and Al Hall directed. Mike Boylan wrote the screenplay from Rowland Brown's original.

Of Six New Releases In The Past Week, Only One Rated Over 100%, One Came Through Fair, And Four Were Very Weak.

RKO—Also 1 New Release

RKO's latest release is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit "SORORITY HOUSE" which has just opened up fairly well at a 73% average, but will undoubtedly do much better in the nabes, particularly in those houses situated close to schools and colleges. It is good entertainment, well produced and directed.

RKO's little ingenue, Anne Shirley, is starred and seen opposite her is James Ellison, with Barbara Read and J. M. Kerrigan featured. Robert Sisk acted as associate producer and John Farrow directed. Dalton Trumbo's screenplay was based on Mary Coyle Chase's original story.

Exhibitor reports show that their patrons are rather favorably inclined towards Miss Shirley and we believe that RKO can give this young lady bigger and more important roles. While her RKO pictures have been quite satisfactory as a whole and "SORORITY HOUSE" is no exception, still the studio has failed to give her a sufficient publicity build-up to put her among top ranking stars. Undoubtedly if this were stressed a bit more her pictures would probably pull considerably better at the box office.

WARNERS—1 New Release

Warner Brothers' only release this week is a Kay Francis aviation picture, "WOMEN IN THE WIND," which was produced last fall, but due to the number of Kay Francis pictures last year the release on this one was held over until now. While "WOMEN IN THE WIND" is a very entertaining production, still it is failing to draw very well at the box office, so far only running around 66% (plenty of red ink) which seems to prove that the public has seen enough of Kay Francis as her last four or five pictures were very weak.

William Gargan is seen opposite Miss Francis and Victor Jory and Maxie Rosenbloom are prominently featured. "WOMEN IN THE WIND" was produced by the Bryan Foy program unit and directed by John Farrow.

MONOGRAM—1 Average Pic

Monogram has one new release this week, "UNDERCOVER AGENT," which is doing very poorly at a 63% average. While it has a good title and is a fairly entertaining picture, still it is entirely lacking in marquee strength and therefore will have to be double billed with a very strong A attraction. Russell Gleason and Shirley Dean are co-starred, if it is worth the trouble to put their names upon a marquee.

E. B. Derr produced and Howard Bretherton directed.

FRANK E. WOODS

Frank E. Woods passed over to another world since our last issue—and we are certain the warmth of his welcome there will measure up to the sorrow over his departure from those who knew him on this side.

Though it will never be quite possible for the sprouts and spratlings of the screen writing field today to realize what they owed to Frank E. Woods.

He was the man who convinced the early mushroom millionaires of the picture industry that it might be worth while to use more than frayed cuffs for manuscript paper. He was the man who convinced worth-while writers that he would keep their incognitos and "accept" their services for pictures by Griffith. He was the man who guided those pictures so well that the writers began sing for "credits."

And in his mature years, through the foundation of the Academy, through Relief Fund activities, and work with writers' organizations, he was the friend of those who needed friends.

It was our proud privilege to succeed him as motion picture editor of The Dramatic Mirror. And if the record the papers give of "Spec's" age is true, we must have stepped from the cradle. But all we hope is that he feels now, from the high perspective, that we carried on in his buoyant, heart-felt faith in the motion picture.—ROBERT E. WELSH.

HONOR SPOTS

We are tempted to make this a permanent feature, in justice to the fine troupers who help so many big pictures, and get only meager credit because they are not the stars, but since there are only a few inches at our disposal all we will mention now are the performances of Lynne Overman and Akim Tamiroff in "Union Pacific," of a newcomer to us in the same picture listed on the credits as William Haade, and of J. M. Kerrigan's authentic Irish. . . . We could mention some other pictures. . . . There is that actor not given program credit on "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" who portrays a Goebbels.

6 New Releases Not In Last Issue

1 Over 100%.....1 Fair.....4 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. East Side of Heaven	UNIV	120	115
2. The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	87	90
3. The Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	76	90
4. Sorority House	RKO	73	75
5. Women in the Wind	WAR	66	75
6. Undercover Agent	MONO	63	65

THE SECOND GUESSER TELLS THE WORLD THAT HE PREFERS THE MONEY DIRECTORS

The Second Guesser can never be counted on to do the expected thing. Usually, we expect him to walk into our office with a barrage of complaints against anything concerned with picture makers or distributors. This week he surprised us by walking in with an opening word against exhibitors. He almost floored us, but we managed to stay on our feet long enough to report his words.

Second Guesser Says Exhibitors Too Star-Minded

Yessir, that's the way he started out:

"Like all theater men—or ex-theater-men—I would always prefer to have an automatic handle to hang out over that marquee and watch the crowds come in. And so many times during the year it seems that certain 'stars' are our only bridge between the bank and the bankruptcy. But when hard times, and a tough year repeats itself into two years, then some of us get thinking."

He blushed at the mention of the last word, but we encouraged him to continue. He did it haltingly.

"You know," he said, "the first fellow to climb aboard with lumberjack shoes on a star is the exhibitor. The star can be his hero one day, and his poison the next. The star can be unknown to him today, and his pet and petted the next day.

"So I got to thinking. Gosh," and this time it was more than a blush when he stuttered. "I said that before."

"Give Me The Money Men In The Directors"

With a Bob Burns drawl he approached his subject:

"Rats," he said, "One week a star is a knockout for me, three months later he scares the rats away. What made the difference? The story? Don't tell me that—because those guys out in Hollywood have been writing the same two or three stories over for so many years that they have even worn themselves out. Something makes the difference. What is it? Because it is terribly important to me to be able to know at a quick glance. I am just a poor exhibitor a thousand miles from inside information and if you take my 'star' away from me I just can't swim."

"Well," he continued. "I got to thinking—there's that word again—and I checked the records. And I have my answer. Here it is:

"Give me the money-directors—the boys who consistently, over more years than a columnist's memory, have turned in money at the box office whether they had lemons to sell, or caviar, or just plain healthy horse-meat.

"That's my answer to the picture business.

It would be my answer if I were running a company, it would be my answer if I were running a theater."

We gave him the appropriate gasp for breath, and allowed him to continue on.

"Let's Make Up A Racing Form" Says He

"Make up a racing form on the past performances of stars, executives, writers and what-have-you, and you will find that the consistency is in the directors.

"In any other industry that would be an acknowledged fact, and an important factor in its year calculations. With us it is submerged in deference to the publicity department's need to sell glamour.

He saw that we were interested, so he continued right on. But not without a chip on his shoulder.

"Oh," he growled, I suppose you want me to mention names. Well, I will. And when I get through you'll have the history of the picture theater box office. While you are listening, don't forget that I am not giving out artistic awards, I am talking exhibitor and distributor cash.

"I could kill a couple of birds with one pebble by starting out with Frank Capra—who gets the awards artistically and at the box office. But you might not consider that fair. Let's start out with Bill Seiter, who takes his assignments much as they come in the course of a man's year—but who, to the best of a very solid memory, HAS NEVER MADE A PICTURE THAT DID NOT MAKE MONEY. And my memory of Bill Seiter goes too far back into the 1920's to make many up and coming youngsters happy.

"But then there are so many names I could mention—when I am thinking of the box office receipts over the years. What about Frank Tuttle, who down back in the years gave me my hit pictures with Swanson, Dix, etc., then started a cycle with Powell in the Van Dine mystery yarns, and after that made a complete change of face for the Bing Crosby musicals such as 'Waikiki Wedding'."

"For that matter," he continued, and we could see that he thought we were arguing. "Tell me a Wesley Ruggles picture that has ever lost money for maker or exhibitor. Show me any time that Howard Hawks does not go to town with the right material. Mention a name like Norman McLeod to me—a man so darned capable that he can almost write, direct, and illustrate the titles for any picture he makes—but always for the box office, for money. I'm talking about money-men.

Second Guesser Pauses To Catch His Breath

"Gosh," he gasped, "I've got a lot of names that I would like to get off my chest, but I

just recalled that I had mentioned Howard Hawks. And isn't that a heck of a title they are giving him for a good picture—'Angels Have Wings.' Omigosh, I can imagine myself trying to sell that title in Omaha. Where the rest of the ad copy must tell them that it is a rip-roaring meller, formerly known confidentially as 'Front Page.'

"Oh well, he yawned, "I suppose you would like me to just let names run off my tongue of the directors who have been safety to theaters. Well, I could mention Irving Cummings, Rowland V. Lee, William Wellman, Norman Taurog, Leo McCarey, Henry King, Victor Fleming, and King Vidor among the old timers. And if I want to come down to some of the newer boys who have that atmosphere of consistency, I could suggest George Stevens, Mark Sandrich, and some up and coming boys like John Farrow who will some day get their break on real story material."

"But I did not start out to give you a list of the top directors of the industry. What I meant—and what I repeat—is that whether it was a company or a picture theater—my solid conviction today is that I would put my money on the money directors. Selah—and anything else you want to say. Good-by!"

The Second Guesser Sums It Up

He continued in pondering mood: "Do you think that anyone but DeMille would have the nerve to go into the prayer and cross scenes that he has in 'Union Pacific' if he did not have confidence in his own knowledge of what the public will take, what it will like, and what it will talk about? That's why I say—give me money-men for directors. Add them all up, and all you get for the total is 'money.'

"But don't think I am discounting stars entirely. What I mean is that the star today is out on a limb. And the only ladder he—or she—can reach for is the director. He can't reach for the writers any more, because with about four exceptions the writers stopped writing a year or two ago—some of them had never started—and he is left in the mercy of the conference system.

"The conference system consists in making a bad picture so well that at its preview nobody knows where to place the blame. That works out pretty well if you are just trying to live out an option, a personal promise given at a night club, or a hope for a Labor Board that will cement you to the seat.

"But it is sorta tough on the exhibitor back in Kankakee who pays money for Hollywood pictures—and who is just a little dazed and completely bewildered by Hollywood doings."

Paramount's "Union Pacific" Certain Top Money Maker for Current Season

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 170%)

Producer Cecil B. DeMille
Associate Producer William H. Pine
Director Cecil B. DeMille
Screenplay: Walter De Leon, C. Gardner Sullivan, Jesse Lasky, Jr.
Based on an adaptation by Jack Cunningham
Of a story by Ernest Haycox
Stars Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea
Featured: Akim Tamiroff, Robert Preston, Lynne Overman, Brian Donlevy, Robert Barrat, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Ridges, Henry Kolker, Francis McDonald, Willard Robertson, Harold Goodwin, Evelyn Keyes, Richard Lane, William Haade, Regis Toomey, J. M. Kerrigan, Fuzzy Knight, Harry Woods, Lon Chaney, Jr., Joseph Crehan, Julia Faye, Sheila Darcy.
Photographer Victor Milner
Special Photographer Gordon Jennings
Process Photographers: Fraciot Edouart, Dewey Wrigley.
Dialogue Supervision Edwin Maxwell
Film Editor Anne Bauchens
Time 136 minutes

Unless some other miracle maker has a tremendous surprise up his sleeve, "Union Pacific" is, in the opinion of this reviewer, destined to be the top money maker of the year.

The picture has everything—size and sweep, laughs and tears, great acting performances, and corking writing. And it has a theme as straight lined and sure-fire as "The Covered Wagon" in its day. And to top it all, Cecil B. DeMille has played with his materials with consummate skill—with hoey and hokum where hoey and hokum serve, with deftness where that was the requirement. His twenty-five years of picture making have been crammed into one grand prize package. A large sized package.

Jack Cunningham's fine adaptation, and the great screenplay by Walter De Leon, C. Gardner Sullivan and Jesse Lasky, Jr., tell the story of the building of the transcontinental Union Pacific railroad with a blending of vigorous melodrama and intense human characterizations. Joel McCrea is a trouble shooter for the railroad as it pushes its trackage mile by mile across the country, his chief task is to thwart

CURRENT REVIEWS

5 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....2 Weak.....1 ???

		Est. %
1. Union Pacific	PAR	170
2. Rose of Washington Square	FOX	150
3. Juarez	WAR	145
4. Lucky Night	MGM	135
5. Invitation To Happiness	PAR	120
6. Captain Fury	UA	90
7. For Love or Money	UNIV	75
* Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	?

a gambling-liquor ring headed by Brian Donlevy and Robert Preston. Barbara Stanwyck is a "daughter of the railroad"—postmistress on the mail car that travels step by step with the lusty workmen, and daughter of the engineer, J. M. Kerrigan.

Backgrounding the principals is a hell-roaring gang of two-fisted Irish construction workers, to whom a fight is a frolic and an obstacle a joke. Intertwined are the machinations of rival financial groups seeking to sabotage the railroad, and a rollicking "three musketeer" note through the presence as McCrea bodyguards of Akim Tamiroff and Lynne Overman. Highlighting all, is one smash physical scene after another, staged as you would expect DeMille to stage his punches. Indians, train-wrecks, blizzards and brawls.

All performances are superb. We believe that McCrea in the restrained "strong, silent hero" role does the best job of his career, and Barbara Stanwyck, playing with a delightfully melodious Irish brogue, turns in a performance that compares favorably with her memorable "Stella Dallas" role. Brian Donlevy is an intriguingly sinister menace, and a surprise of the picture is the comparative newcomer, Robert Preston, Donlevy's aide and McCrea's rival for the Stanwyck heart. He's good.

In addition to Akim Tamiroff and Lynne Overman, who supply a steady vein of outstanding comedy, the support is spotted with good performances. Our memory checks off

Henry Kolker, J. M. Kerrigan, William Haade, Regis Toomey, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Ridges, Robert Barrat, and Frances MacDonald among the many.

Not the least notable of the picture's features is an effectively subdued musical background by Sigmund Krumgold and John Leopold. The consistently excellent photography of Victor Milner combines with outstanding special and process work that never intrudes as such, but always maintains the broad sweep of the canvas on which DeMille is painting.

All in all a great day for Paramount; a top achievement by DeMille and his associate, William Pine, in the production saddles; and plenty of room for a word for Arthur Rosson, who directed the second unit.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Get all the extra days and extra squeezing you can out of Paramount on your contract. It is a picture that can only be mentioned in recent box office memory with "Snow White" and "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Union Pacific' is Paramount's contribution to the growing cycle of epics of the 'building of the West,' and as such will take its place as one of the best. It ran over two hours at its preview showing last night, and would be a much better picture with at least a half-hour clipped from its length. It is by all odds destined for heavy grosses."

VARIETY: "'Union Pacific' has a full head of steam for a box office smash, pulling a heavy payload of exciting drama, spectacle, thrill and pictorial beauty."

"For Love Or Money" Just Gets By

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Associate Producer Max Golden
Director Albert S. Rogell
Screenplay: Charles Grayson, Arthur T. Horman.
Original Story: Julian Blaustein, Danel Taradash, Bernard Feins.
Stars June Lang, Robert Kent
Featured: Cora Witherspoon, Etienne Girardot, Edward Brophy, Richard Lane, Horace MacMahon, Edward Gargan.
Photographer Stanley Cortez
Art Director Jack Otterson
Musical Director Charles Previn
Film Editor Maurice Wright
Time 67 minutes

It took three writers on the original story, and two on the screenplay to turn out this run of the mill filler. It takes no discernment to

know that there is nothing for the marquee when you must say, "June Lang and Robert Kent."

The story is a blend of an implausible story basis, not helped by the scripting, and implausible humans who exist only in the pictures your patrons always damn with that phrase "so silly." We have the formula story basis in which the hero has to recover \$50,000 which he has lost to highjackers, or be put on the spot himself by the big boss. The premise has possibilities, as we start to root for the chap who must get the money back or die a death. The possibilities grow interesting as it is discovered that innocent June Lang has the boodle. But then the boys went haywire. Too many cooks and too little broth.

Al Rogell, handling the direction, just has an opportunity to do a regulation job, and no material on which to lift above that scale. He hyped it for all the values that his many years of successful experience could dictate, but it just wasn't enough.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just sneak it by. But they won't complain in its proper spot on the bills.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'For Love or Money,' Universal has a sleeper that will more than just fill the niche for which it was intended."

VARIETY: "This one won't rise above its pretensions, that of being a modest filler. It runs overlength through familiar situations and stays up way past its bedtime."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

Thanks to . . .

Sandy

Universal

Milton Feld

Dave Butler

Herb Polesie

Bill Conselman

Johnny Burke

Jimmy Monaco

George Robinson

Irene Morra

Bernard Brown

Chas. Previn

John Scott Trotter

Frank Skinner

and all who assisted

Bing

**A NEW
UNIVERSAL
PICTURE**

Now Playing The Music Hall, New York City

Pantages and Hillstreet Theatres Starting Thursday

'EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN'

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

"THAT SLY OLD GENTLEMAN"

**"HANG YOUR HEART ON A
HICKORY LIMB"**

"SING A SONG OF SUNBEAMS"

"EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN"

LYRICS

Johnny Burke

MUSIC

James V. Monaco

**A NEW
UNIVERSAL
PICTURE**

Now Playing The Music Hall, New York City

Pantages and Hillstreet Theatres Starting Thursday

'EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN'

"Rose of Washington Square" Will Hit

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 150%)

Executive ProducerDarryl F. Zanuck
Associate ProducerNunnally Johnson
DirectorGregory Ratoff
ScreenplayNunnally Johnson
OriginalJohn Larkin, Jerry Horwin
Stars.....Tyrone Power, Alice Faye, Al Jolson
Featured: William Frawley, Joyce Compton,
Hobart Cavanaugh, Moroni Olsen, E. E.
Clive, Louis Prima, Charles Wilson.
PhotographerKarl Freund
Dances staged by.....Seymour Felix
Art Directors.....Richard Day, Rudolph Sternad
Musical Director.....Louis Silvers
Music and Lyrics: Mack Gordon, Harry Revel,
James H. Hanley, Ballard MacDonald.
Film EditorLouis Loeffler
Time90 minutes

"Rose of Washington Square" is a wobbly job of picture making that will probably make a heluva lot of money. The money will be made by those names you can put up on the marquee—Faye, Power, Jolson—and the smash value of the music. The wobble is in the fact that the story of Nicky Arnstein and Fanny Brice—transferred to Alice Faye and Tyrone Power—never was important enough to justify all this trouble, and the screenplay does not magnify it.

It all sums up in the fact that even Darryl Zanuck couldn't make "Alexander's Ragtime Band" over again. Though he made a pretty good try.

"Captain Fury" Is a Mellow Meller

HAL ROACH

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer-DirectorHal Roach
Original Story and Screenplay: Grover Jones,
Jack Jevne, William DeMille.
StarsBrian Aherne, Victor McLaglen
Featured: Paul Lukas, June Lang, John Carradine,
George Zucco, Douglass Dumbrille,
Virginia Field, Charles Middleton, Lawrence
Grossmith, Lumsden Hare, Mary Gordon,
John Warburton, Claud Allister, Will Stanton,
Edgar Norton, Margaret Roach, Billy Bevan,
Edwin Brian.
PhotographerNorbert Brodine
Photographic EffectsRoy Seawright
Art DirectorCharles D. Hall
Set DecorationsW. L. Stevens
Musical ScoreMarvln Hatley
Film EditorWilliam Ziegler
Time91 minutes

"Captain Fury" has husky qualities of adventure and broad spots of comedy that will give satisfaction in many spots, but it is not fashioned to the 1939 pattern. So you can put

The picture approaches its entertainment-selling problem by the route in "Alexander"—a cavalcade of well remembered song numbers. It gives Alice Faye a chance to go to town and she takes it in full stride; it gives Tyrone Power an opportunity to do some of the best acting of his career, but in an unsympathetic part that won't do him any good with the fans; it gives Al Jolson many moments in which to prove that there is no one living in this generation who can sell a song as Al Jolson can.

Yessir—Al gets his moments. And when he does his "Mammy" your house will come tumbling down. Tyrone Power grits his teeth into an untasty role with assurance and sincerity, but Tyrone Power as a Robin Hood rat in "Jesse James," and Tyrone Power as just plain rat in this one, are two different fellows. Alice Faye does her usual "heart and soul" job of selling everything with which the script has provided her, and surmounts the part.

The plot concerns the fact that a couple of Fourteenth Street entertainers—Al Jolson and Miss Faye—start to climb the Broadway staircase as a team when Alice meets the shifty neer-do-well Tyrone Power, who is combination gambler and what-have-you. She falls for him heavily, thus splitting up the team, and setting herself in for a life of trouble as Ty gets in one jam after another. The picture ends as he is on his way to Sing Sing.

it down in the book as "not a critic's picture," while at the same time not neglecting it for the days when the he-men and the kids approach the ticket window.

There is novelty in the locale, Australia, which dresses up the formula yarn, and will naturally help the picture in the British market. There is a corking performance by Brian Aherne, and a tailor-made role for Victor McLaglen. Paul Lukas is handicapped by the role and the dialogue given him to utter. June Lang is present decoratively.

It is a story of the days when England shipped so many of its boisterous citizens off to the Australian penal colony. Brian Aherne is the lusty Irish "Captain Fury," with McLaglen his blustering side-kick. There are nasty villains aplenty, a touch of naive love interest, and bang-bang action scenes in profusion. It is Aherne and McLaglen against the world—and they use fists, wiles, and laughs to triumph for dear old Robin Hood.

All this is a background for some very entertaining song spots. The producers may have taken some license with their chronology, but manage to give us some of the best remembered favorites of the early years of this century, and build entertainingly to the top numbers "My Man"—splendidly rendered by Miss Faye—and "Mammy"—socked home by Mr. Mammy Jolson himself.

Direction by Gregory Ratoff measures up to the material, but it must be recorded that Ratoff did not have the opportunities to show the fine skill he evidenced in "Wife, Husband and Friend." At that, he does spot his every possible moment with skill.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Look at those names and hear the songs, and you don't need our advice. It will make plenty of money and only disappoint where they expect another "Alexander."

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "'Rose of Washington Square' offers a rich bill of entertainment and has the look of a heavy grosser. For the triple starring names, Tyrone Power, Alice Faye and Al Jolson, it is a natural and meaty vehicle."

REPORTER: "'Rose of Washington Square' is impressive. While lacking the consciously impressive strivings of unblushingly lavish musical, it asserts its importance both musically and dramatically and will undoubtedly brush the higher fringes of box office eminence."

Don't sell the picture short where your audiences like mellow mellers. And remember that Aherne is going to steal the critical raves in "Juarez," while McLaglen is riding high on "Gunga Din."

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just keep it away from the sophisticates.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Captain Fury' is but Robin Hood in new habiliments, which will fall to fool even the adolescent fan. It has neither surprise nor breath-taking qualities which are customarily fashioned into this plot, whether laid in dear old England or in the popular western background."

VARIETY: "Let who will make 'em artistic. Let who is so minded make 'em for the carriage trade and the studied plaudits of the critics. This one is just a plain, old-fashioned hightailing western meller set against an Australian background and loaded with all the time-honored ingredients which seem never to stale as entertainment for the action-minded."

You Are Only Worth What the
BOX OFFICE Says You Are Worth!

«

—and the only service in the industry which gives you the authentic box office value of every individual associated with the making of motion pictures is the

»

DIGEST'S BOX OFFICE ANNUAL

"Juarez" Sincere---But Heavy History

WARNER BROTHERS

(The Digest Estimates 145%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
 Associate Producer Henry Blanke
 Director William Dieterle
 Screenplay: John Huston, Aeneas MacKenzie,
 Wolfgang Reinhardt.
 Based on a play by..... Franz Werfel
 From the novel by..... Bertita Harding
 Stars Paul Muni, Bette Davis
 Featured: Brian Aherne, Claude Rains, John
 Garfield, Donald Crisp, Joseph Calleia, Gale
 Sondergaard, Gilbert Roland, Henry
 O'Neill, Harry Davenport, Louis Calhern,
 Walter Kingsford, Georgia Caine, Montagu
 Love, John Miljan, Vladimir Sokoloff, Ir-
 ving Pichel, Pedro de Cordoba, Gilbert Em-
 ory, Monte Blue, Manuel Diaz, Hugh Soth-
 ern, Mickey Kuhn, Bill Wilkerson, Martin
 Garralaga, Frank Lackteen.
 Photographer Tony Gaudio
 Art Director Anton Grot
 Musical Director..... Leo F. Forbstein
 Music by..... Erich Wolfgang Korngold
 Film Editor Warren Low
 Time 130 minutes

The obvious sincerity of purpose with which Warners set out to produce a tragic chapter of history; a group of performances that will long be remembered, combine to make "Juarez" a big production. In the face of those elements, and the undoubted success that will reward them, it must seem hypercritical to inject a faint whisper in the wilderness of praise.

"Juarez" is heavy—and preachy. Its pace is as methodical as the pages of a school history; as unrelieved by anything approaching lightness—not to be sacrilegious and use the common word "comedy."

So, for a judgment on general mass appeal, the exhibitor will have to take all the mentioned factors into consideration. As a general thing, we would say that no one can go wrong with so vibrant a chapter of history presented with such honesty; with the recollection of the outstanding histrionic performances still fresh in our minds, we would repeat the opinion. But in our years we have met audiences—and other audiences. The "other audiences" must be reckoned with, too.

The Warner approach to the story of "Juarez" is an attempt to give it a timely link with today's headlines by making the struggle of Juarez a battle against the autocratic rulers of Europe on behalf of the democracies of the American continent. That was their choice, and that's where the sermonizing enters. And it is why it must be reported that the most important actor in the picture is Abraham Lincoln, and he is present only in the form of a wall painting that is always within camera range of Paul Muni's shoulder.

Having set out on a heavy track, the subsequent job has been wonderfully done. Acting honors go to Brian Aherne, in a characterization of ill-fated Maximilian, that evokes a striking portrait of the vacillating vitality of that puppet Emperor of Mexico. To any who have read "The Phantom Crown," on which the picture is largely based, page after page of that book leap forth from the screen in Aherne's performance.

Rating any performance ever given by

Paul Muni or Bette Davis would seem an impertinence, and we will not try it. Both are subordinated in the course of the story to the necessary footage given to Maximilian, but both are commanding. Muni's is a grippingly stoic characterization of the Indian-blooded liberator; Miss Davis comes to vibrant life when she must "fight for her man"—and pays the price of insanity.

Claude Rains as the foppish Napoleon III, John Garfield as Porfirio Diaz, aide to Juarez, and Donald Crisp as the cynical French Marshal in charge of Napoleon's interloping soldiers in Mexico, are others with outstanding moments.

Direction and screenplay measure up to the weight of the historic material, but perhaps too conscientiously weightily.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good for big money on almost any of the week's days, but keep it away from the nights that the jitterbugs come. It's history.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Juarez' . . . has magnitude, sweep, inspired depth and a dramatic impact which hold relentlessly to the emotions to the final fadeout. Unquestionably, it is charted for greatness far more enduring than that indicated by its obvious box office dominance."

VARIETY: "With a cast charged with exalted players and a magnificently staged version of the spectacular historical tragi-drama of Louis Napoleon's effort to dominate Mexico through the gilded puppet, Maximilian of Hapsburg, Warners enters 'Juarez' as its contender for this season's Academy award."

"Lucky Night" Delightful Fun

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer Louis D. Lighton
 Director Norman Taurog
 Screenplay: Grover Jones and Vincent Lawrence.
 Based on story by..... Oliver Claxton
 Stars..... Myrna Loy, Robert Taylor
 Featured: Joseph Allen, Henry O'Neill, Douglas Fowley, Bernard Nedell, Charles Lane, Bernadene Hayes, Gladys Blake, Marjorie Main, Edward Gargan, Irving Bacon, Oscar O'Shea.
 Photographer Ray June
 Musical Director Franz Waxman
 Art Director Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor Elmo Vernon
 Time 80 minutes

In a week of epics and super-epics, "Lucky Night" arrived as a delightful diversion. Don't let critics sated with a compressed diet of "social consciousness" and million dollar budgets throw you off on this one. It is audience meat right down the alley for that great slice of the public somewhere between the ages of sixteen and thirty—along with quite a few who would like to be thirty again.

The story is frothy, true. It has its moments when the writers slightly taint a great evening's work with some teetering on the flowery tight-rope where whimsy becomes whimsy. But it has direction by Norman Taurog that is the fruit of years of experience at knowing

what socks with the mass and audience; it has performances by the principals and support that make you feel that they enjoyed the whole job. And don't let anybody tell you that feeling can't sell itself to an audience.

In the first place it is down to earth. Not that serious earth where there is mud and heaviness, but that Cinderella earth that lies in the heart of most humans. A boy and girl—she an heiress out on her own, he a happy-go-lucky—meet in an employment agency, cement the friendship on a park bench, borrow fifty cents from a cop to buy their first meal of the day—and start out to paint the town. Before the night is over they have accumulated a bankroll, a Deussenberg car, a thousand laughs, two hang-overs—and a marriage certificate.

And by that time, even though the story must necessarily go a bit plotty and spotty, you like Myrna Loy and Robert Taylor so darned well for the "escape" they are giving your own desires, that you are not worrying much about formula so long as they keep on cutting up in the hands of Norman Taurog. You don't even object too strenuously to some of the hammiest love-making speeches that the year is apt to hear.

And along with the two delightful acquaintances you have made in the persons of Miss Loy and Taylor, you have witnessed a chuckle-evoking performance by Douglas Fowley, a

"different" type of parental ogre in the person of Henry O'Neill, and a fine supporting cast. To top it all, you have that "MGM production class."

Producer Louis D. Lighton does not have to worry about this one. Nor does Director Norman Taurog. Nor does MGM—anytime they want to team Myrna Loy and Robert Taylor for an evening of laughs.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Take those marquee names and don't spot it as an epic, but grab it as a life-saver in entertainment some night you are worrying about the epic. For all ages, therefore, for all days.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Lucky Night' is apt to put a pretty severe test on the marquee strength of the stellar combination of Myrna Loy and Robert Taylor. Without those two names, and without their owners' Trojan efforts pressing for attention throughout and impressing with their talents, the picture would have very little to recommend it. And, in the final checkup, it will do little in furthering their careers, nor will it have consistent box office strength."

VARIETY: "This fragile story, which relies wholly upon charm and whimsy in treatment, offers a fresh and unaccustomed role for Robert Taylor which becomes him very well. For Myrna Loy it is a natural, a variant of the suave and graceful delivery most often written for her but never stale in her capable hands. It will excite no great b. o. furore, but will amuse and satisfy widely."

"Confessions of a Nazi Spy" Hot Stuff

WARNER BROTHERS

(The Digest Estimates 7%)

Executive ProducerHal B. Wallis
Associate ProducerRobert Lord
DirectorAnatole Litvak
Based on Articles ofLeon G. Turrou
ScreenplayMilton Krims, John Wexley
StarEdward G. Robinson
Featured: Francis Lederer, George Sanders,
Paul Lukas, Henry O'Neill, Dorothy Tree,
Lya Lys, Grace Stafford, James Stephen-
son, Cella Sibelius, Joe Sawyer, Sig Ru-
mann, Lionel Royce, Henry Victor, Hans
von Twardowsky, John Voigt, Frederick
Vogeding, Willy Kaufman, Robert Davis,
William Vaughn, George Rosener, Freder-
ick Burton, Ely Malyon, Bodil Rosing.
PhotographerSol Polito
Art DirectorCarl Jules Weyl
Musical DirectorLeo F. Forbstein
Film EditorOwen Marks
Time103 minutes

There is sensational money awaiting "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" in most of the metropolitan centers of the country. And if the Madman of Europe continues hitting the headlines with his customary arrogance, that money will be found also in the hinterlands.

But there are spots where the exhibitor will do well to see the picture himself, and rate it on his own audiences.

Because the picture is a slam-bang, two-fisted, courageous presentation of its own premise that practically all Germans are rats, and that half of them are lurking under our beds hugging stupid code books to their breasts while they listen to our pillow conversations.

It pulls no punches. When Warner Brothers set out to declare war they declare WAR.

Accepting the story as factual, on the strength of the book by Leon Turrou, former FBI chief in New York, and the testimony brought out in that city's spy trials a year or so ago, there can be nothing but praise for the

Warner treatment of the subject. While at the same time it is not possible to resist wonder at the childish naivete—stupidity would be a better word—of the "spies" who threaten us so insidiously. But it is all banged home so darned effectively and efficiently that we would not be surprised to meet the German fleet in New York harbor some bright morning.

Exceptional acting marks the picture. Edward G. Robinson is top-lined, and he delivers as only Edward G. Robinson could be expected to deliver. But his sincere desire to aid the message delivered by the picture prompts him to unselfishly take on a role that in footage and spot scenes takes second rank to that given Paul Lukas. Lukas is the fanatic center and guide of the spy ring—a part drawn from life—and it is the top performance of his career. Gosh, how he goes to town. He makes you hate and want to hiss, at the same time you pity the nitwit for his fanaticism. Francis Lederer comes into his own in a meatily vicious role, far from his usual characterizations, but one that will give explosive new interest to his screen life. Stepping close behind them as another dupe of the Nazi bunds is a girl, Dorothy Tree, who, as a hairdresser on a German liner, is the chief means of communication with the Vaterland. George Sanders does a close-cropped Prussian that sums up all the goose-steppers you have ever imagined.

Down through the cast, the performances have a quality of reality prompted by something deeper than the mere playing of a picture part. It seems to have been "a labor of love." There is a Goebbels, portrayed by an uncredited actor, that makes you want to throw an egg or two. And we mean that as the height of praise for the actor. Following down the line you can go through the list of credits

above with nothing but praise for each characterization.

The story confines itself to the efforts of homeland Nazis to secure spy information about U. S. defenses, and to the organization and encouragement of "bunds" of swastika-swallowers throughout this country. The menace is Naziism, the hero democracy—and no attempt has been made to introduce any strictly racial problem. The treatment is a combination of the "March of Time" type of picture, with fiction aplenty and a dessert of authentic Hitler scenes.

Remember when Carl Laemmle mopped up for exhibitors with "The Kaiser, Beast of Berlin"? Well, here's the 1939 version, and his name is Hitler.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: *Only one time in its history has THE DIGEST used a question mark for an estimate. That was on "Snow White." We believe that showmen will appreciate that our attitude on this picture is also dictated by the humble admission that no individual living can set a prospective box office figure on freak attractions.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In the annals of screen entertainment, 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy' is unique. It may well lay the foundation for new and broader adventures in dramaturgy. It will unquestionably sound out the efficacy of a new approach to purposeful entertainment, and in so doing, pave the way for the absorption of more daring and presumably fertile sources of material."

VARIETY: "Daring, fearless, provocative, gripping with an intensity seldom achieved in screen offering, Warners' 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy' will be one of the most discussed and argumentative films of current time, and by that token also a picture of heavy money-making capacity."

"Invitation to Happiness" Audience Meat

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer-DirectorWesley Ruggles
Assistant Director.....Mel Epstein
ScreenplayClaude Binyon
Based on a story by.....Mark Jerome
Stars.....Irene Dunne, Fred MacMurray
Featured: Charlie Ruggles, Billy Cook, William
Collier, Sr., Marion Martin, Oscar O'Shea,
Burr Caruth, Eddie Hogan.
PhotographerLeo Tover
Musical ScoreFrederick Hollander
Art DirectorHans Dreier, Ernst Fegte
Film EditorAlma Macrorie
Time95 minutes

The Wesley Ruggles-Claude Binyon team again proves that the boys have what is needed to play with audience emotions. And Paramount has a picture destined to get its share of big business while delivering what could be called a "gamut" of audience satisfaction.

There is nothing particularly impressive or imposing about the story basis of "Invitation To Happiness." It is the heart-string touch of the Ruggles-Binyon duo, resulting in exceptionally happy performances by all members of the cast, that rounds it all out into a great evening of enjoyment.

Irene Dunne and Fred MacMurray make a great team; Charles Ruggles, switching his style entirely to prove that he was an actor before he became a character; Willie Collier, Sr., acting in Collier stride, and a fine prospect of a youngster in Billy Cook, go through this hour and a quarter of laughs, sugary romance, and hokey drama as though they were enjoying it as much as the audience.

The story has its elements of healthy sex, its footage of sobs and tears in a divorce and subsequent father-son angle; and a prize fight background that we believe even the women will accept—if it is not put up on the posters to scare them away.

It seems that a personable pugilist named Fred MacMurray is thrown into contact with a society belle named Irene Dunne. She falls for him, he falls for her, but warns her that there will be trouble ahead in the marriage of "a mug like me and a lady like you" This is the most entertaining portion of the picture, because while there is nothing much of a "plotty" nature happening, you can feel the audience reaction to a "girl chases husky boy" theme.

After they are married, trouble does come

—and a son. MacMurray chases the championship bubble for ten years, neglecting to see his wife very often, and completely forgetting to get acquainted with his son. There comes the divorce, the championship match which the hero loses, and a thorough wrap-up which leaves everybody where you know they will "live happily ever after."

It all seems inconsequential. It probably is. But as directed, scripted, and played—it is a grand evening of entertainment.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestions: *Good for any days of the week, but you will have to sell past that sappy title, and don't let the women know about the prize fight until you get them in.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount can look for hefty grosses from 'Invitation To Happiness.' The picture doesn't miss a trick in playing on every emotional response that can be expected in even the most heterogeneous audience imaginable."

VARIETY: "The tale is written, directed and played with moving emotional appeal. It is a more serious picture than has come off the Paramount lot lately, and one of the best in some time."

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

PERSONAL SERVICE . . . Warner Brothers gave personal service to John Steinberg for two nights in a week, when they decided to preview their two most important pictures of the year at the Warners Beverly—just a medium weight stone's throw from the portals of the Victor Hugo. . . . The result worked both ways—a lot of the folk who don't like traffic jams ate at their leisure in the Hugo, and then went to the preview on foot. A number of others realized how close it was to the theater and made their after-show reservations accordingly. . . . A pleasant smile to us was Steinberg's own anxiety to get away from the "shop" about eight-thirty so that he too could see "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." . . . He looked like those likeable youths with a fire in their eyes who want to enlist. . . . We won't attempt to give you the names to whom the appropriately named "Victor Hugo" was host on those two evenings. . . . Take out your Hollywood directory.

* * *

SAD NOTE . . . We have had one letter from an exhibitor—and any publisher of long experience will tell you that one letter written is usually equal to one hundred letters conceived but not put on paper—mentioning that divorce squabble between Tom Brown and Natalie Draper. . . . This fellow says that Tom Brown is so good in the wholesome mature-adolescent

characterizations—a period of life that buys one-half of the theater tickets—that it is never going to be the same now that his patrons have heard routine divorce testimony and news syndicates synopsized it. . . . Wonder if they all read that much? But mebbe the exhibitor knows more than we do.

* * *

THE GROVE BLOOMS . . . There was a time when your first invitation to a visiting Easterner was the Coconut Grove. . . . And just recall, now, that one thing and another, principally internal union rows, have had the Grove dark for lo, these many weeks. . . . All that is changed, and advantage has been taken of the dark weeks to give the Grove a new face-lifting—more than that a job from toe-nail polishing to top-knot curling. . . . Anson Weeks and his orchestra will be on the band-stand, with Veloz and Yolanda on the shimmering floor to make the old-timers think of nothing but the Castles, the brides and bridegrooms of Astaire and Rogers, and the newer generation of nothing but Veloz and Yolanda.

* * *

SHADES OF GLORY . . . May 11th has been set for the re-opening of the famous Trocadero, which has been publicized from the Saturday Evening Post to breakfast, and from Ken to supper. . . . And internationally. . . . Felix Young is reopening the traditional

Hollywood spot with quite a few ideas of showmanship. . . . He is bringing Emil Coleman's musical aggregation west, which will get attention because this high-ranking, smooth-swinging organization is a newcomer to our cowboys. . . . He is going to town in smart decorations. . . . handled by Nicholas Remisoff, who has the first and famous Chauve Souris to his credit. He says he has a good chef. . . . And "Ralph" will be at the door. . . . That last means a lot to the folks out this way.

* * *

OMIGOSH NOTE . . . Geewhillers, or whatever nice young girls use when they are excited, but a few months ago we tipped off the colony to the fact that the latest from the East by way of the Continent, was the idea of girl and boy friend getting together on their decision as to what to wear for an evening—and the result a two-some ensemble. . . . We did never hope that two such regular people as Barbara Stanwyck and Robert Taylor were even ahead of us, and would show up almost the same day we spoke at the Vine Street Brown Derby with a synchronous scheme in sports clothes. . . . (We know synchronous is not the word for color, but we can't think of the right one at the moment. But at any rate, they looked great.) . . . And it is going to be a tough day for the boy friends of America when this news starts spreading. . .

Can you imagine the boy friend with two suits of clothes—one pressed—being informed by his guest of the evening that she is going to wear lapus pazura, dressed in faint orchid coloring slightly blushing, and he must match his wardrobe to that, or the evening will be spoiled? . . . It will play helen with the agents in Hollywood, who squeeze the dime so tightly, they always prefer to say "dress up." . . . A tux never grows old.

* * *

BIG NEWS . . . One of these days you will find one of the big national magazines discovering one of the big stories in American life—the twenty-four hour Rex. . . . There's a yarn. . . . You can—and a large portion of Hollywood top-notchers are doing it—go to the Rex at any hour of the day and night. . . . And whatever it is they seek, they seem to find it.

* * *

WHAT'S A DERBY? . . . The Kentucky Derby got a lot of conversation out here in Hollywood, but not so much dollar action as you would suspect from the publicity blubber. . . . Truth is, most of our Hollywood acting shots don't get any big thrill out of betting on a race unless they have been kidded by old line race track kidders that they have an "inside" on a framed race—or unless the event is big enough for the syndicate photographers.

**Dine and Dance
WE NEVER CLOSE**

THE World's Greatest Casino

RACING SERVICE DESCRIPTION
From All Tracks Beginning 9 a.m. Every Day
WE PAY TRACK ODDS
ALL TRACKS — 5% COMMISSION
A new high limit 20-8-4.
It is legal to play Horse Races on the REX.

**ANCHORED OFF
SANTA MONICA**

Open 24 hours a Day - RAIN or SHINE S.S.

Cocktail Lounge — Popular Prices
Bonded Liquor Exclusively

Only 10 minutes from Hollywood, then a comfortable 12-minute boat ride to the REX. Continuous water taxi service To and From ship, 25c round trip from Santa Monica pier at foot of Colorado Street, Santa Monica. Look for the red "X" sign. Park on pier.

Cuisine by Henri Supervised by "Hy" Hoffman

Anchored in Calm Waters off SANTA MONICA

**DUAL POWERED
ALL STEEL FIREPROOF SAFETY SHIP
INSPECTED BY U.S. INSPECTORS**



William Wyler

DIRECTED

Current Release

"WUTHERING HEIGHTS"

(Samuel Goldwyn)

In Preparation:

"INTERMEZZO"

(Selznick International)

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A.
OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	183
Gunna Din	RKO	179
Dodge City	WAR	159
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	142
Stagecoach	UA	132
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	130
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	121
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	120
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	120
Wuthering Heights	UA	117
Love Affair	RKO	119
Made For Each Other	UA	116
Midnight	PAR	117
Little Princess	FOX	114
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	112
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	108
Honolulu	MGM	105
Zaza	PAR	102
Paris Holiday	PAR	102
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	94
Winns of the Navy	WAR	94
Tallpin	FOX	94
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	92
Broadway Serenade	MGM	87
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Three Musketeers	FOX	86

B.
FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pyramation	MGM	133
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	125
The Beachcomber	PAR	113
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Hound of Baskervilles	FOX	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	87
Sergeant Madden	MGM	87
Im From Missouri	PAR	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Cafe Society	PAR	85
On The Record	WAR	85
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Prison Without Bars	UA	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	81
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
On Trial	WAR	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Let Us Live	COL	79
Never Say Die	PAR	76
One Third of a Nation	PAR	76
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
King of the Turf	UA	75
Lady and the Mob	COL	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
Smiling Along	FOX	71
The Flying Irishman	RKO	70
Women in the Wind	WAR	66
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	65

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C.
FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Blackwell's Island	WAR	80
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Romance of the White Room	COL	77
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	76
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	75
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	75
On Trial	WAR	74
Society Lawyer	MGM	74
Family Next Door	UNIV	74
King of Chinatown	PAR	74
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	74
Sorority House	RKO	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73
They Made Her A Spy	WAR	72
Society Smuellers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Prates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Persons in Hiding	PAR	70
Bulldog Drummond Secret Police	PAR	70
Mr. Moto in Denner Island	FOX	70
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	70
Ambush	PAR	70
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	69
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Within the Law	MGM	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Risky Business	UNIV	64
Blonde Meets the Boss	COL	85

D.
BELOW \$100,000

Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	74
Homicide Bureau	COL	74
The Sunset Murder Case	GM	72
Whispering Enemies	COL	72
I Was A Convict	REP	72
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Omnivox Code	MONO	68
Navy Secrets	REP	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	GN	67
Forged Passport	REP	67
Boy Trouble	PAR	66
Star Reporter	MONO	66
Mystery Plane	MONO	66
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	66
Undercover Agent	MONO	66

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Directed by

*David Butler**

★

★

Screenplay by

William Conselman

★ Original Story in
Collaboration with Herbert Polesie

**A NEW
UNIVERSAL
PICTURE**

Now Playing The Music Hall, New York City

Pantages and Hillstreet Theatres Starting Thursday

'EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN'

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 15.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, MAY 29, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

TOP MONEY PICTURE: "ROSE OF WASHINGTON SQUARE"

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THE LOW-DOWN ON THIS YEAR'S THEATER CONTRACTS

SEE PAGE 6

ARE BAD TITLES KILLING OFF THE BOX OFFICE?

SEE PAGE 3

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The
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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST



"Honor Box"



THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY-FOX** Wins With

"ROSE OF WASHINGTON SQUARE"—126%



Vice President in Charge of Production
DARRYL ZANUCK



Producer and Screenplay Writer
NUNNALLY JOHNSON



Director
GREGORY RATOFF



ALICE FAYE



TYRONE POWER



AL JOLSON

Original
JOHN LARKIN — JERRY HORWIN

Dance Director
SEYMOUR FELIX

Music & Lyrics
MACK GORDON — HARRY REVEL
and
JAMES H. HANLEY
BALLARD MacDONALD

Photography
KARL FREUND

Film Editor
LOUIS LOEFFLER

NATIONAL BOX OFFICE

DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

THOUGHTS ABOUT TITLES

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

In the welter of suggestions as to why picture theater business in general has taken a nosedive, despite a fair proportion of hit attractions that give occasional high spot weeks, we wonder if there isn't something worth while in a check up of the titles that exhibitors are being asked to sell?

A few years in the show business have taught us that there is no more dangerous subject about which to be dogmatic than the matter of titles.

Your experienced showman will be the first to admit that, except for freak attractions—exploitation subjects—he would be the last to bet his bottom dollar that any particular title is a definite SELLING title.

As stolid and heavy a title as "The Covered Wagon" was among the first to prove that if a picture has what audiences want—they will find it out. It probably wouldn't have made any difference if they had called that picture "Wild Men of the West." Or maybe it would have.

Currently, business on "Union Pacific" is proving that you can even name a picture after a railroad and rake in the ducats—if you have the PICTURE.

* * *

No—the question of titles is not one of sudden bursts of genius on the part of producers or sellers that combine words into phrases in the hope of producing same magic ticket-seller.

The one point on which your old time showmen will always greet you with unanimity is the matter of NEGATIVE titles—or what they call, POISON titles.

The average exhibitor would rather have a safe, solid title that did not attempt to sell anything than have some of the examples of recent months that KEEP PEOPLE AT HOME.

If you want examples, we can mention the past year's rush of "Heart" titles. Most showmen will tell you that the word "Heart" in any combination, is for some

peculiar reason, one of the sappiest words he can put on a marquee.

We don't know the explanation. We have heard many. They boil down to this: That hardboiled hubby, who is paying the freight, after a day at the office has a healthy fear that a picture with such a title will be a lot of sugar and saccharine and slop, and gosh, how he wants to get some real entertainment. Then the kids are consulted, and they shy away from that "Heart" word. And the result is, that enough families stay home at the radio, awaiting a more tempting night, to cost a picture ten or twenty per cent of its deserved gross.

We just happened to pick on that word "Heart." "Love" is another one with its dangers. At the other end of the scale there are the heavy-heavy titles. Suppose "Dracula" had been called "Horror of Horrors" by some bright title-maker?

Our point is that the chief job of a title selector is to devise a title that won't KEEP THEM AWAY. If he can do that much, the picture itself will do its job for whatever it is worth.

* * *

While on the subject, let's express a pious wish in connection with a current news item.

We read that Twentieth Century-Fox has changed the title on "Hollywood Cavalcade" to "Falling Stars."

Far be it from our humble selves to question the judgment of the showmen whose ability is on record in 20th's performances, but some observations are in order. We may as well express them now before exhibitors start writing to us.

Aside from the questionable judgment of letting the nation's marquees read: "Don Ameche and Alice Faye in 'Falling Stars'—what is the psychology of the title?

Instead of a suggestion of youth, joy, life and a "good time" at the local theater to-

(Continued on Page 12)

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

	Releases	%
1. MGM	20	97
2. United Artists	7	97
3. 20th Century-Fox	21	92
4. Warner Brothers	20	92
5. Paramount	21	86
6. R. K. O.	13	86
7. Universal	13	85
8. Columbia	12	76
9. Republic	10	71
10. Monogram	10	68
11. Grand National	2	68

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THE HIGHLIGHTER HAS INTERESTING NEWS BUT NO REAL HIGHLIGHTS TO TALK ABOUT

Your Highlighter Had His Suspicions

When the news broke from New York that Fritz Kuhn, chief Blunderbuss of the Blunder-blunds in the United States had sued Warners in connection with "Confessios of a Nazi Spy," your Highlighter was just mean enough to get a nasty suspicion and sense the fine Italian hand of Charles Einfeld in the suit. . . . We just figured that a Blunderbuss could be expected to sell out for a price and an exploitation stunt. . . . But then, gol durned it, just when we figured out a clever private script, the fellow goes and gets himself arrested for stealing from his own Haters. . . . We don't like to follow through on Charles Einfeld on that finale curtain, but maybe we should.

The Same Fellow Sounds A Warning

When we say, "The Same Fellow," we mean that chap known as The Highlighter. He has a warning to serve. . . . Bing! Bing! Bang! . . . Here it comes! . . . Producers and distributors better stop kidding themselves that they have shaped up the three shells and the one pea, so that they will get the benefit of the producer-director idea in picture-making, but only pay off as and when the auditors get through their juggling. . . . THE DIGEST has a group of Field Investigators covering the country right now, every one of whom has the respect—earned—of exhibitor groups. . . . We are hearing things. . . . And we will guarantee that you could not get Bill Shakespeare or Georgie Shaw—middle name Bernie—to be happy as a producer-director if he discovers that you are using his name to hypo the price on your other junk.

Which All Comes Round To A Business Thought

The most intelligently inspired and conducted craftsman organization, in a field that is a mysterious combination of that intangible thing called "art" and the practical thing known as business, is the Screen Directors Guild. . . . These fellows don't make any false feints, but neither do they miss when they set for the straight left. . . . And if you want the proof, see what they did at their election last week. . . . No two or three weeks of argument and headlines. . . . No internal recriminations. . . . Just business. . . . And the result? . . . Frank Capra is again prexy. . . . And then go down through that important group of operatives: Woody Van Dyke and John Cromwell as vice-presidents; Rowland Lee as secretary; Phil Rosen as treasurer. . . . And then the board: John Ford, William K. Howard, Gregory La Cava, Frank Lloyd, Rouben Mamoulian, Lewis Milestone, Leo McCarey, King Vidor, William Wyler, William Wellman, Frank Tuttle. . . . And a veteran of the busi-

PICTURES GOING UP
Nothing went UP last week.

We could have reported a point or two of differences on three pictures, but when we got through with all the mathematics, we decided that it would be more honest to producers and exhibitors to forget "Going Up" this week.

Rather than do an unfair thing to exhibitors AND producers by on a one-tenth of an inch basis.

We might fool a producer, but we don't like to kid an exhibitor.—Robert E. Welsh.

ness, who knows both onions and scallions, J. P. McGowan as executive secretary. . . . Mr. Rockefeller: If you want to tie up this picture business without a single anti-monopoly suit, just tie up the share of those brains that you can buy. . . . But after you buy them, remember that the reason you did it was: BRAINS.

Taking A Quick Run Around The Studios

Our cynical heart had to ad, that it was impressed by the fever of showmanship thoughts bursting around the Charles Rogers office at Paramount when we dropped in for a moment last week. . . . What we mean is that it wasn't the usual dead pan executive office, but a spot where everybody—from a half dozen aspiring players, a couple of earnest writers, and on through to Rogers himself, and merely stepping over his aide, Bill Pierce,—seemed to have the spark that results in a show. . . . So then we started checking up, and we realized what this canny Mister Rogers is doing. . . . He has a healthy title and a great theme: "The Star Maker." . . . He has the insurance of Bing Crosby at the top. . . . But he hasn't stopped there. . . . He has Walter Damrosch for a top musical note for the class audiences, just as he had Stokowski for a memorable screen debut, then he hits for safety by getting the top successful song-writing team, Jimmie Monaco and Johnnie Burke, for his mass sock—and on top of that all his organization is confidene that he has a surprise comparable to the surprise he

PICTURES GOING DOWN

		Was	Now
1. Dark Victory	WAR	138	131
2. Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	122	117
3. Wuthering Heights	UA	117	111
4. Let Freedom Ring	MGM	87	85
5. Blackwell's Island	WAR	80	77
6. Back Door to Heaven	PAR	79	75
7. You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	77	74
8. One Third of a Nation	PAR	74	70
9. Sorority House	RKO	73	69
10. Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	70	68
11. Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	70	67
12. Zenobia	UA	73	67
13. The Flying Irishman	RKO	70	65
14. Spirit of Culver	UNIV	69	65
15. Women in the Wind	WAR	68	64

had in Deanna Durbin, in a new youngster, Linda Ware.

But Let's Catch Up With The News

We shouldn't editorialize so much, and then we could probably get a greater number of happy and interesting items in this page. . . . For instance, it is good news to us to hear that Universal has been able to bring back George Marshall to direct a picture, and it is a "two-plus-two" combination of pleasure to know that it will be a Joe Pasternak production. . . . It is no secret that Marshall didn't have the easiest of assignments on that Fields-Bergen opus. . . . But what he did for the company under the worst of conditions, and what he did for box offices are nw on the recrd. . . . So it is cheerful to hear that he is going to make one of those pictures that are made on clean slates. . . . The title is, "The Man From Montana," the star is James Stewart. . . . And we hope the yarn gives Stewart a chance to step even further than the fine job he did in "It's A Wonderful World." . . . Bill Seiter, another one of our real "money directors," is also taking a vacation from Twentieth Century-Fox to visit RKO-Radio on "The Pennsylvania Uprising"—which looks like one of those epics. . . . But, gosh, if they want an epic we hope they don't take advantage of Seiter on his usual willingness to play ball with the budget. . . . Let him go to town.

There's Plenty Of News If You Look Around

Ben Judells, who has gone through twenty—or mebbe more—years as the big shot independent of the Mid-West, working out of Chicago, but having every flag-waving railroad stop on his route, is going ot bob up with his own independent producing company. . . . Ben apparently has decided that Hollywood is not making the picture that his market desires. . . . Ben has a serious failing. . . . He wants to spend his own money.

Things That Interest The Highlighter

You'd be surprised—because the only things that really interest the Highlighter are those important facts that mean dollars to picture workers. . . . For a choice: The news we get from the Grosvenor House Operative in London that the George Stevens production "Gunga Din" is now in its eighth or ninth week, and that across the Channel, in Paris, it is up to the twelve or thirteen week mark. That quiet, silent, little fellow George Stevens must have plenty of opportunities to smile all by his lonesome. . . . There's good news also in the fact that James Hogan is going to get a chance to show what picture experience can really do in his Paramount assignment with Joe E. Brown. . . . Hogan is such a good soldier that he suffers through the years by being a good soldier. . . . But his pictures don't suffer.

"ROSE OF WASHINGTON SQUARE" TOPS THE WEEK; GENERAL BUSINESS NOT TOO GOOD

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In all fairness to our publication we should like to make the following statement:

In the last two or three weeks the box offices throughout the nation have been taking an awful licking with big pictures running from 20% to 30% off and smaller program pictures from 5% to 10% off. Accordingly many of our estimates were considerably higher than the pictures are now actually grossing. We realized box offices were sliding, but did not anticipate such a decided nose dive around the middle of May, as May is generally a good month with box offices generally taking the usual summer slump late in June after school is out and summer holidays set in.

FOX—3 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has three new releases this week; one the new Faye-Power special; the second, a fairly good program picture and a third, a very weak English importation.

Darryl F. Zanuck's latest big musical, "ROSE OF WASHINGTON SQUARE," with Alice Faye, Tyrone Power and Al Jolson at the head of a big cast is the top picture of the week. And considering conditions, is holding well at a 126% average. Although this is considerably below what we had estimated. In many instances this picture has been held for a second week with satisfactory results, as besides the big star names there is an excellent musical score of old time hits. And furthermore this one has been backed by a terrific exploitation campaign including the broadcast from the famous Kentucky Derby.

Gregory Ratoff handled the direction quite capably.

Twentieth Century-Fox's second release this week, "CHASING DANGER" 79% is a better than average programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit. Preston Foster and Lynn Bari are co-starred.

Twentieth Century-Fox's third and last release this week "INSPECTOR HORNLEIGH" 61% is an especially weak picture from the British-Fox unit.

MGM—Also 3 New Releases

Leo the Lion roars again and MGM has three pretty good releases this week. Two of which are running considerably above 100%, while the third, a new programmer is also doing very good business.

MGM's first release is another English made picture "GOODBYE MR. CHIPS," which opened very strongly both in New York and Los Angeles and at present is averaging around 122%.

"GOODBYE MR. CHIPS" which is from the pen of the famous James Hilton, was produced at MGM's London studios under Victor Saville's

Of Thirteen New Releases In The Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%, One Came Through Fair And Nine Were Very Weak



supervision by Producer Ben Goetz who was also responsible for MGM's other two big English pictures, "A YANK AT OXFORD" and "THE CITADEL." Direction was by Sam Wood.

Robert Donat, well-known to American audiences, is supported by an all-English cast which includes the Greer Garson and Terry Kilburn. As "GOODBYE MR. CHIPS" is a rather lengthy feature and quite sad it might be advisable for those exhibitors that are going to double bill this picture to book it with a rather short comedy feature to lighten up the program; but due to the popularity of the novel many exhibitors, particularly in key cities, should be able to single bill this one with satisfactory results.

MGM's second release is a light and fast moving comedy entitled "LUCKY NIGHT" co-starring two of MGM's top players, Myrna Loy and Bob Taylor. On its first runs this one is only averaging around 112% so far, but we are of the definite opinion that word of mouth advertising will build it considerably higher. In many of the spots where it has opened so far it has been playing opposition to heat waves and should do much better on future bookings.

Two of MGM's top men; Producer Louis Lighton and Director Norman Taurog are responsible for this fine comedy hit.

MGM's third release is the second in the famous Kildare series from the Joe Cohn unit and this time it is "CALLING DR. KILDARE" which is equally as good as the first of the series and is doing the same kind of business at an 87% average.

UNIVERSAL—2 New Releases

Universal has two new program releases this week, of which the best is "BIG TOWN CZAR" 74%, co-starring Barton McLane and Tom Brown with JackLaRue and Frank Jenks featured. This one has plenty of action and will make an excellent filler for a double bill.

Kenneth Goldsmith produced and Arthur Lubin directed.

Universal's second release "CODE OF THE STREETS" is another in the Little Tough Guy series and like its predecessors it is only doing fair at a 70% average. Evidentially the public along with the P.T.A. are getting fed up with the number of Dead End and Little Tough Guy pictures.

PARAMOUNT—1 New Release

Paramount's only new release this week "HOTEL IMPERIAL" 73% is a special that does not seem to be doing any special business. Over three ago Paramount started to produce "HOTEL IMPERIAL" with Ernst Lubitsch directing and Marlene Dietrich starred, but when La Dietrich walked out of the studio the production was shelved and was only recently revived.

Ray Milland, who just draws a fair house himself, is co-starred with Paramount's new foreign importation, Isa Miranda. Judging from past box office returns the American public are about fed up on foreign stars such as: Garbo, Dietrich, Simon Simon, and it is surprising that Paramount still insists on introducing a new one in Isa Miranda—unless they are figuring on a strong play from the foreign market. As this one is only averaging around 73% it will be advisable for exhibitors in most instances to book it with a much stronger box office attraction.

COLUMBIA—2 New Ones

Columbia has two new releases this week, neither of which are very strong at the box office. "BLIND ALLEY" with Chester Morris, Ralph Bellamy, and Ann Dvorak, is by far the best and although it is only averaging around 70% on its first runs, it will undoubtedly do much better in neighborhood houses particularly where action pictures are desirable. Charles Vidor directed this stirring melodrama.

Columbia's second release this week is another fair programmer from the Irving Briskin unit, "FIRST OFFENDERS" which is just doing so-so at an 64% average. Walter Able, Beverly Roberts and Johnny Downs are co-featured.

MONOGRAM—1 New Release

Monogram's only new release this week is another in the series co-starring Moviata and John Carroll, entitled "WOLF CALL" by Jack London. Although this one is only doing 68% on its first run bookings it should take a big jump in neighborhood and small town houses, especially in the West where stories of the Mounties are always popular. This one has plenty of thrills and action and some very unusual photography.

"WOLF CALL" was produced by Scotty Dunlap with Paul Malvern supervising and George Wagner directing.

(Continued on Page 12)

13 New Releases Not In Last Issue

3 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....9 Fair

		%	We Est.
1. Rose of Washington Square	FOX	126	150
2. Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	122	115
3. Lucky Night	MGM	112	135
4. Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	87	85
5. Chasing Danger	FOX	79	75
6. Big Town Czar	UNIV	74	75
7. Hotel Imperial	PAR	73	85
8. Blind Alley	COL	70	80
9. Code of the Streets	UNIV	70	75
10. Wolf Call	MONO	68	70
11. First Offenders	COL	64	65
12. Sweepstake Winner	WAR	62	70
13. Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	61	60



J. Maurice Ridge

DIGEST'S FIELD MEN TALK COLD TURKEY

THIS WEEK'S REPORT FROM SALT LAKE CITY



Harry E. Nichols

Startling News For Many Exhibitors

Whether it is the hand of time, the march of progress, the survival of the fittest plan or the approach to a more equitable contractual relation between the distributors of motion pictures and the independent exhibitors that has brought it about, the industry is to see the inauguration of SECTIONAL AGREEMENTS.

From reliable sources comes the almost unbelievable news that Southern California exhibitors are to be offered a separate film contract by all the major companies for the coming season's products. The nature and terms of this separate agreement have not been disclosed, however, it is reported by those in the know, that the specific complaints of the Southern California exhibitors will be "appeased."

Previews Causing Most Los Angeles Trouble

One of the knotty problems that has brought about many conferences via the air mails and long distance phone calls, is whether the showing of a sneak preview, at which an admission is charged, constitutes a national release date on that picture. The collectors of the dimes in other Southern California theatres, where previews never, or rarely ever, fill the infrequently used seats, complain they are being deprived of a run, with subsequent loss. The producers insist the picture is only being tried out for audience appeal, and that it goes back to the cutting rooms for more dissection, reconstruction and a general reconditioning, in accordance with the post-card criticisms that flow in from the surprised audience, which has been gathered from the four ends of the city to be the first to see the reputed immortal masterpiece.

But There Are Also Other Problems

There are many other problems, that California exhibitors contend are peculiar to that section of the

land of the free and home of the highly taxed, that can only be solved by a special contract. One of these is the more specific selling of zoning and clearance. It appears that there are two kinds of clearance records in the lower left hand drawer of the booker's desk. One of these clearance records is referred to as the old defunct N.R.A. plan. This one is used in situations, where only independent theatres are operated. The other is the so-called BLUE BOOK. This is another method of booking, where there are producer owned theatres in operation, in competition to independent ones. On the front page of this Blue Book is printed "Property of Fox West Coast Theatres Operating Company." It is explained by the bookers that the Blue Book is followed in order to

sion with respect to "presumptive conspiracy."

Allocations Are Worth Talking About, Too

It is noted this week, that this modest publication's advance prognostication with respect to the probable box office returns on "I'm From Missouri" is verified, when it is learned that it has been taken out of the A classification and put down in the B releases. Paramount still has it in the A classification for the independent exhibitors in the Salt Lake territory, but in the first runs, in the region of the Wasatch Range, it is being released as a B picture, and run in the class B houses of the chain operated theatres. This same situation maintains in the Dallas, Texas, territory. According to information received over the grape vine from the Lone

admission. This 5000 town is in an agricultural section. It's a house record.

Short Term Contracts Encountered In Salt Lake

Due to the single bills that are the order of the day in the Salt Lake City exchange territory, there are a great many short contracts written. In a small Utah county seat town "Union Pacific" and four other pictures were sold on percentage. It is stated by the film men in this section that the single bill situation makes this selling policy necessary in the area served out of this center.

Decentralization Presents Many New Angles

In discussing the possibility of sectional contracts for all exchange centers, with branch and district managers during this week of traveling, there rose the question of what this would eventually lead to, with respect to distributor operations. Recognizing that the local problems are best known to the branch and district executives in each exchange center, there would fall upon their shoulders greater responsibilities, which would require more authority in solving them. When this innovation becomes a national policy, it naturally follows that such operation would be of no value, unless it increased the box office returns to the exhibitors, and a corresponding increase in film rentals to the exchange.

Exchange executives see in it a possible decentralization plan, an opportunity of being of greater service to the customer—the exhibitor, as well as to their own companies, with a corresponding increased remuneration for their part in such a plan. It has long been a sore spot in the distribution department—the question of regimentation, and the hope of playing a more important part in shaping policies, has given the local branch exchange managers renewed hope, for a place in their organizations, they so richly deserve.

**Watch For Live Field Reports Each Week From
THE DIGEST Field Investigators.**

carry out the terms of the MASTER AGREEMENTS, under which the chain operated, producer-owned theatres are booked.

Whether the independent exhibitors of Southern California will be able to inject into the proposed sectional agreement, the BASKET DEALS with the ANNUAL SETTLEMENT day, enjoyed by the chains, offers another headache, for the distributors.

The Knights of the Road Must Get A Break

There are many other important points at issue, which must be quickly settled, in order that the Knights of the Road may return to their territories and start selling. Instructions from the major distributing companies to the Los Angeles branch managers last week were to stop selling until June 1, at which time it was presumed by those on the side-lines, that the big wigs in the Home Offices, exercising their gray cell matter, would offer a contract that would appease the ire of the G-men and comply with the late Supreme Court deci-

Star state. In the Los Angeles area, a reallocation from A to B classification by the Independent Theatre Owners officials was arranged, with the proviso that the first runs in each zone might run it as a class A picture on percentage or on flat rental, at their own option.

Hot Spot News On The High Spots

Las Vegas, Nevada, played the "Nazi Spy" opening last Sunday, after a couple of setbacks, due to discussions with the distributor over its allocation. It is understood that this production hit the Class B group, after the B. O. info was learned from its first run in Los Angeles.

Union Pacific Clicks In This Territory

That Union Pacific is headed for a record run throughout the country, was further evidenced this week when reports from small towns in Idaho were received. In Burleigh the picture played to more than \$1100 on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 35 cents

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THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Gregory Ratoff

DIRECTED



Now Directing
"ELSA MAXWELL'S HOTEL FOR WOMEN"



**"ROSE OF
WASHINGTON SQUARE"**

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



Alice Faye



“ROSE OF WASHI

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

"I never knew I had so many friends"—

Al Jolson



NGTON SQUARE''

New "Tarzan" Picture Definite Hit

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Producer Sam Zimbalist
 Director Richard Thorpe
 Screenplay Cyril Hume
 Original Edgar Rice Burroughs
 Star Johnny Weissmuller
 Featured: Maureen O'Sullivan, John Sheffield,
 Ian Hunter, Henry Stephenson, Frieda
 Inescort, Henry Wilcoxon, Laraine Day,
 Morton Lowry.
 Photographer Leonard Smith
 Film Editors..... Frank Sullivan, Gene Ruggiero
 Time 81 minutes

The report is good, in fact, it is enthusiastic. For every exhibitor who knows what he has done with previous "Tarzan" pictures, we can say it in simple words:

MGM may have taken a long time to make this picture, but when then finished it, it has all the kid value you would ordinarily expect from a "Tarzan" a new angle in a kid star. And not a bad adult appeal.

Add all those factors up, and you know that what MGM must have decided was that they would not release the picture until it was right.

It IS right. Good formula. Fine performances. We will never go into ecstasies over Johnny Weissmuller as an actor, but we will give him the palm as Tarzan. And the gra-

CURRENT REVIEWS			
1 Over 100%.....5 Okay.....4 Fair			We Est.
1.	Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	110
2.	Charlie Chan In Reno	FOX	80
3.	Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	80
4.	6,000 Enemies	MGM	80
5.	Hotel Imperial	PAR	80
6.	Racketeers of the Range	RKO	80
7.	The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	75
8.	The Zero Hour	REP	70
9.	S-O-S Tidal Wave	REP	70
10.	Tell No Tales	MGM	70

acious presence and trouping skill of Maureen O'Sullivan, keeps the picture alive and vibrant.

On top of that there is a kid. We hate to start proclaiming new kid stars to exhibitors, because they come too fast for box office consumption, but this youngster, John Sheffield, is good enough to give the twirl to the title "Tarzan Finds a Son." He's the son. And very good.

There is little reason for re-telling a "Tarzan" story. We could first report that the director, Richard Thorpe has turned out a yeoman job for box offices and for his company on a subject that might have thrown many weaker men for a loss. We should secondly report that the injection of the youngster, who is an aviation-orphan because his father and

mother crashed in that unknown land of Africa that might as well be called "Tarzaland," was an inspiration on the part of producer, director, or writers. It gives the picture the lift that makes it a "new" Tarzan.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: All you have to know from us is that it is probably the best of the "Tarzan" series—and you can pick your own days. Previewed May 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The kiddies—young and old—will get a whopping amount of fun out of 'Tarzan Finds A Son.' This is the most hilariously amusing, the most pretentious and the most imaginative of the series, by far."

VARIETY: "It is in many respects the most substantial of the Tarzans and a certain money-maker."

Gracie Allen Hits the Bell in Solo Effort

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer George Arthur
 Director Alfred E. Green
 Novel S. S. Van Dine
 Screenplay Nat Perrin
 Star Gracie Allen
 Featured: Warren William, Ellen Drew, Kent
 Taylor, Jed Prouty, Jerome Cowan, Donald
 MacBride, H. B. Warner, William Demar-
 est, Judith Barrett, Horace MacMahon, Al
 Shaw, Sam Lee.
 Photographer Charles Lang
 Art Director..... Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick
 Songs.....Matty Mainick, Frank Loesser
 Film Editor.....Paul Weatherwax
 Time74 minutes

"The Gracie Allen Murder Case" is all that the title could be expected to promise. It is zany, screwy, riotous and uproarious. All in all a fine debut for Gracie Allen solo starring.

The audience that want epics and problem

plays will just have to close eyes and ears or else give in to the infectious antics of Gracie Allen, the swift tempo of Al Green's direction, and a yarn that may not have substance but that does have gags and twists and puns.

You won't be surprised to know that Gracie is seen as the blundering "Little Miss Mix-It-Up," assistant of Warren William, who is seen as Philo Vance. There is a murder for which Kent Taylor seems destined to take the rap. Warren William works suavely and legitimately as Philo Vance—Gracie always calls him Fido Vance—while Gracie herself works everything from slapstick to daffiness unlimited. She blunders sufficiently so that the innocent Taylor seems due to have the crime definitely pinned on him, and then blunders on still further to the real solution.

Ellen Drew shares the romantic interest capably with Kent Taylor, with Jerome Cowan in his accustomed villainous role. Others ex-

cellent in support include Donald McBride, William Demarest, H. B. Warner, Judith Barrett, Horace MacMahon, and Jed Prouty.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A laugh hit, with especial appeal for the younger generation. Previewed May 12.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Gracie Allen's myriad of fans will unquestionably find 'The Gracie Allen Murder Case' entirely to their liking. Those iuke-warm on the zany antics of half of the Burns & Allen team will be inveigled into many an open chuckle before the picture has been many minutes old on the screen."

VARIETY: "Fulfilling the funny implications of its title, 'The Gracie Allen Murder Case' is riotous with laughs and fresh gags—taking its place beside the most infectious comedies all the way and has exceptional earning capacity."

The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

—NATIONAL BOX OFFICE DIGEST

Charlie Chan Goes to "Reno" and It's Okay

20th CENTURY-FOX
(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer John Stone
Director Norman Foster
Based on characters created by Earl Derr Biggers.
Screenplay: Frances Hyland, Albert Ray, Robert E. Kent.
Original Story..... Philip Wylie
Star Sidney Toler
Featured: Ricardo Cortez, Phyllis Brooks, Slim Summerville, Kane Richmond, Sen Yung, Pauline Moore, Eddie Collins, Kay Linaker, Louise Henry, Robert Lowery, Charles D. Brown, Iris Wong, Morgan Conway, Hamilton MacFadden.
Photographer Virgil Miller
Film Editor..... Fred Allen
Time 65 minutes

This Chan really rates as one of the best of the Charlie Chan pictures. A statement like this is difficult to make, because in series pic-

tures, every individual is entitled to his own idea.

But we liked this one. Norman Foster kept it stepping along, his cast played ball with him, and turned in the good trouping performances that one would expect from the credit list printed above.

Best news of all, in our estimation, is the fact that exhibitors who have had their market for Charlie Chan pictures can relax and then go on to selling—because we think the series will pick up added life with this one.

If you ask us to tell the story, we will do so. It concerns Chan's efforts to solve a crime committed somewhere between Reno and here-and-gone. A number of good troupers go through the action under what is really life-saving direction by Norman Foster, and they do Legiannaire jobs. We felt a little hurt

though, to see Ricardo Cortez toss in a couple of effective lines and then bow back to—the plot.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: One of the best of the Chans. But only for the Chan followers, and on those days. Previewed May 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Charlie Chan in Reno' will not have to depend on dyed-in-the-wool followers of Oriental detective for its box office take, but is an offering that will have general appeal."

REPORTER: "Every device of suspensive suspicion planting is employed in this Chan opus to puzzle the murder mystery addicts. In addition to the mystery element there is a lot of swell comedy supplied by the unusually clever dialog. Production rates as one of the better Charlie Chan pictures to date."

"Jones Family in Hollywood" Entertaining

20th-FOX-COSMOPOLITAN
(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer John Stone
Director Malcolm St. Clair
Screenplay Harold Tarshis
Original story: Joseph Hoffman, Buster Keaton
Based on characters created by Katharine Kavanaugh.
Featured: Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, Ken Howell, George Ernest, June Carlson, Florence Roberts, Billy Mahan, William Tracy, June Gale, Marvin Stephens, Hamilton MacFadden, Matt McHugh.
Photographer Edward Snyder
Film Editor Fred Allen
Time 60 minutes

We are one of those left-handed persons who sincerely believes that the Jones Family series is a better job of picture making than the

Hardy Family, but who must agree that just at present there is only one Mickey Rooney alive and obsteporous.

So, having given you our apology, we beg to state that we think this number in the life of the Jones Family will not only hold up its family reputation, but we think many people will vote it the best of the series.

When you can do that in one of these chain-gang picture propositions you have practically surmounted Alcatraz. But Mal St. Clair's veteran touch, combined with a veteran cast—you can read those names above—and a workmanlike job of scripting, left the picture into what we should call "B-plus" rating.

This time the Jones Family is in Hollywood. And good writing and direction manage to hit almost all Hollywood interesting spots that

your audiences could desire to see. In between there is a neatly told family story. And telling it all is a swell cast.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: You know what the Jones Family does for you, but our idea is that this is one of the best. Previewed May 19th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Jones Family in Hollywood" is concocted of surefire audience stuff, and it doesn't miss an opportunity in making the most of it."

VARIETY: "The Joneses from Maryville go to Hollywood—and go Hollywood—in a bright and boisterous comedy which will regale the confirmed patrons of the series and amuse those who may herein get their introduction to the group."

"Zero Hour" Standard Program Fare

REPUBLIC
(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Sol C. Siegel
Director Sidney Salkow
Original Screenplay..... Garrett Fort
Stars..... Frieda Inescort, Otto Kruger
Featured: Adriane Ames, Don Douglas, Jane Darwell, J. M. Kerrigan, Ann Todd, Leonard Carey, Sarah Padlen, Ferris Taylor, Willard Parker, Landers Stevens.
Photographer Ernest Miller
Film Editor..... William Morgan
Time 62 minutes

Before we mention the fact that "The Zero Hour" is a rattling good job of entertainment-making, we think we should put in black and white that it is the latest exposition of the

creed that is apparently Republic's for the future.

The picture is produced, directed, played and written with a touch of class—and if you want to add up the budget you know more than we do. We just take those pictures off the screen as they appeal to us.

They started with what could have been a wishy-washy idea—one of those Broadway producer creating a star thoughts—and they could have laid an egg except that Otto Kruger was the producer, Frieda Inescort was the star, and the director, Sidney Salkow, kept his eye on the ball even when formula dimmed his eyes.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: It finishes up as good entertainment. Box office value is set by the names you read in the credit list above. Audience value is koya. As a matter of fact, they'll like it. Previewed May 18th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Given care in production, direction and character delineation, Republic's "The Zero Hour" rates as a better B offering, which brings Republic closer in its efforts for major recognition by exhibitors."

VARIETY: "Packing plenty in way of entertainment and production values, 'The Zero Hour' marks dawn of new era in matter of Republic programmers."

"6,000 Enemies" MGM Version of Red Meat

Put this one down as a good mass buy on your MGM deal. There are no marquee names, there's nothing to go out and shout about since the subject has been worked over by Warners in various versions until Metro looks like a fifth-rate imitator.

But it is good entertainment. The writers started off with an idea—what would happen to a vigilante District Attorney if he himself

were sent up to the Big House? The picture tells you.

It is so thrilling in premise, and so skillfully hauled by George Seitz in direction, that it is a shame the story didn't know where to go in the last reel. But do not take us too heavily on that thought—because George Seitz packs in a decade of picture making experience to make every individual moment—up to that trick finish—real powerful redmeat entertainment.

It is probably unnecessary to talk about the cast. Their names you all know. But it is a director's picture. A bit of trickery here and there, but a lot of solid punch when it is needed.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good melo entertainment, with a prison background, that will back up almost any top epic on your bill. Previewed May 20th.

"S-O-S Tidal Wave" Has Novel Idea

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer.....Armand Schaefer
 Director.....John H. Auer
 Original.....James Webb
 Screenplay.....Maxwell Shane, Gordon Kahn
 Featured: Ralph Byrd, George Barbier, Kay Sutton, Frank Jenks, Marc Lawrence, Dorothy Lee, Oscar O'Shea, Mickey Kuhn, Ferris Taylor, Donald Barry, Raymond Bailey.
 Photographer.....Jack Marta
 Film Editor.....Ernest Nims
 Time.....62 minutes

The fact that Republic is on its toes is proven by this picture, which might have been a run of the bill attraction in straight audience values, but which takes on that welcome touch of novelty by its combination of two live themes—television, and the recent "Invasion From Mars Scare."

The writers started off with something refreshing. The production in all departments has carried through. And there is a grand climax that is a topper for any picture made by

any studio. It is a particular tribute to this Republic crew because it is a process effect of the type that a number of us think only MGM can do. MGM could only have topped the destruction of New York City as shown in "S. O. S. Tidal Wave" by spending another half million dollars—and then we doubt if they would have topped it.

All of this makes a final reel that is an audience smash, but having talked enough about that point, we will go on to treat the picture in routine reviewer style.

Let's decide that you can't do much with the names for the marquee, so then let's decide to sell the smash cataclysm scenes. Back of that for selling purposes, you have a well written and directed picture, played by minor names in a thoroughly competent manner. The story basis is placed in television, and Ralph Byrd is a member of the new tribe of televisors: Frank Jenks a newsreel cameraman holding up his end in great form; and a well rounded cast of troupers whom we know well—and favorably.

Oh, yes, the story concerns a gang of racketeers who are out to get our hero, Ralph Byrd, his wife, Kay Sutton, and his child, Mickey Kuhn. They go to such limits that they finally put on a faked blowing up of New York City. Big stuff done in a big way.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A great bargain buy. You have no marquee names, but it will sell that "mass" audience like a ton of bricks. Use the top of the marquee for some million dollar flopperoo that is too expensive to shelve. Previewed May 24th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "S-O-S Tidal Wave" is one of those pictures which, given strong marquee names and a little more time and care in the making, might have measured up as substantial top-of-the-bill entertainment. As it stands it is still well up in the program division and will give plenty of satisfaction to theatres which book it."

VARIETY: "Backgrounded against television as its enthusiasts hope it will develop few years hence, 'S-O-S Tidal Wave' reaches screen as better-than-average programmer.

"Hotel Imperial" Could Have Been Lost

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Director.....Robert Florey
 Assistant Director.....Stanley Goldsmith
 Play.....Lajos Biro
 Screenplay.....Gilbert Gabriel, Robert Thoeren
 Stars.....Isa Miranda, Ray Milland
 Featurel: Reginald Owen, Gene Lockhart, J. Carrol Naish, Curt Bois, Henry Victor, Albert Dekker, and the Don Cossack Chorus, Serge Jaroff, conductor.
 Photographer.....William Mellor
 Art Directors.....Hans Dreier, Franz Bachelin
 Musical Director.....Boris Morros
 Musical Score.....Richard Hageman
 Musical Advisor.....Phil Boutelje
 Song.....Frederick Hollander, Ralph Freed
 Film Editor.....Chandler House
 Time.....78 minutes

Paramount chose to preview "Hotel Imperial" on a Saturday night, an off-night for Hollywood previews, used only by companies who are convinced that they have a weak sister on their hands. There is nothing about "Hotel Imperial" which particularly refutes this belief.

It is not a really "bad" piece of work, however, but rather it is just another picture. And considering the time and money expended on "Hotel Imperial," it has no business being "just another picture."

The film also serves to introduce Isa Miranda, imported from Europe quite some time ago. She might be classified as belonging to the Garbo-Dietrich "soulful" school. And since Garbo and Dietrich have proved most expensive duds for American exhibitors during the past five or six years there seems no reason to believe that the beautiful Miss Miranda will

fare any better. But perhaps it is unfair to pass final judgment on the basis of this one picture.

Ray Milland, costarred, walks through the film with a stiffness that is unusual in him. However, Reginald Owen, as a Russian general, and Gene Lockhart as the hotel manager, furnish amusing characterizations. J. Carrol Naish, in his role as a spy, performs with his customary aplomb. Curt Bois contributes an amusing bit as the cynical assistant to Lockhart. The Don Cossack chorus aid the film with their dashing presence and some splendid music.

The story takes place in a war torn town in the year 1916. Isa Miranda is out to avenge the death of her sister and the Austrians and Russians are out to kill each others. Add a few spies, a love affair, several attacks and counter-attacks, mix well, and there you have it.

It was directed by Robert Florey from the screenplay by Gilbert and Robert Thoeren.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Strictly an off-day picture. It's not bad, but it's not good. Previewed May 7th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount's revival of 'Hotel Imperial' is an unexciting though obviously extravagant effort to interest the American public directly in the career of Isa Miranda. It will do little either to enhance her prestige or to add bulk to box office."

VARIETY: "Long deferred and debated in the making, the theatrical 'Hotel Imperial' emerges in film as a fairly entertaining wartime melodrama, but without sufficient distinction to merit more than average program fate at the b.o."

Thoughts About Titles

(Continued from Page 3)

night—doesn't it give the idea of a picture concerned with old age, pseudo-tragedies, failures?

After a hard day at the office, do those thoughts inspire you to take a couple of dollars out of the family purse and go out to the local theater for the evening?

Hell, no—you are going to seek something that has the ring of effervescence to it—something like "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

Or, maybe . . . "Hollywood Cavalcade."

Releases of the Week

(Continued from Page 5)

WARNERS—1 New Release

Last week Warner Brothers released three big box office smashes in "JUAREZ," "DARK VICTORY," and "NAZI SPY." Now possibly comes the filler of program pictures to offset the high budget special and this one is "SWEEPSTAKE WINNER" which is an entertaining picture but only averaging 62% because of the lack of marquee names. Marie Wilson, Johnny Davis and Allen Jenkins are featured, and all are excellent players but not exactly box office magnets, so this one will have to be double billed with a super-super. However with the current interest in horse racing and sweepstake tickets in the U.S.A. this one should prove a quite satisfactory filler.

"Racketeers of Range" Standard O'Brien

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
 Producer.....Bert Gilroy
 Director.....D. Ross Lederman
 Screenplay.....Oliver Drake
 Story.....Bernard McConville
 Star.....George O'Brien
 Featured: Chill Wills, Marjorie Reynolds, Gay Seabrook, Robert Fiske, John Dilson, Monte Montague, Bud Osborne, Ben Corbett, Ray Whitley, Cactus Mack, Frankie Marvin.
 Photographer.....Harry Wild
 Film Editor.....Frederic Knudtson
 Time.....62 minutes

George O'Brien remains standard fare, but it cannot be said that he improves with age. This current effort is just another one of those things—guided skillfully by Lee Marcus and Bert Gilroy on the production end—but still showing nothing more than George O'Brien going through his paces.

Your western audiences will give thanks to production and direction, and writing, for packing its action, guns, rides and all the stock things that they love. It is from an original by Bernard McConville—who has been writing darn good action yarns for more years than your reviewer likes to remember—and has something of a different twist for its premise.

Instead of the trite rustler or "Cattlemen's Association detective premise," or the boy who has to prove to his father that he has known who were the real crooks all along, or the silent figure returning from jail for his vengeance, it has something new in presenting O'Brien as the stalwart champion of a group who are about to be squeezed to the wall by a packing company.

It is the first time that anyone following westerns ever knew that cows are made to be packed.

And it goes along with fairly good interest. It will satisfy. Though we cannot guarantee that they are not apt to get tired of the routine George O'Brien performance before long.

Some well spotted song numbers help the entertainment value.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Safe routine for the Western days, but not one of the best. Previewed May 24th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Picture falls a little below the pace set by producer Bert Gilroy in his previous O'Briens as to quality and story, but will still make a good showing in its intended spot on a western bill.

VARIETY: "'Racketeers of the Range' maintains the George O'Brien standard of fast moving, colorful and energetic westerns, cut to the pattern supported by his stable audience for dependable returns."

"Tell No Tales" Just Gets By

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer.....Edward Chodorov
 Director.....Leslie Fenton
 Original.....Pauline London, Alfred Taylor
 Screenplay.....Lionel Houser
 Stars.....Melvyn Douglas Louise Platt
 Featured: Gene Lockhart, Douglas Dumbrille, Florence George, Halliwell Hobbes, Zeffie Tilbury, Harlan Briggs, Sara Haden, Hobart Cavanaugh, Oscar O'Shea, Theresa Harris, Jean Fenwick, Esther Dale, Joseph Crehan, Tom Collins.
 Photographer.....Joseph Ruttenberg
 Musical Score.....Dr. William Axt
 Art Director.....Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor.....W. Donn Hayes
 Time.....68 minutes

"Tel No Tales" has a wishy-washy title to sell a smartly produced picture that will provide a good share of entertainment wherever it is shown. There are no marquee names, so even considering its entertainment value and the smart MGM production it can only be rated as 'B'-plus for box office purposes.

Producer Edward Chodorov and Director

Leslie Fenton combined with the scripter to make it one of those pictures that twists and turns, with mystery and melodrama to play with, so that an audience is kept pretty well up in their seats. It starts out as a newspaper yarn and then goes into a gangster touch when the hero sets out to wrap up a particular gang of kidnapers.

The cast is well selected, without being of selling strength. Melvyn Douglas turns in his usual good performance as the heroic newspaperman who runs down the gangsters; Louise Platt, with limited opportunities in such a fast action picture, gives satisfactory romantic interest. Highlights are the performances of Gene Lockhart, Douglas Dumbrille and a colored girl, Theresa Harris. But helping all things out are such fine players as Hobart Cavanaugh, Zeffi Tilbury and Florence George.

What makes the picture entertaining is the apparently harmonious producer-director-scripter combination. What makes it better than its marquee value is the class atmosphere

that MGM can put behind any picture it makes.

If you would like us to mention the names in that producer-director-scripter combination we will do so because they deserve it for a good job of medium-budget picture-making—Edward Chodorov produced, Leslie Fenton directed, and Lionel Houser did the screenplay.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: The title will not be any help, particularly since it does not indicate the type of picture you will be selling. So the best you can offer is a good piece of entertainment to help out on a double bill. Previewed May 9.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This one is a fine example of a well-made low budget picture that will give a good account of itself on any double bill, and in some spots will bolster up the A picture on the program."

VARIETY: "Swift, exciting and unfolded with unusual story interest, the vaguely titled 'Tell No Tales' offers an excellent hour's entertainment and a novel complement to any well arranged bill."

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WE NEVER CLOSE**

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RACING SERVICE DESCRIPTION
 From All Tracks Beginning 9 a.m. Every Day
WE PAY TRACK ODDS
ALL TRACKS — 5% COMMISSION
 A new high limit 20-0-4.
 It is legal to play Horse Races on the REX.

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ANCHORED OFF
SANTA MONICA
 Open 24 hours a Day - RAIN or SHINE S.S.
 Cocktail Lounge — Popular Prices
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REX

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 ALL STEEL FIREPROOF SAFETY SHIP
 INSPECTED BY U.S. INSPECTORS

Anchored in Calm Waters off SANTA MONICA

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

IN A QUANDRY NOTE: The Editor has us in a spot on this page . . . He has just bawled us out . . . He says some of the odds and ends readers would like to know more about the pillow stories that we print, and he says that some of our best people are willing to put up with the page because we don't do that sort of stuff. . . . Son that just left it up to us—but in a more tender spot than our lap.

* * *

FAIRNESS NOTE: In all fairness to The Editor, we should say that we don't think he would let us get back with any leering. . . . Did you notice that word "leering?" . . . It's our idea of what a lot of columnists are forced to do. . . . But, thanks to the Editor and our own dispositions, we don't have to start practising leering just yet.

* * *

FORGET IT ALL NOTE: By that heading we just mean that from now on we are just talking idle items of personal interest that we would be able to exchange with you over your fireside, and if we occasionally beat Winchell—as we have three weeks hand running on a real news item—that's just your fault. . . . Not ours.

* * *

SO WE SEE: While all the big shots are basking in glory outside the "Goodbye Mr. Chips" at the Four Star Theater a week or so ago, and having their ears tickled by the loud speaker announcement: "Calling Mister So-and-So's Car," we happened to walk down to the corner and we found one of those Skouras boys, with a delightful family company, just standing there with a smile on his lips—and no dress clothes on his limbs—as he heard the announcements of the real and near and double reek phonies calling for their cars . . . He winked at us . . . Funny part about that preview was the fact that Ben Goetz, who did the job, and Louis B. Mayer, whose vision inspired the great British production, were unknown in the fanfare . . . Mayer was in Nova Scotia getting an honorary collegiate degree, Goetz was running around like any good host lining up for the party he gave afterwards with Victor Saville.

NICE NOTES: Since Leo Gorcey got married he is seen once in a while at the night spots with his bride . . . And a very nice couple they make . . . The town has gone a little bowling nutty, and a good thing it is . . . For example, here's some red hot news: Bob Hope—yes, he's the actor—faces the test of his career tonight in a bowling match at the Sunset Bowling Center when he matches looping throws with Eddie Laurent . . . The reason? For a crippled children's fund in Hollywood . . . And when you turn from Bob's gallant efforts for charity, you are apt to find Humphrey Bogart trying without a screen villain's weapons to lick seventeen year old Jean Marshall . . . Or Harold Lloyd, a veteran on his own hook and a loyal backer of bowling, just sliding those balls for his own satisfaction . . . If you look hard enough around the town you will find more stellar names at the bowling alleys than you will discover at the night clubs . . . Which is pretty tough on the columnists who have to sell glamour and what-you haven't.

* * *

HISTORIC NOTE: Harry Charnas, long inseparable from the Warner organization, is sponsoring a real national Congress of Bowlers in that Sunset spot. . . . So many of our exhibitor readers will join in the chorus that we may as well use quotes to express our good wishes . . . Wonder if Harry remembers the first time we met—around a Cleveland hotel table—with the FOLKS up from Youngstown . . . Wonder how many letters of good wishes Harry will get from exhibitors in that Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia territory, when they read this. . . . Or, do exhibitors read gossip during the buying season?

* * *

HAPPY NOTE: Just to prove that you don't have to go to night clubs to observe things in this small village called Hollywood we can chronicle the fact that we found Joe Cunningham and Paul Gerard Smith at a high school play presented at the Wilshire Ebell Theater. . . . With the frause, of course. . . . And having a darned good

time watching a bunch of youngsters, under good stage direction by Joseph Rice, turning in a fine performance. . . . And, oh yes, aside from the big-wig politicians present, we say representatives of other cinema families—Sam Taylor's, the Sol Politos, Pete Molle, etc. . . . And by the way, why couldn't that gang get together one of these days and give us a picture measuring up to the combination of their abilities? . . . We volunteer the Editor's services as Advisor. . . . The Advisor is the fellow who tells you what to do, but doesn't take any of the responsibility. . . . Something like an Associate Producer.

* * *

REX GOES ROYAL: There must be something about this royalty stuff, because from the day the papers started talking about the good King and Queen approaching America, the boat with the name REX added additional glamour. . . . If you don't know what we mean by the word "glamour" we will confess to seeing Darryl Zanuck hitting them for plenty one night last week, with some kibitzers named Gregory Ratoff, Mervyn LeRoy, and Bill Goetz in the background. . . . Not so far in the background. . . . And not so poor a group of anmes to refer to as "kibitzers," either . . . But the reason we said it was that Zanuck seemed to be having the most fun, while Ratoff told the best jokes, and the others just were having a pleasant time.

* * *

GET ABROAD: If you are on the invitation list, one of the nicest things you may be able to do for the next semester, will be to join the party that the Edward Robinson's are giving on June 8th to help Ann Lehr's Assistance efforts. . . . There will be tea and an art exhibition, and it happens to be one of those fine days when you know that no one is seeking anything, and all receipts go DIRECT to the cause you are thinking of. . . . And speaking of causes, we think there will be one of these

days a great bustout and a bust-up if some picture people don't get behind the Motion Picture Relief in more sincere fashion. . . . We know some of the sharpest shooting sharpshooters in American newspaper life who are snooping the town these days to bust the story. . . . One of them showed us figures last week which seemed to prove that a very important gaffer at MGM last year contributed more—arbitrarily—from his salary check than a half a dozen of the darlings on the top of the payroll . . . Take that—boys and girls, and read it in Look, Life, or the Daily Worker—when you are ready.

Good News For Good Dressers . . .

- John D. Parrall and Associates, tailors for thirty years, from London to Los Angeles, after five years at Bullock's Wilshire, are now offering Hollywood its real clothing surprises.
- The latest of imported fabrics—novelties that even New York has not yet seen—and the skillful tailoring of craftsmen—
- And all at a reasonable price for the quality delivered! A surprising price!
- Among the latest innovations, specially imported, a new weave called 'Pheasant,' the latest in London. And for a bargain, a special importation of tweeds for sport coats that can be the most effective and least costly item in your wardrobe.
- Let us talk over your clothes problems. You'll be surprised at what good tailors, cooperating with your budget problems, will deliver.

JOHN D. PARRALL

237 SOUTH LA BREA
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ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A.
OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	122
Gunna Din	RKO	180
Union Pacific	PAR	161
Dodge City	WAR	158
Juarez	WAR	140
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	134
Starecoach	UA	128
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	126
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	122
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	121
Love Affair	RKO	119
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	117
Made For Each Other	UA	115
Midnight	PAR	115
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	114
Little Princess	FOX	114
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	112
Wuthering Heights	UA	111
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	109
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Honolulu	MGM	105
Zaza	PAR	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Talspin	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Broadway Serenade	MGM	88
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	85
Three Musketeers	FOX	84

B.
FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pyramation	MGM	133
Dark Victory	WAR	131
The Hardy's Ride High	MGM	127
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	123
The Beachcomber	PAR	113
Lucky Night	MGM	112
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	94
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Cafe Society	PAR	85
Of The Record	WAR	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Im From Missouri	PAR	82
Prison Without Bars	UA	81
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Never Say Die	PAR	80
Stolen Life	FOX	80
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
On Trial	WAR	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Let Us Live	COL	77
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	75
Lady and the Mob	COL	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
King of the Turf	UA	72
Smiling Alone	FOX	71
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Zenobia	UA	67
The Flying Irishman	RKO	65
Spirit of Cahier	UNIV	65
Women in the Wind	WAR	64

C.
FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chasing Danger	FOX	79
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	75
Big Town Gear	UNIV	74
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	74
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	74
On Trial	WAR	74
Society Lawyer	MGM	74
Family Next Door	UNIV	74
King of Chinatown	PAR	74
Hotel Imperial	PAR	73
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	73
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	WAR	73
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Strange Faces	UNIV	71
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	71
Prizes of the Skies	UNIV	71
Blind Alley	COL	70
Code of the Streets	UNIV	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
Almost a Gentleman	RKO	70
Persons in Hiding	PAR	70
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	70
Ambush	PAR	70
Sorority House	RKO	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
Mr. Moto in Daneser Island	FOX	68
Within The Law	MGM	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Risky Business	UNIV	64
Sweepstake Winner	WAR	62
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	61

D.
BELOW \$100,000

Homicide Bureau	COL	74
The Sunset Murder Case	GM	72
Whispering Enemies	COL	72
Streets of New York	MONO	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanahai	COL	71
Pride of the Navy	REP	71
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	UNIV	69
I Was A Convict	REP	68
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
The Zero Hour	REP	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Lone Shot	GN	67
Forged Passport	REP	66
First Offenders	COL	66
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Star Reporter	MONO	63
Wolf Call	MONO	63
Undercover Agent	MONO	63

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.
The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

We Thank You---

● WE THANK YOU for all the kind words received about the 1939 DIGEST ANNUAL.

● We are just old enough in picture experience, and always young enough in publishing enthusiasm to appreciate a pat on the back.

● And when we get so many pats on the back that the shoulders are sore—we are HAPPY.

● Not through any conceit. We have seen too much of the show business to take those words as more than kind words from regular fellows to a fellow whom they believe to be regular.

● But we ARE HAPPY because a number of our best people—and four thousand of our best exhibitor picture-buyers seem to believe that we are honest.

● Gosh . . . that's SOMETHING in this current life.

Robert Z. Walsh

**THE
DIGEST**

The DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 17.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 13, 1939

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"MAN OF CONQUEST" HITTING HIGH AT BOX OFFICES

SEE PAGE 5

EDITORIAL: ZANUCK DEMANDS ENTERTAINMENT

SEE PAGE 3

HIGHLIGHTER GIVES THE LOWDOWN ON EVERYTHING

SEE PAGE 4

**The
Only
Authentic
Box
Office
Figures
Published**

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

★

The

"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **REPUBLIC** Wins With
"MAN OF CONQUEST"—110%



Producer
SOL SIEGEL



Director
GEORGE NICHOLLS, Jr.

Original
HAROLD SHUMATE
WELLS ROOT

Screenplay
WELLS ROOT
JAN FORTUNE
E. E. PARAMORE, Jr.



RICHARD DIX

Featured

RALPH MORGAN
VICTOR JORY
C. HENRY GORDON
ROBERT BARRAT
EDWARD ELLIS



GAIL PATRICK

Photography
JOSEPH H. AUGUST

Film Editor
EDWARD MANN



JOAN FONTAINE

THE DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

ZANUCK HITS THE TARGET

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Visiting with a producer at the Twentieth Century-Fox lot we were fortunate enough to glimpse a confidential inter-office memo which Darryl Zanuck had written to all of his associate producers, and then we became good salesman enough to prevail on the producer to allow us the privilege of quoting a few paragraphs.

For this reason:

In the course of the two page memo which we saw, Zanuck concentrated more solid and concrete showmanship, more paraphrases of exhibitors' own thoughts, than all the past year's ballyhoo trade paper interviews from all and sundry have contributed to the industry's welfare.

We will let our exhibitor subscribers read the opening paragraphs of this memo and then realize the reason for our enthusiasm.

* * *

Addressed to all the important executives on the Twentieth Century-Fox lot, the memo starts out:

"In reviewing the national theater situation at the present time, I feel that I should write you this memo.

"Despite the various semi-propaganda pictures that have been produced lately, despite the efforts of producers (including ourselves) to tackle a finer type of literature, despite all of the hullabaloo in the trade papers about the success of certain 'class type' of pictures, THIS IS STILL THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS.

"Audiences today are no different than they were last year or the year before. When they lay down their admission at the box office THEY EXPECT A SHOW. They will not swallow propaganda. They will not even go to see a picture just because it happens to be FINE.

"They want something more than fine pictures—and it all boils down to one phrase. Audiences today, as ever, demand a SHOW and they will not accept class or propaganda unless it is cleverly concealed with an appealing coating of entertainment."

That is about as much as we could borrow from this memo, because the rest of it continued with frank talk about the box office of current pictures—both those of FOX and other companies—but not the sort of stuff that even a snooping reporter could request for use.

But we have quoted sufficiently to warrant us in the belief that we are one hundred per cent right when we say that a chorus of unanimous approval for Darryl Zanuck will rise from exhibitors throughout the country.

Picture business is off just now—badly off. Isn't it about time for someone to sound a signal call and remind us once again that we are in the SHOW business?

This humble writer tried to say it several months ago—when we warned producers against the "social conscious" trend, the propaganda pap, and a general desire to make pictures for a few elongated browed critics in New York.

A number of the important picture people encouraged us with agreement, a number of others just gave us that Hollywood sneer which just carries the general impression that your brow is two inches below your eye-lashes.

* * *

You can imagine how happy we were, then, to stumble into the above memo, and its evidence of a hard-boiled executive talking hard-boiled language about the sort of pictures that should be made.

You see, the difference is, that we just use printed words on paper, while Zanuck SPENDS THE PRODUCTION MONEY.

But if a fellow can keep his feet on the ground the way Zanuck set them in this memo, then there are things in the

picture outlook to be cheerful about, no matter how the sun shines or fails to shine on any particular day or week.

At least the exhibitor can figure that there are a few folks in Hollywood who think "box office"—as the exhibitor is compelled to. And he knows that there are no salaries paid in Hollywood unless the box office pays them off.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

		Releases	%
1. United Artists	8	Releases	96
2. MGM	23	Releases	94
3. 20th Century-Fox	24	Releases	91
4. Warner Brothers	21	Releases	89
5. Paramount	23	Releases	84
6. RKO	14	Releases	84
7. Universal	15	Releases	84
8. Columbia	14	Releases	75
9. Republic	11	Releases	72
10. Monogram	11	Releases	67
11. Grand National	3	Releases	66

THE HIGHLIGHTER LETS OUR READERS IN ON LOWDOWN ABOUT AFFAIRS IN HOLLYWOOD

Your Highlighter Liked The Paramount Spirit

Conventions come, and conventions go. . . . You and I, and all showmen have seen so many conventions and heard so much convention talking that we are able to take them in stride. . . . But as a veteran of the wars, civil and otherwise, we have to report that the Highlight of the week was the Paramount convention in L. A. . . . Almost every one of our exhibitor readers would have enjoyed being present. . . . For business reasons. . . . Because it was a business convention. . . . Gosh, they ran those Paramount boys through so many business sessions that they only saw Hollywood on the jump, and got only breathing space for time out to buy the usual "presents for the wife at home." . . . But it was a happy convention—enough product was shown, enough product plans were frankly disclosed, enough studio big-shots sat and talked frankly for all to become acquainted with mutual problems, to send the boys home feeling that they are sitting on top of the world. . . . We suppose if we were to start tossing orchids, we should start with the names of Balaban, Freeman, Le Baron, and Gillham at the top. . . . But at the risk of treason, we will toss a few of our own orchids to Terry DeLapp, Cliff Lewis, and the studio boys who just made it their business to know that betwixt and between heavy business, the boys would go home snorting for bigger business.

Are There Any Other Sparkling Highlights?

You are perfectly right in asking the question. . . . We don't know what the Associated Press may have carried over the country on the Warner-Fox West Coast argument, but they are still nursing it in Southern California. . . . Having said our piece last week, we suppose it is a waste of space to seem to be picking on it. . . . But we would like to anticipate the letters we will soon be receiving from around the country asking for "the lowdown." . . . Any wise exhibitor knows that all "battles" are not what they appear in the headlines. . . . By next week we may be able to present a full statement from both sides that will be right enough for us to stand behind as our reply to the letter writers. . . . Meanwhile, a good thought to keep in mind is that you don't take it very seriously when you see two behemoths grunting and groaning on a wrestling mat. . . . And the present antagonists are both behemoths. . . . For the patrons the advice still reads: "In case of fire or other danger, LOOK FOR THE NEAREST EXIT."

Titles Have Us Worried—No End

Or maybe it should be the pictures—but we sincerely do not think so, because there are a

Again No "Going Up"

A number of pictures are doing very satisfactory business, but something has happened to general theater conditions—which no one has yet explained. Once again, The Digest must report that there no pictures "Going Up."

Wires have been sent to our Field Men—in the East and West—to get exhibitor explanations of this current situation. The Digest hopes within a few weeks to give a front line analysis of what is happening to box offices.

number of good pictures coming out these days. . . . But they are not selling. . . . A few weeks ago we took up the idea editorially and we were brash enough to suggest that Twentieth Century had made a mistake changing "Hollywood Cavalcade" to "Falling Stars." . . . We suggested a few days ago that they might go back to the original title. . . . They have. . . . We think they will be getting the same sort of huzzahs from exhibitors for the decision that American democrats are giving to gracious Majesties. . . . But we still worry. . . . In New York, we blamed the comparatively poor key opening business on some pictures—hit pictures—that would be top money at any other time, on the World's Fair. . . . But then we learn that the World's Fair committee, Grover and all the little Grovers, is holding midnight meetings to find out what has happened to their expected attendance. . . . Even the all-popular King and Queen of a mighty nation played to a flop figure at the box office. . . . With a Governor and a Mayor thrown in for the bottom end of the double bill. . . . So, if the Fair is not getting the money, and the theaters are not getting it, what is the matter? . . . Do you suppose it can be that our writers are too darn busy worrying about "causes" to have any time left for IDEAS? . . . Or do you suppose it possible that most of them never had any ideas in the first place, but have just been with us for the sleigh ride?

16 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. Juarez	WAR	140	127
2. Nazi Spy	WAR	120	107
3. Wuthering Heights	UA	109	105
4. Lucky Night	MGM	107	102
5. It's a Wonderful World	MGM	101	98
6. The Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	92	89
7. The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	86	82
8. Three Musketeers	FOX	84	81
9. Prison Without Bars	UA	81	79
10. The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	81	78
11. The Gorilla	FOX	77	74
12. Some Like It Hot	PAR	80	73
13. Stolen Life	PAR	80	72
14. Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	72	70
15. Hotel Imperial	PAR	73	70
16. The Kid From Texas	MGM	72	69

Let's Travel Around The Places Where They Work

Shucks, why should we be spending this space talking "problems," when there are so many real workers grinding away at the studios trying to lick the "problems" by doing something about it. . . . Maybe there is lot more news, and certainly there is more interest, in just jogging around the studios. . . . For instance: The news that the war horse, Breezy Eason has been called in to direct special battle scenes for "Gone With the Wind." . . . That gives a kick to any memory in Hollywood. . . . Because, since "Ben Hur," whenever the makers of a super-epic get one of those high, wide and handsome riding affairs to picture, the call always goes out for Breezy. . . . And it is a tribute to our big shot directors that they open the gates wide to the possibility of someone else getting a mite of share on the credit sheet. . . . MGM is again setting up its Junior Writers group. . . . They've got something there. . . . But at the same time it is our belief that there are several dozen writers in Hollywood with something to sell for the screen and the box office who are not getting a break, and probably never will, because they have not got the correct agents, or do not mix in the best social circles. . . . But maybe one of these college kids will come through with a "Gone With the Wind" idea—if some associate producer doesn't slap his ears back too early.

Let's Keep on Traveling—It's Lots More Fun

And there is still lots of fun traveling the picture lanes. . . . Of course, it should be important to say after "Union Pacific" that Paramount has renewed its deal with Cecil DeMille, and this time the dotted line says four years. . . . After what DeMille and his able associate, Bill Pine, did for Paramount with "Union Pacific" we think they could sign a Social Security pact. . . . We read that Jerry Brandt, name-bearer for a fine chap, Joe Brandt, has formed a production alliance in the independent field with E. B. Derr. . . . There is a lot of drama in that announcement that we could probably squeeze into the New York addition of "Hollywood Cavalcade." . . . Back when Joe Brandt, Harry Cohn, and Jack Cohn were using two shoe-strings and a biscuit to prove that they could run a picture company—there was drama. . . . Unfortunately, Joe's health went the wrong way. . . . But his son is going to have a lot of fellows doing some rooting in the cheering section.

Mixing Happy Thoughts With Our Earlier Peeves

For happiness: We were glad to receive—very officially—the Universal confirmation of our last week's remark that the company

(Continued on Page 5)

"MAN OF CONQUEST" PROVING REAL HIT AT BOX OFFICES; "CAPTAIN FURY" GOOD

REPUBLIC—1 New Release

Republic cops top honors this week with the biggest money-getter in "MAN OF CONQUEST," which has opened in 65 first run situations from coast to coast including many prominent circuit houses and is averaging very satisfactorily at 110%, considering the present poor business conditions. In the past Republic Pictures have produced many Westerns as well as a great number of cheaper program pictures. However, they did produce two big musicals with Phil Reagan and Frances Langford that did very well. But never before has Republic spent \$750,000 on a single feature which is much in excess of many big pictures made by MGM, Paramount, Fox, Warners, etc.

Republic's first high budget picture, "MAN OF CONQUEST," definitely proves the faith that H. J. Yates has in his production organization as this picture ran slightly in excess of three quarters of a million dollars for the negative cost alone not including distribution, prints and exploitation. "MAN OF CONQUEST" as a whole has done exceptionally well throughout the country and while it has been a bit weak in a few spots there are many important situations that have held the picture over for a second and third week. Accordingly, if Republic continues to produce this type of picture they will be a strong contender with the majors for first run bookings.

The critics have all agreed that this is the greatest artistic as well as box office triumph for Richard Dix since RKO's famous "Cimarron." In Mr. Dix's supporting cast are such prominent players as Gail Patrick, Edward Ellis, Joan Fontaine, Ralph Morgan, Robert Armstrong and Victor Jory.

Sol C. Siegel produced this great western epic and George Nicholls, Jr. directed. Exhibitors in key cities will undoubtedly benefit by Republic's exploitation campaign on this picture. However, in smaller cities where exhibitors have bought this pictures for a small percentage or a low flat rental, they will do exceptionally well by going out of their way and exploiting it to the limit.

P.T.A.'s, public schools and churches in most instances will be very glad to cooperate with exhibitors in helping them to make this picture a standout attraction. While exhibitors generally consider Republic pictures as a younger company, "MAN OF CONQUEST" is definitely an "A" attraction and should be booked accordingly, especially in spots where such pictures as "Dodge City" and "Union Pacific" have been box office hits.

U. A.—1 Release

United Artists have a new release this week in Hal Roach's production of "CAPTAIN FURY," which incidentally is the first picture ever filmed with an Australian locale. "CAPTAIN FURY" has opened up in a number of key cities as well as many small situations with fairly good results and so far is averaging around

Of Six New Releases In The Past Week Only One Rated Over 100%, One Came Through Okay, and Four Very Weak.

94%, which isn't bad considering the off conditions. Incidentally this is the first picture that Producer Hal Roach has personally directed in a number of years and he has done a fairly good job considering the circumstances.

Victor McLaglen and Brian Aherne are co-starred and there is a strong supporting cast which includes such prominent names as Paul Lukas, June Lang, John Carradine, Virginia Field and many others of equal importance.

In the strict sense of the word "CAPTAIN FURY" is a glorified Western based on an Australian epic idea and in those houses catering to this type of production this picture will undoubtedly go over very strong. While "CAPTAIN FURY" is only averaging 94% on its first runs because it is a rather rough and tumble melodrama, in the nabes it will undoubtedly pull much better houses.

MGM—Also 1 New One

Metro's only new release this week is another programmer from the Joe Cohn unit entitled "BRIDAL SUITE" which is nothing special to offer and is only getting by at a 73% average.

Mrs. Tyrone Power, known to the public as Annabella, is co-starred with Robert Young and the excellent supporting cast includes such prominent players as Walter Connolly, Reginald Owen, Gene Lockhart, Arthur Treacher, and Billie Burke. The combination of these names plus the fact that Annabella just recently married Tyrone Power may prove a slight box office magnet, but as a whole the picture is not up to par and it should be booked with a much stronger attraction.

Edgar Selwyn acted as Associate Producer and William Thiele directed.

FOX—2 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has two new releases this week—both of which are program pictures from the Sol Wurtzel unit.

"THE JONES FAMILY IN HOLLYWOOD," 72%, is by far the best of the series produced as yet. The Jones family have no first run value but the exhibitors in neighborhood houses, will know best where to plant

this picture. If you have a big epic that you are afraid of, book "THE JONES FAMILY IN HOLLYWOOD" with it, and it will certainly make your audience feel better—at least they will be in a more receptive mood.

Sol Wurtzel's second programmer is another in the Jane Withers series, entitled "BOY FRIEND," 71%. Little Jane like Shirley Temple seems to be definitely slipping in the bigger key city houses, but in the nabes she still has a definite draw, as exhibitors who have been running her pictures for the past four years all know.

"BOY FRIEND" is a very amusing picture and even if you can't find a spot for it on your Saturday or Sunday matinee you can book this one with any major attraction and be sure that your audience will be definitely satisfied.

GRAND NATIONAL—1 New One

The ill-fated Grand National pictures in the past week have released Director Eugene Frenke's picture, "EXILE EXPRESS" which has been in litigation for the past six or seven months.

"EXILE EXPRESS" was produced and directed by Frenke and stars his famous wife, Anna Sten, whom exhibitors will remember as a former Samuel Goldwyn star, after which she returned to Europe and appeared in several Gaumont-British pictures. This picture is much above the usual Grand National release but not being backed by any exploitation campaign of any importance it is only averaging around 64%. Exhibitors who bought this picture for a small flat rental will do well to go cut of their way on a little extra advertising campaign as it has considerable merit and not so long ago Anna Sten's name meant something to the average American exhibitor.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

had found itself in a healthy bed of black ink . . . Everything we said last week is backed up by the official statement—and our tip is to watch where this boy Nate Blumberg takes this company . . . He is an "ex" hard-boiled theater operator, and you can count on it that he is thinking "theatre-wise." . . . Moe Siegel is back at the Republic desk, and the Republic lot is humming with activity. . . . There's a good business stroke in the trip that H. J. Yates is making after holding down the studio desk for a few weeks. . . . He is off to England, by way of a few weeks stop in New York, with Gene Autry under his arm. . . . Bill Saal precedes him to England to pave the way. . . . But the trip would never be made by as shrewd a person as Herb Yates if it were not already on the books that Autry has a welcome and will leave with a double cheer.

6 New Features Not In Last Issue

1 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....4 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Man of Conquest	REP	110	105
2. Captain Fury	UA	94	90
3. Bridal Suite	MGM	73	80
4. Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72	75
5. Boy Friend	FOX	71	75
6. Exile Express	GN	64	65

"Man About Town" A Hit For Paramount

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Producer Arthur Hornblow, Jr.
 Director Mark Sandrich
 Screenplay Morrie Ryskind
 Based on a story by Morrie Ryskind, Allan Scott, Z. Myers.
 Stars: Jack Benny, Dorothy Lamour, Edward Arnold.
 Featured: Binnie Barnes, Monty Woolley, Isabel Jeans, Phil Harris, Betty Grable, E. E. Clive, Eddie Anderson and The Merriel Abbott Dancers, aMatty Malneck's Orchestra, The Pina Troupe.
 Photographer..... Teddy Tetzla, A.S.C.
 Art Directors..... Hans Dreier, Robert Usher
 Musical Numbers..... LeRoy Prinz
 Dancers, Matty Malneck's Orchestra, ick Hollander.
 Film Editor..... LeRoy Stone
 Time 83 minutes

Mark Sandrich has delivered to Paramount its best Jack Benny picture to date, and to theaters one of the most intelligently delightful musicals to come along in some time.

"Man About Town" is an evening of thorough enjoyment—all around mass entertainment, but at the same time finessed with the Sandrich skill so that it has its touch of smooth, refreshing "class." The story is slight, even familiar, since it presents Jack Benny as the manager of a struggling American show troupe abroad. This time it is England.

But production guidance, crisply smart screenplay and dialogue writing by Morrie Ryskind, and grand performances keep it bubbling with such effervescence that you worry little about the absence of story. It is the essence of good musical-picture formula.

Jack Benny seems more comfortable, and

CURRENT REVIEWS

1 Over 100%.....2 Okay.....2 Weak

		We Est.
1. Man About Town	PAR	110
2. The Mikado	UNIV	85
3. Five Came Back	RKO	85
4. It Could Happen To You	FOX	75
5. House of Fear	UNIV	70

straining less, than in some previous performances. He seems happy—and as a result delivers a job that will make his followers extremely happy. In addition, he is star enough in his own right to allow that colored bundle of joy, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson to trot right along with him step by step for laughs, and to sock home two high spot comedy dancing routines.

Edward Arnold, playing a farce near-menace, is at his best. Dorothy Lamour is present for your marquee value, and not too prominently present to interrupt the pleasure. Corking trouping jobs, allied with charming personalities, are turned in by Binnie Barnes and Isabel Jeans. Monty Wooley tosses the farce ball back and forth with Edward Arnold—they are fellow jealous husbands—in admirable fashion.

The support includes many other okay performances. Phil Harris, playing an almost straight role, and leading Matty Malneck's orchestra in a few musical spots, the safe and certain E. E. Clive in a butler role, and Betty Grable in a cute number, are among those coming to mind.

LeRoy Prinz exercised taste and showmanship in handling the dance numbers—to the

extent where in most cases you would like to see more of them, instead of the frequent glutting effect produced in some musicals. The numbers are interpreted by the Merriel Abbott dancers—good to look at, and top notch in skill. Matty Malneck and Frank Loesser combined on two of the song numbers, "Fidgety Joe," and "Strange Enchantment," while another, "Sentimental Sandwich" is by Loesser and Frederick Hollander. You'll be hearing them aplenty on your radio.

Producer Arthur Hornblow, Jr., can take his bows. The picture must have been a treat for the Paramount sales boys in convention assembled last week.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Safe, clean, and great for all ages. Previewed June 7th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount has a surefire audience picture in 'Man About Town.' The Jack Benny opus proves shamelessly for laughs and succeeds in raising them in from any number of angles."

VARIETY: "Luscious entertainment for eye and ear and one of the brightest and most smartly turned out pieces of merchandise from the Paramount organization in this 'Man About Town.'"

"The House of Fear" Will Just Get By

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Edmund Grainger
 Director Joe May
 Screenplay Peter Milne
 Based on play by..... Thomas F. Fallon
 Novel Wodsworth Camp
 Featured: William Gargan, Irene Hervey, Dorothy Arnold, Alan Dinehart, Harvey Stephens, Walter Woolf King, Robert Coote, El Brendel, Tom Dugan, Jan Duggan, Donald Douglas.
 Photographer Milton Krasner
 Art Director..... Jack Otterson
 Musical Director..... Charles Previn
 Film Editor..... Frank Gross
 Time 63 minutes

Way back in 1928 your reviewer produced this picture for Universal under the title of "The Last Warning." It had been a natural

as a magazine serial, and apparently should have been a natural on the screen. But despite a fine cast, and a directing genius, the late Paul Leni, the picture was still one of those productions that cause your reviewer to blush.

We cannot say that anything has been done to improve it in the present version. They have added microphones and about everything else that could be conceived to meet the word "modernized"—but it is still one of those yarns that never had any real reason for existence.

If you are not at all concerned about what you give your public as the second half of the double bill, they will have a lot of fun and enjoyment with this one. There are creaking doors and long lost attics, and about everything that Flash Gordon would think of if he were back on this sphere. The cast does its

best, but it still remains a serial concoction misnamed a feature.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Where they want to shiver and shudder, it will make an okay bet for the bottom half of a double bill. In other spots, just take it if they give it to you. Previewed June 6th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Universal has turned out another one of those swell murder mysteries in 'The House of Fear,' that sends shivers up and down the spine. Packed with plenty of good, clean comedy amid an eerie atmosphere, suspenseful action and many blood curdling moments, 'The House of Fear' will give any audience a double dose of what it came to see."

VARIETY: "Founded on mystery theme, and treated in farcial mood, 'The House of Fear' is weak fare at best, rating nothing better than filler position beneath strong upper niche feature."



The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

- - - THE DIGEST

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

PRODUCED
BY

*Sol
Siegel*

A
REPUBLIC
PICTURE

“MAN OF CONQUEST”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

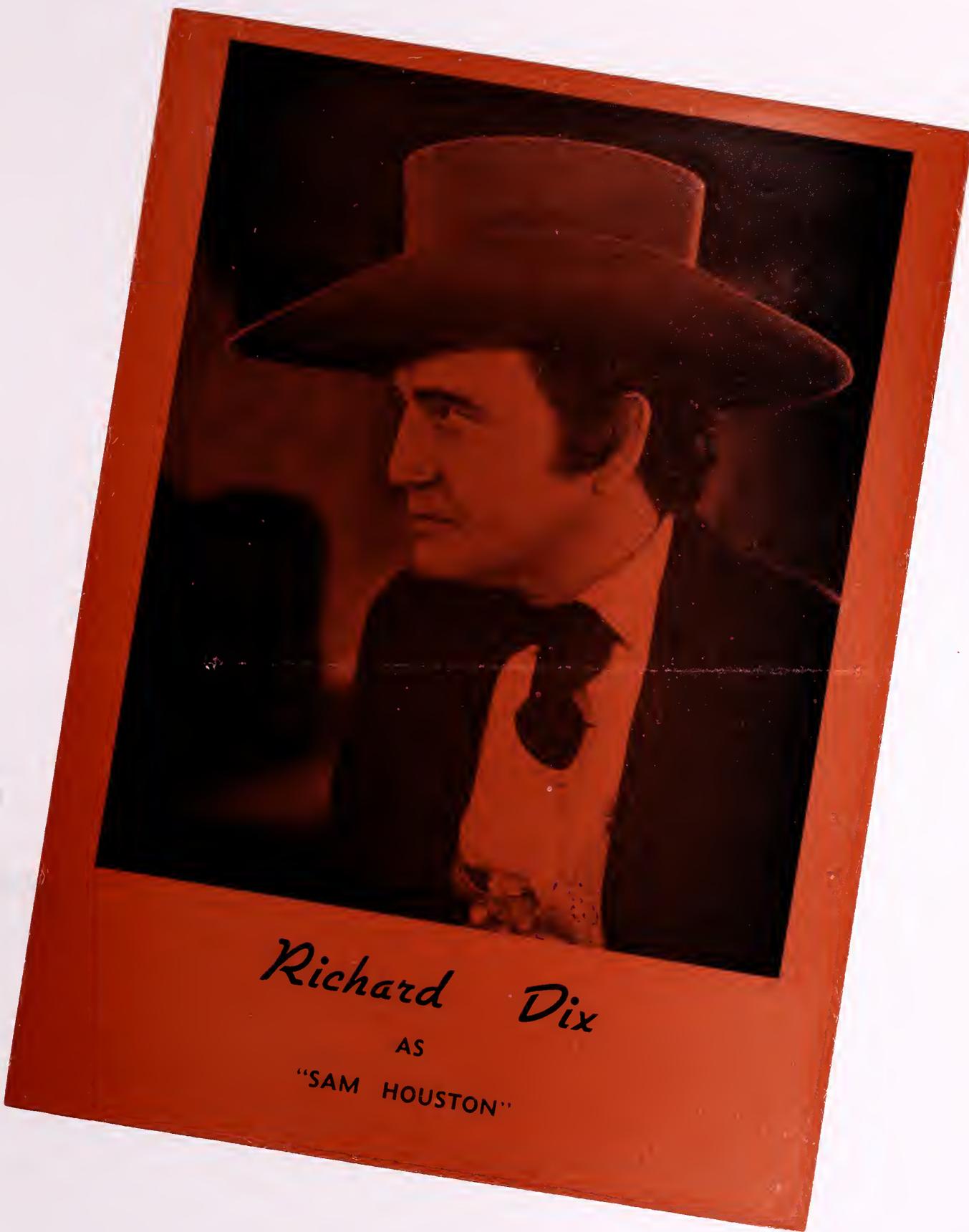
DIRECTED
BY

*George
Nicholls, Jr.*

A
REPUBLIC
PICTURE

“MAN OF CONQUEST”

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



A
REPUBLIC
PICTURE

"MAN OF CONQUEST"

RKO's "Five Came Back" Surprise Hit

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Producer Robert Sisk
 Executive Producer Lee Marcus
 Director John Farrow
 Screenplay: Jerry Cady, Dalton Trumbo, Nathaniel West.
 Story Richard Carroll
 Featured: Chester Morris, Lucille Ball, Wendy Barrie, John Carradine, Allen Jenkins, Joseph Calleia, C. Aubrey Smith, Kent Taylor, Patric Knowles, Elisabeth Risdon, Casey Johnson, Dick Hogan.
 Photographer Nicholas Musuraca
 Film Editor Harry Marker
 Time 74 minutes

Once in a blue moon a conservatively-budgeted picture comes out of Hollywood which smashes to bits the more elaborate spend, spend, spend, theories of success. During a given year, pictures of this calibre could be counted on the fingers of both hands. "Five Came Back" is such a picture, and deservedly ranks as a blue-ribbon member of this group.

It would be a shame if this picture did not get the business that it so justly deserves. So many "critic's pictures" are not really good motion pictures at all, being merely books or stage plays in film form, lacking entirely the basic essentials which are needed to please the great mass of theatergoers. But "Five Came Back" is not only a critic's picture, it is a motion picture, with all the elements—sus-

pense, action, a teasing story premise, and a well-known cast. It deserves to be sold, by the company, and by the exhibitor, to its potential money-making value.

The picture was directed by John Farrow and is his finest piece of work to date. There are not many directors in the business, \$100,000 a picture men and all, who could have taken the material that Farrow had to work with in this instance, and turned out as fine a completed product. Directors like John Farrow should be directing \$1,000,000 pictures to completely protect the investment and prestige of everyone concerned. If after this effort, Farrow is ever forced to direct low-budgeted pictures again, there is certainly a dearth of production brains in Hollywood.

But the credit given the director's excellent work should in no way detract from the splendid craftsmanship of the screenplay writers Jerry Cady, Dalton Trumbo and Nathaniel West, the production guidance of Robert Sisk and Lee Marcus, and the talented cast headed by Chester Morris. They all contribute their share.

The story, from an original by Richard Carroll, relates the adventures of twelve persons on a transport plane bound south out of Los Angeles. In a heavy storm, the plane crashes in the valley of the Amazon but not before Dick Hogan, the steward, has lost his life

saving Casey Johnson, the small son of a racketeer, now in the custody of his uncle, Allen Jenkins. Jenkins and John Carradine, a avaricious detective, also die, killed by savages.

When the plane is finally put in some sort of flying shape, it is found that it will carry but four persons and the boy. Joseph Calleia, a doomed anarchist, is to select the four. C. Aubrey Smith and Elisabeth Risdon voluntarily decide to stay. Patric Knowles, a rich young South American, is killed by Calleia when he attempts to board the plane although not chosen. Chester Morris, Lucille Ball, Wendy Barrie, Kent Taylor and the boy, Casey Johnson, are the five who escape.

Producer Bob Sisk, and Lee Marcus as executive, can feel very proud.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Give it all the trailer build-up and other advance plugging you can and you have a bargain buy that will satisfy any audience. Previewed June 6th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "RKO has a production of considerable entertainment substance in 'Five Came Back.' The picture will play to strong popular approval and will hold top of the bill generally with good box office effect."

VARIETY: "Melodramatic thriller built entirely for suspenseful entertainment and gauged to please majority of audiences in its designed program levels."

Ridge and Nichols Now in the Midwest



J. Maurice Ridge

J. Maurice Ridge and Harry Nichols, the two top members of The Digest Field Investigating Staff, are now hitting the highways through Nebraska and other Mid-West States. . . . They are doing so much traveling that we did not ask them for an article this week. . . . But they have a lot of stuff up their sleeves. . . . And they are combining with our Eastern Field Investigators to prepare an honest and searching analysis of why theater business is in such a peculiar slump, in a nation that is reeking with pay-envelopes. . . . Watch for their articles—they will only be telling what exhibitors are saying.



Harry E. Nichols

THE DIGEST

THE FASTEST GROWING PAPER IN THE INDUSTRY

"Mikado" Delightful Class Musical

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Producer Geoffrey Toye
Associate Producer..... Josef Somlo
Director Victor Schertzinger
Operetta Gilbert and Sullivan
Star Kenny Baker
Featured: John Barclay, Martyn Green, Sydney Granville, Gregory Stroud, Jean Colin, Elisabeth Paynter, Kathleen Naylor, Constance Willis, Chorus of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.
Technicolor Supervisor..... Natalie Kalmus
Time 87 minutes

The Digest reported on "The Mikado" last week on the strength of its openings in Eastern metropolitan houses. The picture was doing a healthy 94%. And when you find anything doing a 94% in this day and week of the picture business, you must give it consideration.

The other night we saw it at the Hollywood showing that could be called a "belated preview."

We enjoyed it. Tremendously. We have actually made a resolve to go back and see it again, even if we pay cash for the privilege.

The sincere treatment of Gilbert and Sullivan is so thoroughly enjoyable that a reviewer is tempted to recommend the production unqualifiedly; but the box office sense must be

retained, and with it the fear of mass audiences. So we can finish by giving a tip off to wise exhibitors who know their communities that this authentic version of "The Mikado" will be a knockout where they have the right audiences, and a problem where the audience came in hoping to see "Flash Gordon."

Now that we are through with the crass commercial aspects of the picture, may we go to town? We had a great night! Victor Schertzinger's sympathetic treatment of music—(You remember "One Night of Love"), production guidance by Geoffrey Toye and the D'Oyly Carte organization, Technicolor that is one of the most eye-pleasing jobs of the year, and the work of a couple of old boys named Gilbert and Sullivan, could not be denied.

The picture will be getting revenue ten years from now when some current epics are being delivered to that fellow in Jersey City who gives you so much a pound for the silver left in the celluloid.

They treated it sincerely—with no attempt to compromise with the accepted formula of motion pictures. In script, presentation, even to the make-up used by the players, it is Gilbert and Sullivan literally translated from the stage, though it must be added that Victor

Schertzinger's use of his camera manages to give it something of a flow of motion, while Technicolor performs wonders even surpassing the stage.

Kenny Baker's performance is agreeable, his voice at its best. Stepping into Gilbert and Sullivan competition with the traditionally trained D'Oyly Carte players was considerable of an undertaking—and he can feel very happy. Jean Colin is an appealing Yum Yum, while highlight audience moments are registered by Martyn Green, Sydney Granville, John Barclay and Gregory Stroud. Musical backgrounding by the London Symphony Orchestra is delightful.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A class musical, beautifully done, but we will have to wait on later engagements to be certain about the mass trade. Previewed June 8th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "With a few concessions to the uninitiate, 'The Mikado' reaches the screen as a questionable box office attraction."

VARIETY: "This captivating classic which has been seen on the stage and has been hummed and whistled by two generations the world over, is given an elegant first screen presentation under the Universal label. It is one Gilbert and Sullivan operetta which can be sold as general entertainment."

"It Could Happen To You" Programmer

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer David Hempstead
Director Alfred Werker
Screenplay..... Allen Rivkin, Lou Breslow
Original Charles Hoffman
Stars Stuart Erwin, Gloria Stuart
Featured: Raymond Walburn, Douglas Fowley, June Gale, Clarence Kolb, Paul Hurst, Richard Lane, Robert Greig.
Photographer Ernest Palmer
Film Editor..... Nick De Maggio
Time 70 minutes

This is one of those pictures in which a downtrodden, hardpressed "average man" is suddenly thrust into the public limelight through a peculiar set of almost implausible circumstances. It is O. K. program entertainment.

For the exhibitor in the family trade houses the picture has potential exploitation values. For, as the trailers and advance press releases undoubtedly point out, the occurrences in "It

Could Happen To You," could happen to any one of the ordinary folks in the Saturday night audience. This angle should be used for what it is worth.

Stuart Erwin is the likeable Mr. Milquetoast of the film, and Gloria Stuart his more aggressive wife. In trying to live up to her belief in him, Stu gets himself mixed up in a murder. He is arrested and seems in for a very unpleasant time until little wife goes out and digs up the real murderer. In this she has the aid of Douglas Fowley who for once does not play a coin flipping racketeer, but rather a fellow-worker of Erwin's of an extremely opposite type.

Direction was by Alfred Werker under the able production guidance of David Hempstead. Although not a perfect job, they have turned out a good piece of product. Screenplay was by Allen Rivkin and Lou Breslow.

One problem family-trade exhibitors may have with the film is the usual one nowadays:

a reel of drunken antics of the leading sympathetic character. It may be argued that this was necessary for plot purposes but it seems as if a little ingenuity on the part of the writers could have eradicated this easy way out of any plot difficulties. At any rate, the exhibitor has been warned.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory program entertainment for most audiences in its proper spot on the bills. Previewed June 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Twentieth-Fox has an unusually diverting program picture in 'It Could Happen To You.' It is amusing, develops strong impetus of suspense, has exciting incident and additionally is so developed, as suggested by the title, that the spectator generates a keen personal interest in the final outcome."

VARIETY: "As modern as a stratosphere plane, and capable of traveling its screen course with same zip, 'It Could Happen To You' is excellent entertainment for the entire family."

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HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

INEVITABLE NOTE: No matter what The Digest may say on other pages, no scribbler writing about the social and semi-social side of Hollywood could neglect the affair with which Paramount crowned its convention before the boys started back for the trenches. . . . Bob Gillham's advertising boys went to town on assurance that every guest would be happy, the stars not only gave a good show, but mixed with the sales boys in a regular feller fashion that made everybody happy. . . . And the sales boys—as they had done throughout the week—conducted themselves in a manner that would make any General Sales Manager proud of his associates. . . . Which is saying considerable—if you know conventions as we do.

* * *

WE SHOULD MENTION: Convention news may be going overboard by this time, but even if it takes a few lines we should mention that Bob Hope and Jack Benny combined for a split master of ceremonies act that was good, that Linda Ware, Charlie Rogers' discovery, sold herself to the sales boys, and that Tito Guizar will be better remembered now that the boys have heard him in person. . . . Bob Burns was the most obliging autographer, with pipe going full steam all the time, Pat O'Brien was present. . . . Joe E. Brown was on the job for a hearty "give and take" with everybody. . . . Cecil DeMille, Charles Rogers, Harry Sherman, and other producers renewed old picture acquaintances. . . . Funny how many good old friends of us Hollywood folk are out there in the field. . . . Equally funny—every one of our old pals to whom we talked said, "We like Hollywood, after a very quick once over—but we would still stick to the old home town." . . . A couple of the boys who gave this remark to us were Brethern Price and Nicols of New Orleans—who promised to remember us to E. V. Richards and Paul Tessier—and a real hearty Southern gentleman, Kirby from Atlanta. Of course, we could probably make a bigger hit with the editor if we had mentioned a

few home office executives—but then, we have an urge for those shock troops who go out on the firing line. . . . And we know so many that we hope there will come a day when we can take off the time—Social Security may do it—to go back over the road and talk things over with the boys.

* * *

APOLOGETIC NOTE: We have spent too much time talking about a convention. . . . Shucks, those boys who sell the pictures are not supposed to be important when you can chronicle the places where some other people have gone to eat, and with whom they have exchanged wives. . . . But we really haven't the heart for it this week—we like and know the salesmen so well, we like and know better the real Hollywood folk that it seems just a little of a letdown for our Pepys pen, to start talking about evening engagements of clingers to the vine.

* * *

BUT WE MUST HAVE NEWS: So we will take an easy way out and give you our cheerful social news first. . . . First item is the B'nai B'rith affair last Wednesday. . . . We gave you some names last week, so we will not repeat any more now, than the fact that the affair was a real success. . . . A hearty one, because everyone present seemed to have the double enjoyment of a good cause and a fine time. . . . We will not start to mention the responsible names. Because they are all our best people and the page is not big enough. . . .

* * *

FUN IS FUN: And the boys in the town—and the gals—just decided they were going to have a real good night being the guests of "Prince" Mike Romanoff. . . . By being "guests" they meant that they would supply the food and refreshments and Mike would supply the nobility. . . . Everybody was present so no names need be mentioned, except that it might be said that of the stunts pulled Harry Joe Brown's arrival with his party probably got the top laughs of the evening. . . . Now that the party

is all over the "Prince" will return to democracy next week. . . . But the good time enjoyed by all just goes to prove how much Hollywood would like affairs where they are not on exhibition.

* * *

WEDDING BELLS: Proof that picture people get married and stay married was very evident at the Victor Hugo one night last week when Herb Yates—the Poo-bah of Republic Pictures—rounded up a group celebrating wedding anniversaries at approximately the same time. . . . The honors went to Mr. and Mrs. Sol Siegal, who have been married for seven years with a photo-finish for second place between the Lew Gray's and the Al Cohen's who are riding happily past the six year mark.

* * *

RIDING THE TIGER: The last night that we were at the Rex Sol Wurtzel was the fellow who was riding hottest. . . . It's a funny thing with all the parties in town during the week and with the afternoons at that Hollywood Park Race Track, how many of the top-flight picture people you will meet any night on the Rex. . . . One of the reasons may be that the picture folk know of one place where they can go where they won't be hounded by the autograph hounds. . . . Because it is probable that most autograph hounds can not swim, and more likely that most of them would not spend twenty-five cents to make the motor boat trip to the piece of Monte Carlo just over the horizon.

* * *

HIGH-HAT NOTE: You would be surprised at the number of people seeking introductions to Gloria Vanderbilt, sixteen year old heiress who arrived in Hollywood the other night, and probably none of us would be surprised if we knew how many of them are giving her the familiar line, "You oughta take a screen test." . . . However, no matter what plans Miss Vanderbilt might have regarding studio visits, she is vigilantly chaperoned by her very capable mother. . . . You will remember that when Gloria last hit

the headlines she was the center of a custody trial that brought in such common names as Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, Mrs. Harry Hayes Morgan, and an assorted sprinkling of Vanderbilts.

* * *

JUSTIFIED PRIDE: Maureen O'Sullivan must have been proud when she heard the reactions and read the reviews on hubby John Farrow's picture, "Five Came Back"—but that was probably nothing alongside her happiness when Archbishop Cantwell served as godfather to the Farrow-O'Sullivan family at St. Vincent's Hospital. . . . Incidentally, Father, Mother, and future Tarzan are leaving this week for a Honolulu vacation, which Papa Farrow will probably use for preparation on his next RKO picture.

We Knew You Would Be Surprised

- We appreciate the enthusiastic critical approval that has been accorded our unusual selection of imported material. But we must say—we knew you would be surprised.
- No tailor in Los Angeles has the connections—and has put forth the effort—that we have, to get the latest in unusual weaves.
- But also—no tailor in Los Angeles gives you the services of such sincere and long-trained craftsmen to turn those woolens into the latest of style.
- And all at a PRICE.
- You will be just as surprised at the price, as so many were last week at the wealth of material—unusual material—from which to choose.
- Come in and see us—or call for a TAILOR to come see you. You'll save a lot of money, we will make some. And we will make a friend.

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THE SECOND GUESSER HAS HIS OWN OPINIONS ABOUT CURRENT WEAKNESSES AT BOX OFFICES

The Second Guesser can always be counted on for a different angle on any subject connected with the picture business. He has had his own experiences, and he thinks things out his own way. This last week he entered the office with a thought that is at least interesting enough for us to pass it on.

Maybe Exhibitors Must Rearrange Their Values

That's his thought. He says: "With box office conditions the way they are now, and have been to an extent for the past year, perhaps exhibitors will have to shake themselves into a different frame of mind as they approach the ticket-selling problem. . . . The time was when all an exhibitor had to do to be a sensational business success was to be in a position in his territory to hog the picture presenting a certain half dozen top flight stars. . . . If he had the price or the power to corral that half dozen or so for his marquee, he was a showmanship genius. . . . If he didn't, he was one of those animals called an 'independent.' . . . Which, in other words, meant that you were sorry for his lack of enterprise. But, maybe, things are changing.

Are Stars Just The Better Known Players?

The Second Guesser is continuing: "When pictures which sincere producers have packed with all the star names they can find available on their lots are not bringing in the coin to the box office—is it possible that stars are no longer automatic ticket sellers Could it even be possible that the IDEA behind the picture is the big thing? . . . Could it be at all possible that a forgotten gentleman named Shakespeare had something when he passed an off-hand remark about 'The PLAY is the thing.' . . . Maybe the old guy had something. . . . Consider the pictures that have not sold for expectations this year, despite the number of once sure-fire stars at the top of the list. . . . Consider the number of pictures that are doing business on the strength of having an IDEA. It's worth considering, isn't it?"

We Are Interested For Personal Reasons

The Second Guesser's angle interested us particularly because The Digest is the only trade publication with the courage—and with the record of performance—to hazard an estimate on preview night about the percentage a picture will do at box offices. . . . We have been wrong a few times. . . . And we think our readers appreciate the fact that when we are wrong we say so with haste and candor. . . . However, a great deal of box office thinking must be based on factors that are not concerned with the particular picture reviewed. . . . Stars may have built up values in previous hit pictures that will carry them through a flop or two before they lose their fans. . . . New players may register corking performances that only word

of mouth and good publicity will transform into box office dollars early enough for most exhibitors to get the cash benefit. . . . And so it goes. . . . Therefore, when the Second Guesser gets worried about why our present day top-scale stars are not drawing business automatically, we are willing to do a little worrying ourselves.

But The Second Guesser Had An Idea Of His Own

We allow the Second Guesser to continue the conversation: "I'll tell you," he said, "What we need these days in the picture business is the youthful enthusiasm and broad spread ambition that was present ten and fifteen years ago. . . . In those days, every prop boy believed that he might eventually become a director—and many of them did become our best current directors. . . . In those days when a kid got a chance, it was because he had sold the boss an IDEA. . . . Probably something that he had been nursing in his dreams for a year or more. . . . Then the industry got too prosperous. . . . And, along with the rest of the country, it got too mechanized. . . . What is the answer? . . . You are compelled to spend a million dollars or so on a picture to have a hit. . . . The rest of your year's product just runs along for Sweeney. . . . And if conditions don't change very soon, it will appear that the only companies which can pay dividends will be those that are financially able to turn out one million dollar epic each month, twelve months in the year."

The Second Guesser Has A Cure In Mind

He started off with a rash suggestion that we did not accept fully, because we have too many friends in this and that part of the industry. . . . But we will let you hear it: "First of all," he said, "We should retire half of those fellows whose shoulders are bent under the title of associate producers. . . . The half I have in mind are the fellows who owe their jobs to their fine social presence, or to their ability to hit headlines—usually by the divorce route. . . . Secondly, we should retire ninety per cent of the 'collaborators.' . . . These are the fellows who can't write a story or a ten-word English sentence by themselves, but who can convince

The Week's High Spots

Top honors in the week's previews must be divided between Mark Sandrich and John Farrow.

To Sandrich—a Winchell orchid for his job on "Man About Town," which just reiterates the fact that Sandrich knows how to make musicals that are pictures, and which gives Jack Benny a great vehicle.

To John Farrow because he took what was probably scheduled as a "B" picture, maybe "B" plus, and in "Five Came Back" turned in one of the dramatic surprises of the year. Two orchids delivered to the correct addresses.

a real creator that THEY are the ones to sell the story. . . . They sell the story, and the result is a credit sheet that looks like the box score of a baseball game. . . . The illiterate member of the group has probably been wise enough to take off the best part of the money for himself; the fellow who CREATED the story idea is so discouraged he goes back to pulp writing." . . . The Second Guesser looked up at that point with a near smile. He murmured, "Am I talking too much?—or will you have the nerve to print what I say? . . . If you have the nerve—I will add a concluding line. . . . Tell those big shot executives at the studios that it might not be a bad idea to start a sort of CCC camp for some of their aides, in which 'relativity' and social charm would be forgotten. . . . Then let the boys designated spend their CCC time visiting theaters. . . . You know, it wouldn't do any harm for a lot of the folks who control the making of our pictures to go out in the wilds and the wilderness and visit a theater once in a while."

"Let's Give The Industry Back To The Founders"

Going strong by now, The Second Guesser was really talking loud—roaring might be the word. Pointing a menacing finger at us he went on: "You know, this industry was pretty good when it was headed by a group of pioneers gathered from all walks of life who just figured that the show business meant giving the customer a show. . . . It rode high during the years when those same pioneers decided that the show business, as translated into the words 'motion pictures,' just meant watching the stock market. . . . Then it went into a rhumba with Humpty Dumpty. . . . Why? . . . Well, I don't claim to know the answer, but do you think that part of the reply could say that the change came when studios became dominated in production control by graduates of New York who are still making pictures for New York? . . . Most of whom come from the prairies and the mountains of the United States, but have been bitten by the log-rolling germ that infests New York's intellectuals. . . . Maybe I've got something there. . . . But I am open to reason. . . . I am willing to suggest another reason for all our troubles. . . . Perhaps they all date back to the time when Hollywood acquired a 'society.' . . . You know, the place where you meet a charming fellow with a good act tonight and you give him a job tomorrow morning bossing a couple of fellows who have learned their trade the hard way. . . . I might have something there. . . . Because a fellow with a memory could almost check off the ups and downs with the calendar against the influence of cafe society on the business of entertainment making. . . . But when we get through with the whole discussion, I guess the only answer is that it is up to these fellows in Hollywood to get more IDEAS."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A.
OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunna Din	RKO	180
Dodge City	WAR	158
Union Pacific	PAR	151
Kentucky	FOX	139
Idiot's Delight	MGM	136
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	134
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	132

B.
FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pygmalion	MGM	131
Dark Victory	WAR	131
The Hardy's Ride High	MGM	127
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	123

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal. The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C.
FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

The Beachcomber	PAR	113
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Lucky Night	MGM	102
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	98
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	94
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
White, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	89
Serjeant Madden	MGM	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Gate Society	PAR	85
Off The Record	WAR	85
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Callie Dr. Kidare	MGM	82
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	82
Tim From Missouri	PAR	82
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Never Say Die	FOX	80
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
On Trial	WAR	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Prison Without Bars	UNIV	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	78
Let Us Live	FOX	77
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	GOI	76
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	75
The Gorilla	FOX	74
Lady and the Mob	COL	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
Bridal Suite	RKO	73
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	73
King of the Turf	UNIV	72
Stolen Life	PAR	72
Boyfriend	FOX	71
Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	70
Hotel Imperial	PAR	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Zenobia	UNIV	67
The Flying Irishman	RKO	65
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	65
Women in the Wind	WAR	64
Smiling Alone	FOX	63

D.
BELOW \$100,000

Blonde Meets the Boss	COL	81
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Family Next Door	UNIV	76
Inside Story	FOX	76
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
For Love or Money	UNIV	74
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	74
Society Lawyer	MGM	74
King of Chinatown	PAR	74
Some Like It Hot	PAR	73
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Nancy Drew Reporter	WAR	73
Romance of the Redwoods	WAR	73
Big Town Czar	COL	72
Chasing Danger	UNIV	72
Persons in Hiding	FOX	72
Sorority House	PAR	72
Society Smugglers	RKO	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	UNIV	72
Strange Faces	UNIV	71
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	71
Pirates of the Skies	RKO	71
On Trial	UNIV	71
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	70
Code of the Streets	WAR	70
Winner Take All	UNIV	70
Secret Service of the Air	FOX	70
Ambush	WAR	70
The Kid From Texas	MGM	69
Buildup Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
Blind Alley	COL	68
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
Within The Law	MGM	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
Missing Daughters	COL	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
Beauty for the Askins	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
Piper Dugan	RKO	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Exile Express	PAR	65
Risky Business	GN	64
Tell No Tales	UNIV	64
Sweepstake Winner	MGM	64
Inspector Horneleigh	WAR	64
Trapped in the Sky	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	74
The Sunset Murder Case	COL	74
Whispering Enemies	GN	75
Streets of New York	COL	75
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	MONO	71
North of Shanghai	REP	71
Pride of the Navy	COL	71
Tough Kid	REP	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	69
I Am A Criminal	REP	69
Fishing Thoroughbreds	MONO	69
Gambling Ship	REP	69
Convict's Code	UNIV	69
I Was A Convict	MONO	69
Navy Secrets	REP	68
Federal Man Hunt	MONO	68
The Zero Hour	REP	68
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	REP	67
Forged Passport	GN	67
Five Offenders	REP	66
Wolf Call	COL	66
Mystery Plane	MONO	66
My Son Is A Criminal	MONO	64
Star Reporter	MONO	64
Undercover Agent	MONO	63
Boy's Reformatory	MONO	61

Speaking of Subscribers!

THE DIGEST

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

June 10th, 1919.

Mr. Welsh:

I am listing below the subscription renewals received since June 1st, and, as you instructed, will continue to give you this separate renewal report twice each month.

Tivoli Theatre, Miami, Florida.
Kerasotes Bros. Theatre, Springfield, Ill.
Hunt Stromberg, Culver City, Calif.
Lincoln Park Theatre, Lincoln Park, Mich.
Harold Wilson, Los Angeles, Calif.
Larry Darmour, Hollywood, Calif.
Parkway Theatre, Minneapolis, Minn.
Frank Borzage, Los Angeles, Calif.
James Hogan, Van Nuys, Calif.
O. K. Theatres Corp., Dallas, Texas
Walter Wanger, Hollywood, Calif.
Central Amusement Co., New Orleans, La.
Family Theatre, Harrington, Washington
Boyd Enterprises, Philadelphia, Pa.
Sol Wurtzel, Bel Air, Calif.
Capitol Theatre, Charleston, W. Va.
Warren B. Duff, Burbank, Calif.
United Artists Theatre, San Francisco
Wayzata Theatre, Wayzata, Minn.
Jefferson Amusement Co., Beaumont, Tex.
Bette Davis, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Lawton Theatre, Lawton, Okla.
Craig & Pike, El Portal Theatre,
Las Vegas, Nevada
Palace Theatre, Malta, Montana
Zeppo Marx, Hollywood, Calif.
Wm. Morris Agency, Hollywood, Calif.
Keith Albee Theatre, Huntington, W. Va.
Darryl Zanuck, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Lyric Amusement Co., Tucson, Arizona
Jesse Lasky Jr., Hollywood, Calif.
John Considine, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Deanna Durbin, Hollywood, Calif.
Ritz Theatre, Tulsa, Okla.
Walter Houston, Hollywood, Calif.
Lee Tracy, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Carole Lombard, Van Nuys, Calif.
William F. Gordon, Salt Lake City Utah
Rouben Mamoulian, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Mischa Auer, Hollywood, Calif.
George B. Seitz, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Randolph Scott, Santa Monica, Calif.
Matty Fox, Universal Studios
Frank O'Heron, West Los Angeles, Calif.
George O'Brien, Hollywood, Calif.
Lincoln Theatre, Lincoln, Ill.
Orzatti Agency, Hollywood, Calif.
Leimert Theatre, Los Angeles, Calif.
B. J. Leavitt, Los Angeles, Calif.
Largo Theatre, Watts, Calif.
Principal Theatres, Los Angeles, Calif.
Tivoli Theatre, Sawtelle, Calif.
Grover C. Parsons, Redwood City, Calif.
Charley Walker, Fox Film Co., Salt Lake
Cabrillo Theatre, Los Angeles, Calif.
Western Poster Co., San Francisco, Calif.
A. W. Hartford, Salt Lake City, Utah
Cobart Theatre, Los Angeles, Calif.
Roy Olmstead, Monogram Pictures,
Los Angeles, Calif.
Whitson & Lewis, Los Angeles, Calif.
Leslie Fenton, Culver City, Calif.
Mareal Theatre, Los Angeles, Calif.
Granada Theatre, Alhambra, Calif.
Nat'l Theatre Supply Co., Los Angeles
John Kerikas, Broadway Theatre,
Salt Lake City, Utah
Bruce Johnson, San Francisco, Calif.
Old Howard Theatre, Boston, Mass.
Claude Hawk, Salt Lake City, Utah
Huish Theatre Ent., Salt Lake City Utah
Freddie Bartholomew, West Los Angeles
Warren William, Van Nuys, Calif.
Zion Myers, West Los Angeles, Calif.
Bing Crosby, North Hollywood, Calif.
Hawks-Volck Agency, Beverly Hills, Calif.
New Palace Theatre, Las Vegas, Nevada
Mitchell Leisen, Hollywood, Calif.
Sigmund Romberg, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Phil Gus, Salt Lake City, Utah
William Seiter, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Elli Thomas, North Hollywood, Calif.

The above list includes only those renewals paid for with the order, and omits those on which we were asked to send an invoice.

R. THOMPSON,
Circulation Department.

T/C

Renewals Tell the Story!

The DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 18.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 20, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"INVITATION" TOP PICTURE IN SPOTTY B. O. WEEK

SEE PAGE 5

LOWDOWN ON ALLIED'S CONVENTION

SEE PAGE 6

EDITORIAL: ARE PRODUCERS ON SIT-DOWN STRIKE?

SEE PAGE 3

**The
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Office
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Original
MARK JEROME

Photographer
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Film Editor
ALMA MACRORIE

Featured
CHARLIE RUGGLES
WILLIAM COLLIER, Sr.
BILLY COOK



FRED MacMURRAY

THE DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

PRODUCERS ON "SIT DOWN?"

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Let's not have a sit-down strike by producers and distributors as the warmer months of the Summer approach!

Business is bad enough now, and has been for a couple of months, without looking forward to the dire prospect of a complete collapse for July and August.

The selling of motion picture entertainment is a business that can ill afford to let too many of its potential customers cultivate the habit of STAYING AWAY from the theaters.

Let's hope that present surface indications that many producers and distributors plan to definitely stall to an unusual degree on release of their big attractions until Fate and blind luck brings better conditions back, are not entirely true.

Theaters are desperately in need of all the real attractions they can get right NOW.

* * *

We have talked to many exhibitors in recent weeks, and corresponded with many more, in an effort to ascertain their reactions to the current business let down.

Unfortunately the exhibitor reply is not helpful to a clear analysis of the problem. Boiled down, their opinions are pretty near unanimous: "Too few REAL attractions."

They then go on to ask, in varying tones of irritation: "What's the matter with Hollywood? Are they laying down on the job out there?"

As we said, that is not exactly helpful in finding the answer. We know that Hollywood is trying. Hollywood may be fumbling, Hollywood may be groping. Hollywood may have lost the formula. But Hollywood IS trying.

And as a matter of fact there have been quite a few good pictures in recent months that did not do within twenty per cent of the business that could have been automatically expected in more normal times.

Can the answer be put in reverse English by saying: "Yes, there have been a number of fine attractions, but in between there have been too many POOR pictures."

We have all had the experience, when discussing pic-

tures with lay ticket buyers, of being told: "Oh, I haven't been to a picture in a long time. Saw a couple of rotten ones about six months ago, and I just got out of the habit."

That person's absence, and a million others like him who happen to be feeling the same way at a particular time, may be costing the loss of a million and one ticket sales for a current big picture of real worth.

And all caused by sad experiences sometime past with a couple of pictures that should never have been let out of the cutting room, if, in fact, they should ever have escaped the scenario department.

* * *

Yes, Hollywood is trying—but is it possible that the machinery is all gummed up?

Is it possible that various causes, among them the insatiable double bill demand, the panting necessity to keep the studio wheels going to justify elephantine plants and astronomical overhead, has resulted in the rushed release of much product that ten years ago would have reposed ashamedly on the cutting room shelves until major operations could be performed? . . . It IS possible.

Which brings us to our point:

Let's not have a sit-down strike of distributors which results in the theaters being flooded with anything and everything on celluloid during July and August! Let's not have producers holding back any picture they think likely to be a top hit for the grand rush in September.

For the simple reason that it does not seem wise to kill off another million size segment of our customers. It will be just that much harder to get the wheels going again in September. Besides which, you producers are going to look

foolish cutting each others' throats with ALL your big attractions in the "thirty days that September hath."

Don't count on the miracle that will change folks who are killing the box office with apathy now, and suddenly transform them into fanatics who will rush from theater to theater, night after night, to catch ALL your epics. There may be other forms of amusement tempting them.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	8 Releases	96
2. MGM	24 Releases	93
3. 20th Century-Fox	27 Releases	87
4. Warner Brothers	23 Releases	87
5. Paramount	26 Releases	83
6. Universal	16 Releases	83
7. RKO	15 Releases	83
8. Columbia	14 Releases	75
9. Republic	11 Releases	71
10. Monogram	11 Releases	67
11. Grand National	3 Releases	66
12. Gaumont-British	1 Release	60

THE HIGHLIGHTER WELCOMES DAVID GRIFFITH AND THEN GIVES QUICK GLANCE AT STUDIOS

Highlights and previews are both conspicuous by their absence in the week just past. As far as the preview shortage is concerned it is ominous, and may indicate that the re-recession has brought Summer on earlier than usual this year. Prospect is not much brighter for a quantity of debuting pictures the coming week. . . . As far as news Highlights are concerned, that is just one of the seven day lulls that can happen in the most erratic of industries. . . . Even the reports from Warner-Skouras were "All Quiet on the West Coast Front." . . . Though we do understand that important local partners of FWC were called into session with Charles Skouras at which a frank and lengthy memo from Spyros Skouras outlined the company's story of the case, and its position. . . . We further understand, as we have intimated in recent weeks, the boys are just battling over money . . . Plain, ordinary money.

The Old Master Returns To The Wars

There's more than sentimental interest in the news that the one and only Old Master of picture making, David Wark Griffith, is returning to the screen wars as a production advisor to Hal Roach. . . . That Griffith should have been on the side lines all these years was no tribute to the industry towards whose foundations he contributed so much. . . . And since David Griffith was born a showman and a creator there is little doubt that he can give much as an aide to the ambitious Roach feature production plans for the coming year.

Paramount Getting Itself Set

On the heels of closing its new deal with Cecil De Mille, Paramount announces that Mark Sandrich's new contract will be a "producer-director" compact. . . . Not surprising after "Man About Town." . . . We have been a lone wolf advocate of the producer-director set-up for a couple of years now, and it is cheering to see the steady spread of the idea. . . . It's the solution of a lot of problems: Real big league executives at the top for the long range planning, cost decisions, star acquisitions and build-ups, for judgment on the market value of themes, for courts of sympathetic appeal on problems—and the creating job in the hands of creators: producer-directors. . . . Not all directors are geared for the responsibility. . . . Not by a jugful of beans. . . . But there are enough who are to probably answer the exhibitor plea for more REAL attractions. . . . News among the directors was the most interesting of the week. . . . Roy Del Ruth has completed the Charles Rogers opus, "The Star Maker" and returned to the home lot, Fox. . . . Incidentally, the Paramount sales boys saw flashes of "The Star Maker" while here, and their enthusiasm ran high. . . . Sam Goldwyn

6 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. Captain Fury	UA	94	97
2. The Mikado	UNIV	87	93
3. Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	82	84
4. The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72	74
5. They Made Her A Spy	RKO	68	70
6. Blind Alley	COL	68	70

is so satisfied with the prize he possesses in William Wyler that the new deal for that director calls for a straight four years. . . . Henry King draws "Swanee River" as his next assignment from Darryl Zanuck.

Rowland Lee Tackling Big Subject

Rowland Lee is gathering his forces for his next Universal producer-director chore. . . . "London Tower," with the cooperation of the British Government on authentic and never used backgrounds. . . . More important is the fact that we understand that Lee will this time be given the time to nurse his picture through the cutting rooms without the rush bell. . . . Less important, probably, is the fact that we hope that they will not try again to give Basil Rathbone anything like a straight role. . . . It may be all right in England, and maybe the English market is doing some dictating these days, but Rathbone can't be sold in Sioux Falls, or the Bronx, for anything but a sneering menace, who will cut your heart out while employing a correspondence school Oxford accent. . . . Mebbe they play him as a real nasty so-and-so this time. . . . It will be all okay then, if the marquee has some other names. . . . Because Lee, with proper cooperation, will give them a picture.

Here's An Unwelcome Tip To Hollywood

On another page we give the only real trade paper low down story on the Allied conven-

10 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	107	103
2. Lucky Night	MGM	102	96
3. Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	89	87
4. Cafe Society	PAR	85	81
5. Society Lawyer	MGM	74	72
6. Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	73	71
7. For Love or Money	UNIV	74	70
8. Stolen Life	PAR	72	69
9. Sorority House	RKO	72	69
10. Missing Daughters	COL	68	64

tion in Minneapolis, at which this exhibitor group rejected a Trade Practice Act which many thought was going to take the Government off the industry's shoulders. . . . At first glance it may scare a Hollywood worker, but we would advise reading it, even if you don't catch the meaning of lots of the technical worries through which exhibitors go. . . . They are the "stores" at which your product is sold. . . . The more you know about their problems, the more you will realize that this industry is not Hollywood alone, but is a vast international, interdependent, combination of art, industry, and commercial sense. . . . And the more you know about that, the better you will be. . . . We might change the words and say, "the better off" you will be. . . . When the revolution comes.

Odds And Ends From Studio Jaunts

One of the saddest blows that Hollywood has experienced in months was the flash news that a sudden summons had taken Sam Pokrass from us. . . . Sam wasn't a glamour boy, nor an exhibitionist. . . . But he was a bubbling bunch of genius on music. . . . He bubbled, just because he was so happy getting the unusual opportunities that Hollywood offers—after a life of trial and tribulation—but those opportunities only made him want to sparkle even brighter. He was called at the springboard point of his greatest work. . . . And a lot of us are pushing our good wishes and recommendations across that River Styx.

Let's Continue Around The Studios

Interesting to read that Paramount has got under way with "Doctor Cyclops," which Dale Van Every will guide through production, with the capable Ernest Schoedsack—remember "Grass," "Four Feathers," "Chang," "King Kong"—at the directorial helm. . . . It will be in Technicolor. . . . With Van Every at the helm, with Schoedsack's genius for the unusual in showmanship. . . . with Technicolor for the topper, we look for something. . . . And we wonder why, with the top hits of recent months, the only ones—aside from "Gunga Din" and "Union Pacific" really hitting on high—"Jesse James" and "Kentucky," both possessing that Technicolor bulge—someone else doesn't get wise. . . . Costs too much you say? . . . Shucks, cut out thirty or forty thousand of that advance story cost wasted on associate producers and writers kicking the gong around, and give the exhibitor the benefit. . . . It might interfere with the time of some of the writers devoted to the local race tracks, but would that be a breach of Emily Post etiquette? . . . Al Lewin turns in his Paramount producer contract because of story differences. . . . Al should not be long announcing a new assignment, since he knows his stuff.

"INVITATION TO HAPPINESS" TOPS WEEK; "YOUNG MR. LINCOLN" BUILDING UP FAST

PARAMOUNT—3 New Releases

Paramount, which is now winding up the end of their 1938-39 productions, has released three new pictures in the past week—one good box office attraction and two fairly good programmers.

Paramount's top release "INVITATION TO HAPPINESS" which is the Honor Box Winner in this issue, has opened up fairly well, at 110% considering the off conditions throughout the country today, especially with the picture houses.

This new story of the prize fighter and the lady theme is swell entertainment and has a strong emotional appeal which word of mouth advertising should help considerably to continue to build fine box office grosses.

Irene Dunne and Fred MacMurray are co-starred and those prominently featured are: Charlie Ruggles, Billy Cook and William Collier, Sr.

This picture was handled by Paramount's ace team of Producer-Director Wesley Ruggles and Writer Claude Binyon. This team has been so successful in producing box office successes it is too bad that Paramount is losing them to Columbia where they report next month to film Clarence Budington Kelland's "Arizona."

Paramount's other two releases are a couple of new programmers from the Harold Hurley unit. "UNMARRIED," 75%, is another story with a prize fighter, but this time with a night club hostess and a strong kid angle. Buck Jones and Helen Twelvetrees are co-starred and Donald O'Connor, Larry Crabbe and Robert Armstrong are featured.

In many neighborhood houses, especially where Westerns are popular, this one should make an excellent Friday-Saturday or Sunday-Monday booking on account of Buck Jones' long standing popularity. Mel Shauer supervised and Kurt Neuman directed.

Paramount's other programmer is the latest in the J. Edgar Hoover series, "UNDERCOVER DOCTOR," which is doing fair at around 74%. There are no stars in this one but there is a fairly good cast of featured players including Lloyd Nolan, J. Carrol Naish, Heather Angel, Robert Wilcox, and Raymond Hatton. Edward T. Lowe supervised and Louis King directed.

FOX—2 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has two new releases this week, one a big epic and the other just a fair programmer.

Darryl F. Zanuck's latest special production is the new biography, "YOUNG MR. LINCOLN," which has opened up very spotty and is averaging around 105%, which is considerably below what we had estimated in spite of the terrific campaign by Cosmopolitan and the Hearst papers.

Of Twelve New Releases in the Past Week Only Two Rated Over 100%, and Ten Were Very Weak.

"YOUNG MR. LINCOLN" is truly an outstanding screen achievement and picturizes Mr. Lincoln when he was a young attorney, which previously had never been filmed.

While this picture is only doing so-so on its first runs, as it is a hard subject to sell, it will undoubtedly build considerably on its second runs and in the neighborhood houses, as it has been strongly endorsed by different American organizations as well as P.T.A. and the Boards of Education. While the romantic interest is of secondary importance still the picture is of sufficient interest historically that every good American should see it and exhibitors who run this picture will certainly receive the strong support and approval of their local communities.

Henry Fonda is starred as Lincoln with a strong cast including such prominent players as Alice Brady, Marjorie Weaver, Arleen Whelan, Richard Cromwell, Donald Meek, Eddie Quillan and many others. Kenneth Macgowan produced and Jack Ford directed from Lamar Trotti's original screenplay.

Twentieth Century-Fox's second release, "CHARLIE CHAN IN RENO," 68%, is another in this popular series produced by the Sol Wurtzel unit. This one is not going quite as strong as its predecessors and it might be that the public does not like the new Chan, Sidney Toler, as well as Warner Oland, or then again it might be the general off conditions.

Supporting Toler as Chan are Ricardo Cortez, Phyllis Brooks, Slim Summerville and Kane Richmond, which constitutes a pretty fair cast.

John Stone supervised and Norman Foster directed.

UNIVERSAL—1 New Release

The New Universal's release this week is a new Victor McLaglen starring vehicle, "EX-CHAMP," which is just doing fair at 72%. Undoubtedly this one will be a much better

draw for the men folks and kids and will probably draw better where action pictures are preferable; so be sure to book this one with a picture that has plenty of feminine appeal for the weaker sex.

Supporting McLaglen are Tom Brown and Nan Gray in the romantic leads and also William Frawley and Constance Moore.

Burt Kelly supervised and Philip Rosen directed.

WARNERS—2 New Releases

Warners-First National have two new programmers from the Bryan Foy unit this week, neither of which is very outstanding at the box office. "TORCHY FOR MAYOR," 68%, is the latest in this series co-starring Glenda Farrell and Barton MacLane, and will probably prove satisfactory in the nabes on the average double bill.

Warners' second release, "CODE OF THE SECRET SERVICE," 64%, is a well made action picture but minus marquee strength, it is not pulling very well. Ronald Reagan and Rosella Towne are featured.

MGM—1 New Release

MGM's only new release this week is a rather poor programmer from the Joe Cohn unit, "6,000 ENEMIES," which is just doing so-so at around 63%. Your only marquee names are Walter Pidgeon and Rita Johnson and since they don't cut so much ice be sure and book this one with a much stronger attraction.

RKO—Also 1 New Release

RKO-Radio Pictures' release this week is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit, "PANAMA LADY," 63%, which has a good box office title but minus any marquee strength.

Two rather new Radio players, Lucille Ball and Allan Lane, are featured but as they have not had sufficient publicity build-up as yet it will certainly be necessary to build this one with a stronger attraction or on a bank night.

REPUBLIC—1 Release

Republic has a good action picture this week in "STREET OF MISSING MEN," 63%, will probably get by satisfactorily in the spot for which it was intended, although as a first run attraction it has done very poorly. Charles Bickford, Nana Bryant head the cast.

G. B.—1 Release

The ill-fated Gaumont British studios have their first release this week in many a moon in "CLIMBING HIGH," which is a new Jessie Matthews feature and is doing very poorly at a 60% average. Some three years ago when Gaumont British were producing on a big scale and had their own exchanges and exploitation department in the U.S.A., Jessie Matthews' name meant something at the box office, but she has been absent too long.

12 New Features Not in Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. Invitation To Happiness	PAR	110	120
2. Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	105	115
3. Unmarried	PAR	75	80
4. Undercover Doctor	PAR	74	75
5. Ex-Champ	UNIV	72	75
6. Charlie Chan In Reno	FOX	68	80
7. Torchy For Mayor	WAR	68	...
8. Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64	...
9. 6,000 Enemies	MGM	63	80
10. Panama Lady	RKO	63	...
11. Street of Missing Men	REP	63	...
12. Climbing High	GB	60	...



J. Maurice Ridge



Harry E. Nichols

FIELD MEN GIVE ALLIED LOWDOWN

THIS WEEK'S REPORT DIRECT FROM BATTLEFRONT

Minneapolis, Minn.—We have just concluded with confabs, resolutions and speeches at the important Allied Theaters convention here, called to consider the newly proffered Trade Practice Act, and policy on legislative matters for the coming year. . . . We don't know what you may have read in the headlines, and we are not going to seek headlines. . . . We will just try and interpret the feeling of these important picture-buyers gathered in convention. We are reporters—we will leave the editorials to the home office.

First Of All— What Made Them Sore?

But before we mention that, we should probably say that we hate to think of all this cross-fire of industrial dispute when it will appear on Congressional records next year. . . . We can turn prophet now, and tell you that if you don't get a Neely bill this year, you will next. . . . These sharp thinking exhibitors had some of the best sales brains right in the spot where they had to answer questions, and they shot the questions out of machine guns. . . . The answers were not all machine-gun in intelligence. . . . On the other hand, the sessions of the convention, and the private arguments, gave the impression that Bill Rodgers of MGM, Gradwell Sears of Warners, Abe Montague of Columbia, and Frank Scully of Universal, were on hand with a sincere desire to sell the new Trade Practice Code as the utmost that distributors would grant, and as the best all-around panacea for the industry's ills.

But Then The Trouble Got Under Way

First of all, the trade paper boys had been supplied with official copies of the new code. . . . But when Sidney Samuelson, of New Jersey went into an exhaustive explanation of the new code it turned out that he had a revised copy, and many points had been changed. . . .

That gave the snorting warhorse Al Steffes an opportunity to tell that the new code in many ways did not conform with the agreements which Allied leaders had made in earlier amicable settlements as the code was being framed. . . . That brought in the word, "framed."

After Which The Fire-Works Started

From there on it was left-wingers and right-wingers, both in the convention sessions, and more importantly in the lobbies. . . . If you folks in Hollywood think that all these arguments were academic and parliamentarian, let's come down to earth and give you some of the lobby chatter. . . . This is the "close to home and pocketbook" talk that exhibitors know. . . . For instance, and just as a case history example of the conversations, there was much talk about a little town named Central City, Nebraska. . . . It appears that Joe Lucas operates the State at Central City, and also a theater of the same name at Idaho Springs, Colo. . . . In the latter town there is also a Mrs. Robson, operating the Mines Theater. . . . Mrs. Robson has under contract all the companies with the exception of Paramount, United Artists, Universal, and Republic, though many of the pictures are run eight to nine months after first run in Denver. . . . She changes four times a week, the rival State, three times a week. . . . The State would like to bid for the MGM product. . . . But can they get it? . . . No, just listen to this letter from the MGM home office: "For this reason I regret that we do not have any feature product available for licensing to you, but if you are interested in newsreels or other short product, I suggest that you communicate with our Denver exchange." . . . This was just a single case history of the evidence that Allied exhibitors are building up to prove that open competition will get more money for producers and distributors, under more openly competitive terms,

if something like the Neely bill becomes law. . . . A small town you say? . . . Yeah, but we would hate to have you start multiplying them and their influence on legislation.

The Convention Boys Were On Business Bent

First indication that the Allied boys had their minds on business, was given by the opening session of the convention. . . . Without any emotional oratory, Sidney Samuelson, aided and abetted by Nathan Yamins, of Fall River, Mass., went over the proposed code in purely dispassionate, legalistic manner. . . . It was a session that every exhibitor in the United States could well have attended. . . . We take our hats off to President Harry Cole, of Texas, for having inaugurated this straight business idea for a convention keynote. . . . We forecast that the rival MPTOA at their coming convention will do much of the same thing in explaining small print type and legal phrases to their members. . . . In the course of the discussions there came an explanation about why the majors are not sticking to a nationwide uniform policy on demanding guarantees on percentage pictures. . . . Here is the angle the exhibitors give: If the distributor asks for a guarantee on percentage, he is not allowed to ask for preferred playing time. . . . But if he sets the guarantee demand high enough, he has the exhibitor where he is in a "heads I win, tails you lose" position when the exhibitor tries to decide between giving preferred days, or swallowing the guarantee. . . . At any rate, that's the way shrewd buyers have it figured out.

William Rodgers Goes To The Bat

It could all sum up into this statement: Those of you who did not go through the night-long sessions naturally do not yet know what the code is about, your local salesmen probably knows as little.

But—and then Bill Rodgers, of MGM, struck off a bombshell. . . . In essence he said that the branch managers better beware! . . . Because the majors will show their sincerity by holding the managers responsible for fulfilling every clause of the code. . . . In fact, he said that the Committee of Distributors will fire any manager or salesman who fails to follow the orders of the Committee on the code. . . . And if you don't think he went out on a limb, when Al Steffes charged that the local Minneapolis branch manager was refusing to sell newsreels and features without the MGM shorts, Mr. Rodgers stated that he would soon have to have some new managers in the territory. . . . That's what he said, and this is no time for levity. . . . Further, Mr. Rodgers stated: "If a salesman asks you to waive cancellations, it will not be permitted!"

Then Rodgers And Colleagues Were Put On Spot

Unfortunately for what possibilities of good will there may have been in sight, dynamite exploded when the sales group agreed to meet the exhibitors across tables outside the convention hall and take on all comers. . . . They were prompted by their zeal to sell the code to Allied members, but they must never have attended an Allied convention before. . . . It took on all the aspects of an assorted group of District Attorneys moving en masse on a trio of defendants. . . . Al Steffes and Nathan Yamins had probably waited ten years for such an opportunity. . . . Sears, Montague, and Rodgers were unmercifully and uncomfortably on the pan. . . . The frying pan. . . . For instance Steffes maneuvered Rodgers into this position, in response to a question as to whether the twenty per cent cancellation clause granted the exhibitor is not being balanced by gross contract receipts being boosted to meet any possible contingency. . . . Mr. Sears, stated that

(Continued on Page 17)

MORE THAN EVER
IT WILL BE

Universal in 1939-40

continuing the most amazing series of successes
in MOTION PICTURE HISTORY!

2 DEANNA DURBIN

P R O D U C T I O N S

(one co-starring Charles Boyer)

Produced by JOE PASTERNAK



HENRY KOSTER
Production

"The OCEAN BETWEEN"

FOUR PICTURES... FOUR SMASH HITS!
THAT'S KOSTER'S AMERICAN HISTORY!

Produced by JOE PASTERNAK

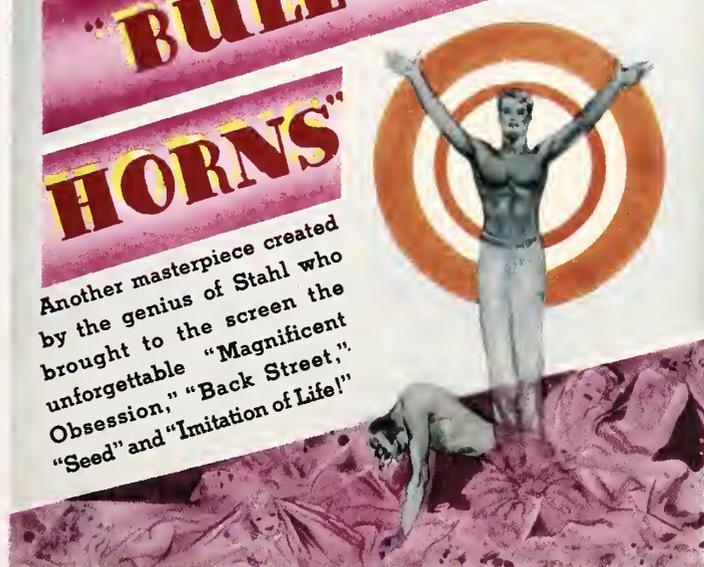
Story by Bruno Frank Screenplay by Bruce Manning



John M. Stahl's

"BULL BY THE HORNS"

Another masterpiece created by the genius of Stahl who brought to the screen the unforgettable "Magnificent Obsession," "Back Street," "Seed" and "Imitation of Life!"



MORE THAN EVER IT WILL BE.

2 J O E P A S T E R

#1

The Hero of "YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU," "MADE FOR EACH OTHER" and "MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON"

JAMES STEWART

in

"THE MAN from MONTANA"

with MISCHA AUER



Irene DUNNE

An assured box office smash-hit with the star of "The Awful Truth" and "Love Affair"



W.C. FIELDS

PRODUCTION

He's Rupee ripe now.... and we pick him to pack 'em with a great successor to "You Can't Cheat an Honest Man"!

Produced by LESTER COWAN



BING CROSBY PRODUCTION

With a Marquee Full of GREAT NAME STARS!



UNIVERSAL in 1939-1940!

N A K Productions

#2



NAN GREY ROBERT CUMMINGS

GLORIA JEAN in

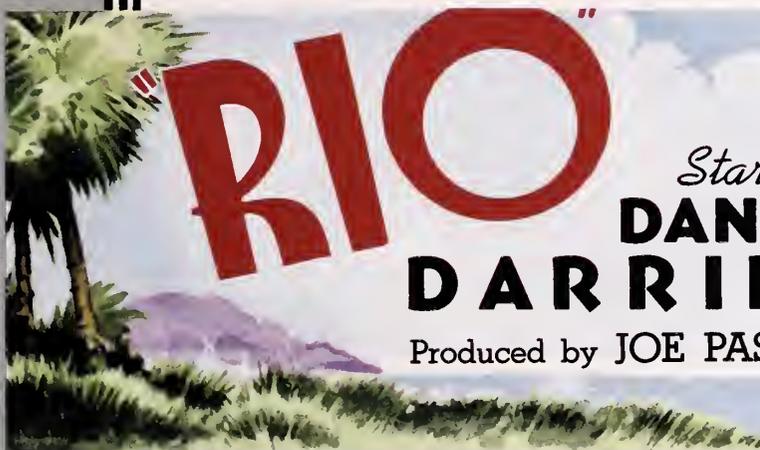
"THE UNDER PUP"

with Beulah Bondi, Margaret Lindsay, C. Aubrey Smith, Ernest Truex
Billy Gilbert, Raymond Walburn, Paul Cavanagh, Ann Gillis, Doris Lloyd

Original story by I. A. R. Wylie

Screenplay by Grover Jones

Directed by RICHARD WALLACE

"RIO"

Starring
DANIELLE DARRIEUX

Produced by JOE PASTERNAK





EDGAR BERGEN
and
CHARLIE MCCARTHY
PRODUCTION

Another sure-fire hit—with a battery of front line stars added—and MORTIMER SNERD, too!



MARGARET SULLAVAN
PRODUCTION

In a role destined to outshine even her own unforgettable performance in "Three Comrades" which won her the highest awards of the season.



MORE THAN EVER IT WILL BE



Jackie

COOPER ★ BARTHOLOMEW

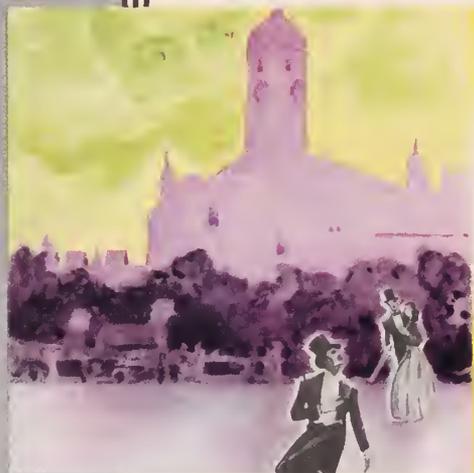
Freddie



in **2 PRODUCTIONS**

Thrilling, appealing, exploitable box office productions, topical stories of America's youth!

Produced by BURT KELLY • Directed by JOSEPH SANTLEY



BASIL RATHBONE

in

"TOWER of LONDON"

One of the greatest masterpieces of shock literature makes a perfect film vehicle for the arch-master of the sinister!

Produced and Directed by ROWLAND V. LEE, who made "The Sun Never Sets" and "Son of Frankenstein"!

"VICTORIA DOCKS at 8"

starring

BASIL RATHBONE

With red fury coiled like a snake in his mind, he sought the peace of destruction in the throes of blind dementia!

An original story by Rufus King and Charles Beahan

Produced and Directed by **RICHARD WALLACE**



Directed by **JOE MAY**

Original Story by **JOE MAY** and **KURT SIODMAK**

"The Invisible Man RETURNS"

Demanded by exhibitor and public alike! Once again to fight his strange fight, to the amazement of unprecedented audiences!



BURT KELLY
Associate
Producer

Jackie **COOPER**
in
"HIS SON"

The production strength of a cast of distinguished stars and a director of outstanding merit will be given Cooper in this story—aimed to hit the pinnacle of his remarkably successful career!

UNIVERSAL in 1939-1940!



"RETURN OF THE SHEIK"

Here's ADVENTURE at Flood-Tide—produced on a scale matching in magnitude the panoramic sweep of the thrilling story!



KARLOFF-LUGOSI "Friday the 13th"

The Merchants of Fear ready to declare even greater dividends than were paid to you with their never-to-be-forgotten "Frankenstein"!



TWO PRODUCTIONS in "THE FAMILY NEXT DOOR"

SERIES • starring HUGH HERBERT
with Joy Hodges, Eddie Quillan, Ruth Donnelly, Juanita Quigley, Benny Bartlett and "SANDY", the Wonder Baby!

Associate Producer
MAX H. GOLDEN



2 LITTLE TOUGH GUYS

PRODUCTIONS
"CALL A MESSENGER"
"ACADEMY WINNER"
With Added Assets in Important Names for the Casts, Stories and Production!

KEN GOLDSMITH
Associate Producer

7 PRODUCTIONS

with Richard **ARLEN** • Andy **DEVINE**

Produced by **BEN PIVAR**

Stories by the greatest authors of all-time!

- "Mutiny on the Blackhawk"
- "Man from Montreal"
- "Way of the West"
- "Raging Rivers"
- "Air Express"
- "Sea Patrol"
- "Steel"

MARQUEE PICTURES!

To liven up the box-office...
To attract Every Type of Patron!

4 EXPLOITATION PRODUCTIONS

Titles that can be campaigned — Group Casts that sell tickets!

"LIVE ALONE AND LIKE IT" • "MISSING EVIDENCE"
"CONVICTED WOMEN" • "ADVICE TO THE LOVELORN"

4 MUSICAL PRODUCTIONS

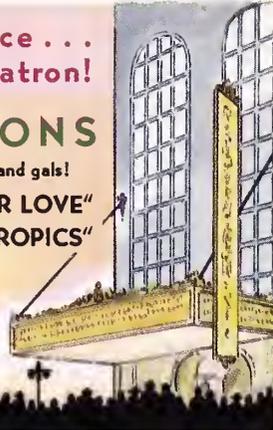
Zipful, zestful comedy-romances seasoned with hit-tunes and gals!

"PENTHOUSE SERENADE" • "DANCING FOR LOVE"
"RHYTHM FOR SALE" • "ROMANCE IN THE TROPICS"

8 ACTION PRODUCTIONS

They guarantee entertainment. Stories hot from the news and fads of the day! This series will be selected from the following stories:

Distress Signal • The Witness Vanishes • Eyes of the Coast Guard
Slightly Tempted • Vice Ring • Front Page Confession • Counterfeit Ring
Jail Baby • Freedom of the Air • Homicide Bureau • Ghost Ship
Hidden Money • Hero for a Day • Inquiring Reporter



7 JOHN MACK BROWN'S

with **BOB BAKER** and **FUZZY KNIGHT**
The three favorites of your action fans,
in a series of pictures that will keep them jumpin' for joy!

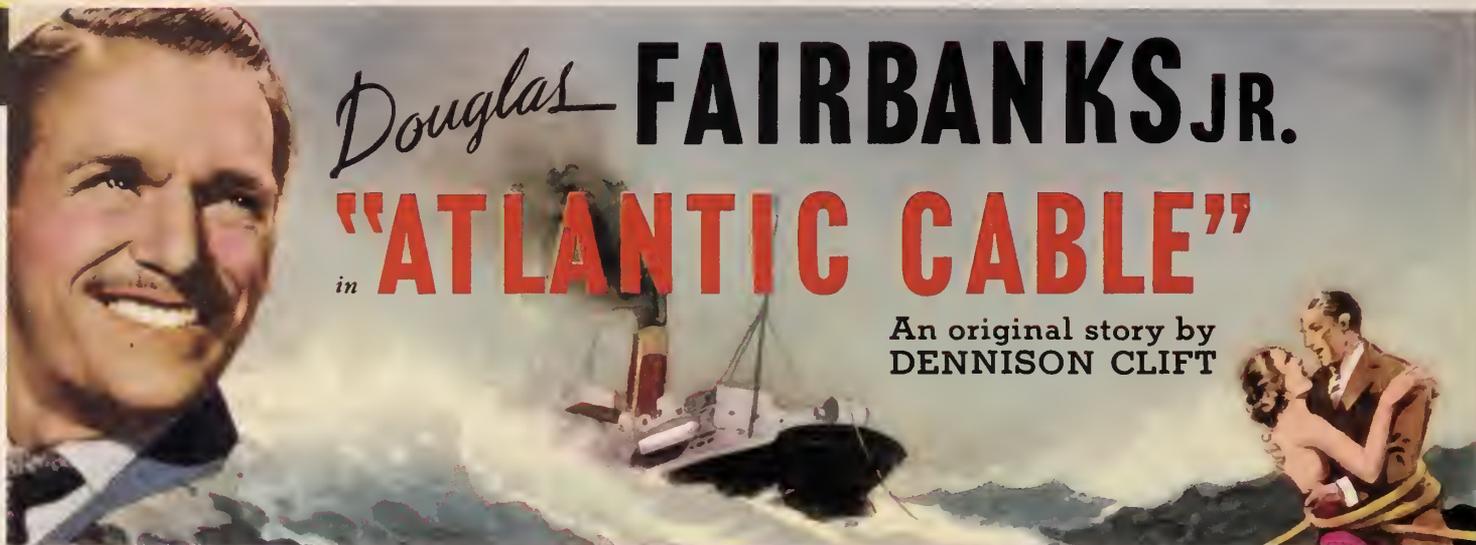
Produced & Directed by **AL RAY**

MORE THAN EVER IT WILL BE

3 FAMOUS PRODUCTIONS

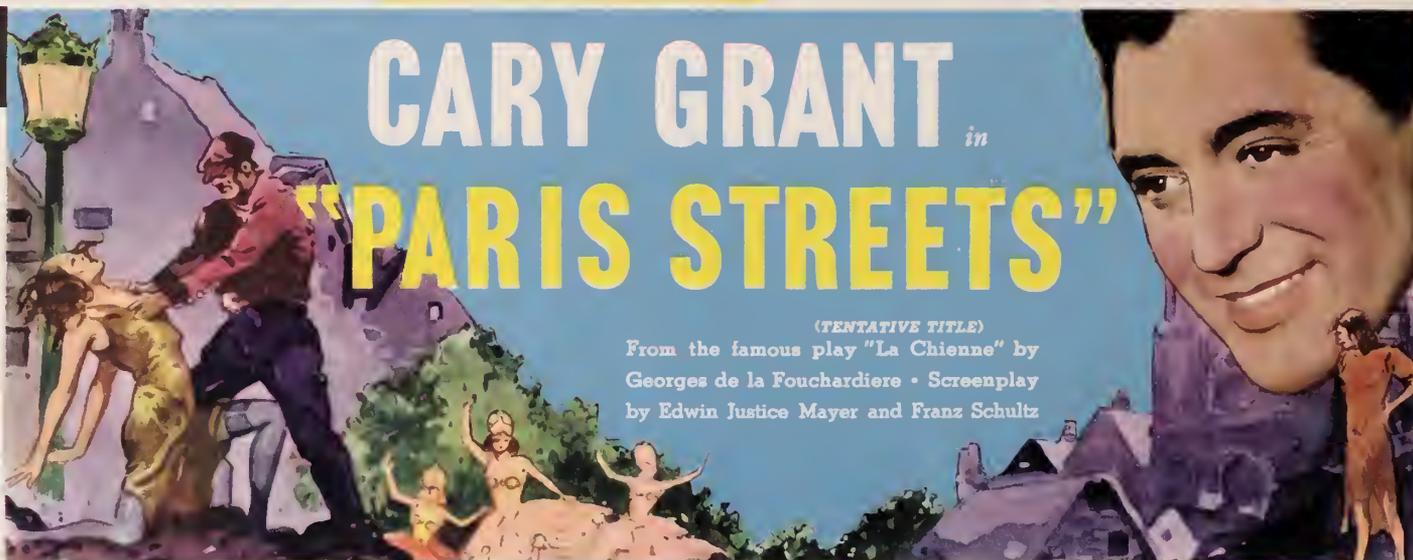
A new producing organization of major importance, headed by HARRY EDINGTON

1



Douglas **FAIRBANKS JR.**
in **"ATLANTIC CABLE"**
An original story by DENNISON CLIFT

2



CARY GRANT in
"PARIS STREETS"
(TENTATIVE TITLE)
From the famous play "La Chienne" by Georges de la Fouchardiere • Screenplay by Edwin Justice Mayer and Franz Schultz

3

"SOUTH OF THE AMAZON"

An original story and screen play by Frances Marion
Cast with Stars of the First Magnitude!



UNIVERSAL in 1939-1940!

SERIAL POWER!

... A QUARTETTE OF MONEY-MAKING, CROWD-PULLING CHAPTER-PLAYS

Produced by the King of Serial Producers—HENRY MacRAE

"THE OREGON TRAIL"

15 Thrill-Packed Episodes of Pioneer Days—with John Mack Brown

"THE PHANTOM CREEPS"

Starring BELA LUGOSI in 12 Episodes of Fantastic Action

"THE GREEN HORNET"

in 13 Episodes. Universal scoops the field with this radio sensation

"BUCK ROGERS Conquering the Universe"

12 Breath-taking Episodes with Larry Crabbe

HERE ARE 52 WEEKS OF BOX OFFICE INSURANCE!

2 RE-ISSUES: *The Greatest Combination Show of the Season!*
"MY MAN GODFREY" • "THE OLD DARK HOUSE"

Presenting an Unprecedented Array of Big Star Names:—

POWELL • LOMBARD • DOUGLAS • LAUGHTON • KARLOFF • AUER • PATRICK • BRADY • MASSEY

13 COLOR CARTOONS

Another step forward in Universal Short Subject Supremacy...the added wallop of glowing color to America's favorite program novelty... produced by WALTER LANTZ

13 TWO REEL MUSICALS

To Be Produced at Universal City where the huge production facilities will guarantee the utmost in life, sparkle and novelty for the series. The cast will be studded with top-notch entertainment names.

15 GOING PLACES 1 REEL

A favorite with Universal exhibitors for many years...bringing to theatre patronage the far places of the world... picture stories finely photographed by foot loose cameramen who rove the Seven Seas.

Commentary by the ace-voice of radio—**GRAHAM McNAMEE**

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Commentary by **GRAHAM McNAMEE**

NEWS REELS

The Flowers That Bloom in the Spring
 A Wandering Minstrel, I
 Three Little Maids From School
 Willow, Tit-Willow
 For He's Going to Marry Yum Yum
 Behold the Lord High Executioner



GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S

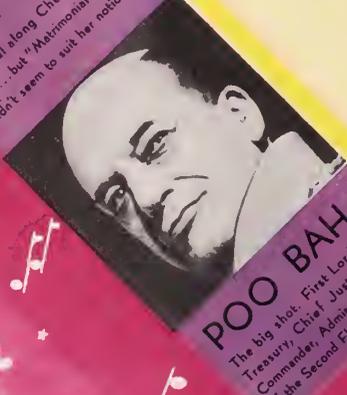
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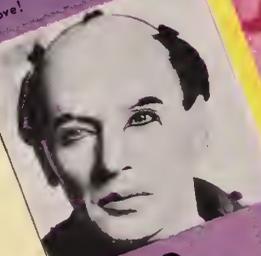
YUM YUM
 No. 1 gal along Cherry Blossom alley... but "Matrimonial devotions didn't seem to suit her notions!"



POO BAH
 The big shock. First Lord of the Treasury, Chief Justice, Chief Commander, Admiral and Groom of the Second Floor Rear!



NANKI POO
 A wandering minstrel he. Sentenced to lose his head over a girl... but not till he had 30 days to love!



KOKO
 Lord High Executioner! But he couldn't chop anyone's head off until he had chopped his own off!

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JEAN COLIN · MARTYN GREEN
SYDNEY GRANVILLE · JOHN BARCLAY
 the **D'O'OLY CARTE CHORUS**
 Recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra
 Adapted, Conducted and Produced by **GEOFFREY TOYE** · Directed by **VICTOR SCHERTZINGER**

WALTER WINCHELL
 says:
"SUPREMACY!"

DANTON WALKER
 says:
"WILL CREATE A SENSATION!"

DOROTHY KILGALLEN
 says:
"Cutest thing in Technicolor since 'Snow White!'"



"Susannah of the Mounties" Fine Shirley

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Producer Kenneth Macgowan
 Director William A. Seiter
 Screenplay Robert Ellis, Helen Logan
 Story Fidel La Barba, Walter Ferris
 Based on book by Muriel Denison
 Star Shirley Temple
 Featured: Randolph Scott, Margaret Lockwood,
 Martin Good Rider, J. Farrell MacDonald,
 Maurice Moscovich, Moroni Olsen, Victor
 Jory, Lester Matthews, Leyland Hodgson,
 Herbert Evans, Jack Luden, Charles Irwin,
 John Sutton.
 Photographer Arthur Miller
 Musical Director Louis Silvers
 Film Editor Robert Bischoff
 Time 73 minutes

This could well be called an edition of "Union Pacific" aimed at the juvenile and parental followers of Shirley Temple. This time the railroad is the Canadian Pacific, the hero the red-coated mounties, the menace the Blackfeet tribe of Indians, and the romance the childish adoration of Shirley for broad-shouldered Randolph Scott.

All these elements add up in "Susannah of the Mounties" to pretty good hokum, certain to give satisfaction to Shirley's fans, and an especially good bet for Canada and the British market. (Timely now, for England, following the cross-continent visit of their Majesties to Canada.)

In Director William Seiter's hands all possible audience appeal is extracted from the

CURRENT REVIEWS		
2 Over 100%.....2 Okay		
		We Est.
1. Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	115
2. Daughters Courageous	WAR	110
3. Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	90
4. Timber Stampede	RKO	80

story, and the talents of little Shirley. Seiter plays his individual moments for fine comedy and charm, his more spectacular scenes for effective smash, and keeps the whole running at a safe hokey speed.

Shirley is her usual capable self, with opportunities for a few dramatic moments, a spot of dancing, plenty of comedy, and consistent lovable charm. Her foils are the romantic guardian, Randolph Scott, a garrulous Irish mountie, J. Farrell MacDonald, and a youngster who is really from the Blackfeet, Martin Good Rider.

The yarn tells of the point in the building of the Canadian Pacific when the malcontents among the Indians took to violence to halt the approach of the Iron Horse. An Indian attack crphans Shirley, the Mounties become her collective foster-parents. Treachery lurks in the wind and events work around to the imminent death of Scott at the stake, with Shirley riding to the rescue. A few large scale battle scenes enhance the production.

It is all a bit naive, but correctly gauged for

its audiences. In addition to the players mentioned already, able support is given by Maurice Moscovich as an Indian chief, Victor Jory as the Indian menace, Moroni Olsen as head of the Mountie Station, and Margaret Lockwood in the slender romantic episode with Randolph Scott. Kenneth Macgowan handled the production reins.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: You know your spots and days for Shirley. This will stand up with her standard offerings, without having the Technicolor advantage of "Little Princess." Previewed June 16th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Shirley Temple's film fortunes will rest safely enough in her latest vehicle, 'Susannah of the Mounties.' The picture has brightness, enough moments of tenderness and sufficient novelty to hold close interest, though it may suffer from comparison with some of her better productions."

VARIETY: "More than any of her preceding vehicles this Shirley Temple starrer is addressed primarily to the juveniles, not the adults."

"Good Girls Go to Paris" Top Comedy

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer William Perlberg
 Director Al Hall
 Screenplay Gladys Lehman, Ken Englund
 Original Story: Lenore Coffee, William Joyce Cowen.
 Stars Melvyn Douglas, Joan Blondell
 Featured: Walter Connolly, Joan Perry, Isabel Jeans, Alan Curtis, Stanley Brown, Alexander D'Arcy, Richard Fiske, Robert Sterling, Beatrice Curtis, Howard Hickman, Leon Belasco, Barlow Borland, Clarence Kolb, Henry Hunter.
 Photographer Henry Froelich
 Film Editor Al Clark
 Time 75 minutes

Columbia has had luck with these fast-paced, slightly screwy comedies—such as "Theodora Goes Wild,"—and continues to click with "Good Girls Go To Paris." In many ways it ranks as the surprise comedy of recent preview weeks.

A refreshingly different story basis, neatly scripted, and directed for verve and spirit by Al Hall, combine to do the trick. Then, there

is Joan Blondell, in one of the best zippy characterizations of her career, along with the safe presence of Melvyn Douglas. Not to forget the comedy war-horse, Walter Connolly, along with an able supporting cast.

Joan is seen as a jittery tea room waitress, whose one ambition is to get a trip to Paris, and sole idea of the way to get there is to rope some playboy into an offer of marriage, and then induce his parent to pay for the trip in order to get rid of a possible breach of promise suit. She hasn't any particular luck, and a lot of trouble, until she lands in the madhouse home of Walter Connolly, a millionaire, and in a series of laugh-producing situations maneuvers things until she is deluged with offers of marriage. Melvyn Douglas is an exchange professor from England, here for a year at an American college, and the final lucky suitor. The action steps high throughout, with Joan a combination Miss Fix-It and a dash or two of Miss Trouble.

Excellent in the support are Alan Curtis, Joan Perry, and Isabel Jeans, with good per-

formances also turned in by Clarence Kolb, Henry Hunter, Alexander D'Arcy, and Howard Hickman.

Production is on a class scale. Producer William Perlberg can join with Director Al Hall in taking bows on providing one of the best light offerings theaters will have available this summer. And they will need plenty.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Not heavy on marquee value, but fine audience stuff. They will enjoy it. Safe for any day of the week. Previewed June 16th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "One of the surprise comedy hits of the season jumped out at the Pantages last night. Much on the same order of 'Theodora Goes Wild,' Columbia and Bill Perlberg have an hilarious, rollicking farce which should be a shot in the arm to box offices in a summer not too promising with comedy fare."

VARIETY: "Story material, direction, and performances combine to make 'Good Girls Go To Paris' swell hot weather entertainment."

"Daughters Courageous" Will Get Money

WARNERS-FIRST NATIONAL

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
 Producer Henry Blanke
 Director Michael Curtiz
 Original Screenplay: Julius J. Epstein, Phillip G. Epstein.
 Suggested by the play by Dorothy Bennett and Irving White.
 Featured: John Garfield, Claude Rains, Jeffrey Lynn, Fay Bainter, Donald Crisp, May Robson, Frank McHugh, Dick Foran, George Humbert, Berton Churchill, Priscilla Lane, Rosemary Lane, Lola Lane, Gale Page.
 Photographer James Wong Howe
 Music Max Steiner
 Film Editor Ralph Dawson
 Time 100 minutes

"Daughters Courageous" may not measure up to the spontaneous inspiration that created "Four Daughters," and this the critics will probably point out. But as far as audiences are concerned, the picture can be taken with pleasure.

It is pretty difficult to figure any picture going wrong that gives you four personable, ebullient daughters of lovable age, and then adds such troupers as Claude Rains, Fay Bainter, Donald Crisp and May Robson. All this is topped by a richly human screenplay that in clever situations and dialogue sugar-coats the fact that the plot itself is a wanderer, and

the characters frequently vaguely irritating in their motivation or lack of it.

The story is not strictly a sequel to "Four Daughters," but rather a presentation of most of the same successful characters in the same pleasant surroundings. On the evening that the mother of the charming brood, Fay Bainter, tells them that she is to marry staid Donald Crisp, who has been a faithful family friend and whose wealth assures security, Claude Rains, husband with the wanderlust, returns after many years absence.

His part is intended to be that of the "lovable rogue." Rains' skill makes it seem real to the point of possibly building up too much sympathy. Counter-plot element to the problem presented by his return, is presented by a budding romance between Priscilla Lane and John Garfield. The latter, son of a Portuguese fisherman, is an engaging near-scoundrel, a younger edition of Rains.

With such a story background there is naturally little opportunity for action, which bares the picture's one possible weakness—it is frequently in danger of talking itself to ennui. Particularly when Garfield is allowed to spout lines that sound like a college commencement day oration—sprinkled with quotations from Shakespeare, and gems of poetic thought. The result is that Garfield plays Garfield—and that is welcome enough—but never the son of a Portuguese fisherman.

Aside from the Garfield characterization, the script is an ace-high job, exceptionally so. Mike Curtiz' accepted skill is clearly evident in the direction, particularly in his adroit choice of angles and movement of camera that manage to give the plot a pseudo-sense of motion.

It seems useless to select players for mention when you survey the cast listed above. Fay Bainter's commanding ability surmounts a vague characterization; all the girls are good, with Priscilla Lane getting the best opportunity and making the most of it; Donald Crisp is his assured self; Claude Rains, we have mentioned. And you need not be told that grand old May Robson steals her scenes.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A safe follow-up for "Four Daughters." Some will like it better, others will disagree, but the argument will help. A bit spicy at spots in the dialogue, but not offensively so. Previewed June 14th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Measuring strongly as major product, 'Daughters Courageous' will undoubtedly attract additional notice for its adroit suggestion of a debatable subject."

VARIETY: "A fresh and captivating heart interest tale cleverly laced with comedy, rich in character and material and brilliantly executed in every phase 'Daughters Courageous' is top flight entertainment."

"Timber Stampede" Standard O'Brien

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
 Producer Bert Gilroy
 Director David Howard
 Screenplay Morton Grant
 Stories by Bernard McConville, Paul Franklin
 Star George O'Brien
 Featured: Chill Wills, Marjorie Reynolds, Morgan Wallace, Robert Fiske, Guy Usher, Earl Dwire, Frank Hagney, Bob Burns, Monte Montague, Bud Osborne.
 Photographer Harry Wild
 Film Editor Frederic Knudtson
 Time 59 minutes

"Timber Stampede" will rank as standard George O'Brien fare, with perhaps a shade of reason for ranking it above average due to a story that makes sense, and the capable directorial hand of David Howard.

Plot is formula in outline, but well set off in treatment. Those cattlemen who are eter-

nally facing rustlers and big business menaces this time find themselves endangered by connivance between the railroads and timber thieves. Their champion of defense is George O'Brien, rancher by blood, small town editor by vocation.

Take that premise, then add a dozen or more bang-bangs, and then some assorted rides, and you have the yarn. As a top layer put on an icing consisting of a grand shoot-it-out climax.

Howard's direction, and the screenplay by Morton Grant, keep it moving at pell mell speed, with neat handling of the build-up for suspense. Original yarn by Bernard McConville and Paul Franklin at least gives us a welcome substitute for the ubiquitous cattle rustlers of most Westerns.

Howard has also handled his support players to advantage. This Chill Wills is coming along nicely as comedy relief and will soon be taking his place alongside George Hayes in

popularity with the Western addicts. The supporting players are standard able troupers familiar to action audiences.

Producer Bert Gilroy, working in the Lee Marcus unit at Radio, is hitting a consistent standard.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Where they like George O'Brien they'll accept this as one of his best. Previewed June 16th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "RKO has a winner in the western division in its latest George O'Brien oater, 'Timber Stampede' . . . they have turned out a surefire sagebrusher packed with plenty of action and thrills."

VARIETY: "Cut to order for George O'Brien, 'Timber Stampede' gives film cowpoke plenty of opportunity to ride, shoot and fight against scenic background and takes its places as one of the better in this western series turned out at RKO."

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HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

LONG RUN ENGAGEMENT
... If you think our studio Little Theaters are just quick one night gasps, consider the fact that the 20th Century-Fox Little Theater group is currently in a week's engagement at the Western Avenue studios . . . The play is "Road to Blue Mountain," with direction by George Renavant and George Santers . . . Claire Parrish authored.

* * *

SAD NEWS . . . Local picture big shots and near shots are not clicking with winners at the Hollywood Park track as they would like to, or as many grass eating little shots of the turf are . . . Which would not cause a real turf man to squirm, but which is bringing wails of anguish from the boys who have been taught that they are genius personified . . . All they need in the picture business was either to be born in the right family, become an agent and acquire a high priced star or two, or—if they were producers, spend a million—and that spelled Genius . . . With the capital G . . . They can't understand why these dratted dumb horses can't be impressed by their impressiveness.

* * *

SUCKER BAIT . . . Incidentally, you would be surprised at some of the kindergarten sucker eating acts that are being put over on some of our "intellectuals" in connection with California racing . . . Acts that we boys on the Morning Telegraph twenty years ago

used to write up as antiques . . . And Variety would advise the shillers: "Change your act." . . . Out of the mothballs they have come, and some of our best 'brains' who are ready at the drop of the hat to tell how the world should be run are falling like babies for a molasses tipped nursery bottle . . . And how . . . Some national magazine will probably get wise and dig into the story before long . . . It's good.

* * *

SHOPPING AROUND . . . Among the interesting items of the week . . . The return of Phil Ohman to public consumption with his appearance at the Victor Hugo . . . There never was a more popular personality for this town in the days when the Trocadero was at the tops . . . Before the deluge . . . Ohman not only entertains, but they LIKE his modest personality . . . Not so modest, though, if you weigh the value of that smile . . . Interesting to see John Farrow at dinner with the publicised Gloria Vanderbilt at the Beverly Brown Derby . . . Incidentally, the director tells us that trip to Honolulu was prematurely announced in the papers . . . Maureen is only recently at home with the baby, and Papa and Mamma are not in any hurry to take chances on trips . . . But the trip will come, at the right time . . . And we'll bet John Farrow will revel in opportunities for study at Molokai, the leper colony which is the back-

ground for his honor winning book on "Father Damien"—and which Radio has been wise enough to give him as an assignment.

FIELD MEN

(Continued from Page 6)

if a gross contract called for \$3000 last year, it would be \$3600 this year—regardless of cancellations. . . . Yamins then went to work and gave Sears all the chance in the world to change his flat statement, but no dice.

Rodgers Still on His Feet Scrapping

Of course, by now, all exhibitors know that the Allied organization rejected the Trade Pact when the momentous concluding moments of the convention came . . . But before the Board of Directors resolution banning the code was submitted to the meeting, Rodgers asked for the floor and was granted the privilege . . . He challenged the right of the Allied leaders to attack the sincerity of the producers and stated in effect that the producers' committee would no longer attempt negotiations with the Allied association . . . A fighting speech, but the tough part about it is that no industry trade practice code will ever be put in practice until every exhibitor in the United States is satisfied with it, regardless of affiliation . . . That's one of the facts of current Washington life,

where the distributors are having troubles enough.

Among Those Present And Things to Come

H. M. Ritchey, formerly of Allied in Michigan, was in a peculiar spot as the good will ambassador of RKO because of his many friends on the other side of the fence, but he made a good impression, particularly because so many of the boys said that Ned Depinet is playing real ball on needed adjustments . . . Jack Kirsch, young and hustling leader of Allied in Chicago, stole his day at the show with his maiden speech at a national convention . . . Watch this comer in exhibitor organization affairs . . . Abraham Meyers, Allied counsel, explained the organization's position on the Neely bill . . . Ed Kukendall, chief of MPTOA was in a real spot with this audience . . . Harry Brandt, of New York's ITOA extended an invitation to all and sundry to make his group's offices their World's Fair headquarters . . . Sid Samuelson, of New Jersey, hit the big spot of the convention with a rebuttal speech to all the distributor representatives had said which is too long to digest here, and too important to give you in a flash . . . We hope to have a stenographic copy in time for next week's issue . . . Can't close without a word for the big time way in which Al Steffes played host—it was tops in system and quality.

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Yours very truly,
Sidney Meyer

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ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

✓ Jesse James	FOX	182
✓ Gunner, Din	RKO	180
✓ Dodge City	WAR	158
✓ Union Pacific	PAR	151
✓ Kentucky	FOX	139
✓ Idolot's Delight	MGM	136
✓ Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	134
✓ Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	132
✓ Statecoach	UA	128
✓ Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
✓ Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
✓ Only Angels Have Wings	COL	122
✓ You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
✓ Juarez	WAR	120
✓ Love Affair	RKO	120
✓ Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	118
✓ Made For Each Other	UA	115
✓ Midnight	PAR	115
✓ Little Princess	FOX	112
✓ East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
✓ Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
✓ Invitation To Happiness	PAR	108
✓ Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	106
✓ Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
✓ Wuthering Heights	UA	105
✓ Honolulu	MGM	105
✓ Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	103
✓ Man of Conquest	REP	102
✓ Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
✓ Zaza	PAR	98
✓ Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	97
✓ Captain Fury	UA	97
✓ Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
✓ Tallspin	FOX	94
✓ Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
✓ The Mikado	UNIV	93
✓ St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
✓ Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
✓ Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
✓ Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

✓ Pymalion	MGM	131
✓ Dark Victory	WAR	131
✓ The Hardys Ride High	MGM	127
✓ Huckleberry Finn	MGM	123
✓ The Beachcomber	PAR	113
✓ Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
✓ It's A Wonderful World	MGM	98
✓ Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
✓ Lucky Night	MGM	96
✓ Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	94
✓ They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
✓ Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
✓ Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	87
✓ Sergeant Madden	MGM	86
✓ East and Loose	MGM	86
✓ Of The Record	WAR	85
✓ Four Gals in White	MGM	84
✓ Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	84
✓ Im From Missouri	PAR	82
✓ Gale Society	PAR	81
✓ King of the Underworld	WAR	81
✓ The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	80
✓ The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
✓ On Trial	WAR	80
✓ Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
✓ Prison Without Bars	UA	79
✓ The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
✓ Never Say Die	PAR	78
✓ The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
✓ Let Us Live	COL	77
✓ Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
✓ Back Door To Heaven	PAR	75
✓ The Gorilla	FOX	74
✓ Lady and the Mob	COL	74
✓ Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
✓ The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	74
✓ King of the Turf	UA	72
✓ Bridal Suite	MGM	71
✓ Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	70
✓ Hotel Imperial	PAR	70
✓ One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
✓ Boy Friend	FOX	69
✓ Stolen Life	PAR	69
✓ Zenobia	UA	67
✓ Spirit of Culver	UNIV	65
✓ Women in the Wind	WAR	64
✓ The Flying Irishman	RKO	63
✓ Smiling Alone	FOX	63
✓ Climbing High	GB	60

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

✓ Devil's Island	WAR	78
✓ Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
✓ Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
✓ Family Next Door	UNIV	76
✓ Inside Story	FOX	75
✓ Pacific Lifer	RKO	75
✓ Unmarried	PAR	75
✓ You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	74
✓ King of Chinatown	PAR	74
✓ Undercover Doctor	PAR	74
✓ Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
✓ The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	73
✓ Boy Slaves	PAR	73
✓ Disbarred	PAR	73
✓ Society Lawyer	MGM	72
✓ Big Town Ozar	UNIV	72
✓ Chasing Danger	FOX	72
✓ Persons in Hiding	PAR	72
✓ Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
✓ Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
✓ Ex-Champ	UNIV	72
✓ Some Like It Hot	PAR	71
✓ Nancy Drew Reporter	PAR	71
✓ Strange Faces	UNIV	71
✓ Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	71
✓ Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
✓ Romance of the Redwoods	COL	70
✓ For Love or Money	UNIV	70
✓ On Trial	WAR	70
✓ Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	70
✓ Winner Take All	FOX	70
✓ Secret Service of the Air	WAR	70
✓ Ambush	PAR	70
✓ They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
✓ Blind Alley	COL	70
✓ Sorority House	RKO	69
✓ The Kid From Texas	MGM	69
✓ Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
✓ Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
✓ Code of the Streets	UNIV	68
✓ Torchy For Mayor	WAR	68
✓ Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
✓ Within The Law	MGM	68
✓ Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
✓ Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
✓ Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX	68
✓ Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
✓ Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
✓ Sudden Money	PAR	66
✓ Fixer Duesan	RKO	65
✓ Boy Trouble	PAR	65
✓ Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
✓ Missive Daughters	COL	64
✓ Exile Express	UNIV	64
✓ Risky Business	MGM	64
✓ Tell No Tales	WAR	64
✓ Sweepstake Winner	WAR	64
✓ 6,000 Enemies	MGM	64
✓ Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	61

D. BELOW \$100,000

✓ Trapped in the Sky	COL	75
✓ Homicide Bureau	GN	74
✓ The Sunset Murder Case	GN	74
✓ Whispering Enemies	COL	75
✓ Streets of New York	COL	71
✓ Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
✓ Woman Doctor	REP	71
✓ North of Shanhai	COL	71
✓ Pride of the Navy	REP	70
✓ Tough Kid	MONO	70
✓ Mysterious Miss X	REP	69
✓ I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
✓ Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
✓ Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
✓ Convict's Code	MONO	69
✓ I Was A Convict	REP	68
✓ Navy Secrets	MONO	68
✓ Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
✓ The Zero Hour	REP	67
✓ My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
✓ Long Shot	GN	67
✓ Forced Passport	REP	66
✓ First Offenders	REP	66
✓ Wolf Call	MONO	66
✓ Mystery Plane	MONO	64
✓ My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
✓ Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64
✓ Panama Lady	RKO	63
✓ Street of Missing Men	REP	63
✓ Star Reporter	MONO	63
✓ Undercover Agent	MONO	63
✓ Boy's Reformatory	MONO	61

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

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1939 JUN 10 AM 5 53

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HARRY NICHOLS
DIGEST FIELD REPRESENTATIVE
C/O WESTERN UNION
DAVENPORT IOWA

HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE ATTEND CONVENTION MINNEAPOLIS STARTING
JUNE TWELFTH. EVERY EXHIBITOR ATTENDING THIS CONVENTION
NEEDS THE DIGEST BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IT TO BE ONE OF THE FINEST
PUBLICATIONS OF ITS KIND BEING PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES
TODAY. DONT HESITATE TO SHOW THIS TO ANYONE BECAUSE WE
FEEL WE ARE QUALIFIED TO JUDGE THE MERITS OF YOUR PAPER WHICH
IS BEING PUBLISHED IN HEART OF INDUSTRY. REGARDS

R H POOLE GENERAL MANAGER
INDEPENDENT THEATER OWNERS OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA

Is It Any Wonder? -----

THE DIGEST

Is the Fastest Growing Paper in the Industry

The DIGEST

Volume 9. No. 19.

HOLLYWOOD CALIFORNIA, JUNE 30, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

LATEST SHIRLEY TEMPLE, "SUSANNAH" TOPS WEEK'S BUSINESS

SEE PAGE 5

FIELD INVESTIGATORS TELL WHAT EXHIBS ARE THINKING

SEE PAGE 6

"SECOND FIDDLE" AND "BACHELOR MOTHER" WEEK'S PREVIEW HITS

SEE PAGES 7, 10

**The
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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

★ *The*
"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY-FOX** Wins With
"SUSANNAH OF THE MOUNTIES"—110%



Vice President in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Producer
KENNETH MACGOWAN



Director
WILLIAM A. SEITER



SHIRLEY TEMPLE



RANDOLPH SCOTT



MARGARET LOCKWOOD

Screenplay
ROBERT ELLIS - HELEN LOGAN

Story
FIDEL LA BARBA - WALTER FERRIS

Based on Book by
MURIEL DENISON

Photography
ARTHUR MILLER

Film Editor
ROBERT BISCHOFF

THE DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

SHOWMANSHIP!

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

A kind friend, with a position in the industry to augment his friendship, tells us that we are not helping the picture business by stating the fact that box offices are anaemic.

As an old-timer with gray in his hair we agree with him. But we have the unfortunate faculty of telling the truth, and both a typewriter and a linotype machine that will put the truth into print.

So—it is with a burst of enthusiasm that we find something this week to cheer about.

While most of the producers are sitting against the wailing walls, trying to figure how their sales departments will have any pictures to sell, or how they will be able to stall for a couple of months until conditions get healthier . . .

ONE FELLOW STEPPED OUT WITH SOMETHING.

* * *

Darryl Zanuck is the name. You may have heard it. But whether or not, give Zanuck and his publicity aides credit for being fellows who can take present business conditions on the chin and then do something about the situation.

They did it.

Last week's international broadcast sponsoring "Second Fiddle" may have been just another radio broadcast to many Hollywood minds—bound by Vine Street and the dark limits of Sunset Boulevard—but to those who know their picture business it meant a lot more.

* * *

First of all, it was a grand publicity stunt, in the sense that veterans use those words.

But more important, it was a great industry stunt at a time when too many of us are flopping over and playing dead dog.

Twentieth Century - Fox will benefit by it. There will be another period when the static announcement from Wall Street will say, "Dividends Paid."

But most of all will the industry benefit by having at

least one individual who must have said, "Well, if business is bad, we MUST do something about it."

And he did it.

* * *

From Norway, New York, and Hollywood, the airplanes talked. They talked with dialogue, and with song, they spoke a cheerful message that there are still picture people making ENTERTAINMENT.

They didn't even whisper any "social conscious" stuff.

And the approach conceived by Twentieth Century-Fox is going to do box offices a lot of good, not only for "Second Fiddle," the immediate object of the broadcast, but for other Fox product and ALL PRODUCT that is aimed at entertainment.

In other words, it will help box offices—no matter what product is being sold.

Because it was about time that someone told American ticket buyers that the industry had not been sold down the river to the "social conscious" boys.

Too many of those potential ticket buyers have been staying away from box offices.

Maybe they are preparing to relax in the evening with a game of bowling, or even a free night at the radio. Maybe they got a bit tired of Hollywood telling them that they should all be Americans.

Maybe they think they are Americans already.

Maybe they think they are more American than many of the prevailing inhabitants of Hollywood.

Isn't it barely possible that our present box office slump

may be ascribed in part to the fact that we listened to the Pied Pipers and suddenly decided we were great big philosophers who had a mission to teach the people?

Is it at all possible that we started selling to MINORITIES — to the accompaniment of their huzzas — and have suddenly discovered the cash paying majority can find other means of ENTERTAINMENT?

1. United Artists	8	Releases	95
2. 20th Century-Fox	29	Releases	93
3. MGM	26	Releases	93
4. Warner Brothers	23	Releases	87
5. Universal	17	Releases	83
6. Paramount	26	Releases	82
7. RKO	16	Releases	82
8. Columbia	15	Releases	74
9. Republic	11	Releases	70
10. Monogram	11	Releases	67
11. Grand National	3	Releases	66
12. Gaumont-British	1	Release	60

HIGHLIGHTER BRISTLES WITH LIVE ITEMS AND ADDS HIS OWN OFF-HAND OPINIONS

Lots of interesting odds and ends during the week, though no one particular item may have been epochal. . . . Barney Balaban made the announcement in New York that the outlook for Paramount indicates a satisfactory dividend in the near future. . . . Just further evidence of the Balaban, Freeman, Le Baron cooperation—backed by improved morale—that is making things hum over at the Paramount lot. . . . Hollywood Reporter tells about a banner Warner year, but no one says anything about dividends. . . . And then, last week was also option-pickup-time. . . . A young man trying to get along, named James Roosevelt, had his option picked up by Sam Goldwyn, and is assured of being able to avoid WPA for another six months. . . . More interesting to us was Darryl Zanuck's signing of a new two year deal with Harry Joe Brown as an associate producer. . . . Brown is our idea of a perfect complement to Zanuck himself. . . . Both have their feet on the ground, both think in terms of showmanship and down to earth picture audiences. . . . We will cash that bet by telling you to watch for Brown's two current productions: "The Rains Came," and "Hollywood Cavalcade." . . . And while we are talking of good news, let's relay the fact that our New York operatives tell us the RKO convention was a really enthusiastic affair. . . . Those boys have had to take it on the chin at times in recent years because of higher-up troubles, but it looks as though George Schaefer has given them a road map.

Selling Troubles Continue To Bubble-Bubble

Sid Kent, back from South America, serves notice on Allied that he will consider no modifications of the Trade Practice Code. . . . Which means that exhibitors will find themselves signing deals in any way, shape or form that they can, because exhibitors need pictures. . . . But which also means just a couple of dozen additional headaches when Congress convenes next year. . . . Because sores will fester. . . . And Allied is politically organized, with effective methods of propaganda and political pressure. . . . Which reminds us that on another page of this issue we have a suggestion from a veteran Nebraska exhibitor that a few right-meaning fellows sitting around a table could come out with a Code on one typewritten page, shorn of legal acrobatics, and leaving all concerned very happy. . . . Read his thoughts. . . . They are on page 6.

Swinging Around The Studio Corners

A pretty big week at Twentieth Century-Fox last seven days, with Herman Wobber in town, and with Morton Levy and Roger Ferri on hand from New York to mull over Fall plans. . . . Not to mention lengthy long distance calls between the quartette of Sidney Kent, Wobber, Zanuck and Bill Goetz. . . .

9 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. <i>The Little Princess</i>	FOX	112	116
2. <i>Calling Dr. Kildare</i>	MGM	84	88
3. <i>The Gorilla</i>	FOX	74	77
4. <i>Bridal Suite</i>	MGM	71	75
5. <i>Some Like It Hot</i>	PAR	71	73
6. <i>Boy Friend</i>	FOX	69	73
7. <i>Sorority House</i>	RKO	69	71
8. <i>Wolf Call</i>	MONO	66	68
9. <i>Missing Daughters</i>	COL	64	67

Thanks to Walter Green, we had an opportunity to hear the new Vocoder, latest Erpi miracle, last week. . . . Daily Variety summed it all up with a heading that said, "New Device Can Make Canary Sing Bass." . . . Thank the shades of Noah Webster for Variety. . . . Just what purpose the remarkable invention will serve in practical picture work no one knows just now, but at a guess we can say it would have saved the careers of John Gilbert, and prolonged that of Doug Fairbanks, Sr. . . . Which was not only important to their careers, but equally important when considering their book value as assets to their parent companies. . . . They tell us that Sam Zimbalist, who has one of the finest black ink records in the group of MGM producers, has a couple of hot ones coming up in "Lady of the Tropics" and "These Glamour Girls." . . . His latest was "Tarzan Finds a Son." . . . And what a surprise that one was to box offices. . . . Just when we are all worrying about what is wrong with ticket sellers it takes a Tarzan to come along and shake the dust off the wickets.

Sound The Trumpets! 'Gone With The Wind' Is Set!

Believe it or just snort, but the Selznick studio has announced that it is definitely aiming at a November 1st release date for "Gone With The Wind." . . . It seems a shame that box offices must wait that long for what will undoubtedly be the money sensation of the current decade. . . . With all its headaches and grief in the production stages, there has never been a picture property with the build up in advance that this one has had. . . . Just recall—that "Birth of a Nation" had to sneak up on us, when it opened at the old New Amsterdam Theater in New York, that "The Covered Wagon," "Beau Geste," were faltering gestures on Paramount's part when they were in script

9 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. <i>Idiot's Delight</i>	MGM	136	133
2. <i>Dark Victory</i>	WAR	131	128
3. <i>Huckleberry Finn</i>	MGM	123	116
4. <i>It's a Wonderful World</i>	MGM	98	96
5. <i>The Mikado</i>	UNIV	93	90
6. <i>I'm From Missouri</i>	PAR	82	79
7. <i>The Kid From Kokomo</i>	WAR	80	78
8. <i>Unmarried</i>	PAR	75	73
9. <i>King of Chinatown</i>	PAR	74	72

stage, and went out and sold themselves. . . . And recall that a lot of folks told Walt Disney he was crazy making a feature length cartoon titled, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." . . . This time the procedure is reversed. . . . All the world is WAITING to see a picture. . . . Without knowing, or caring, about the quality of the picture. . . . That's a break for any budget.

And Still We Ramble Around The Studios

We see a sign that MGM has not forgotten showmanship. . . . That news that it has finally been decided to put "Northwest Passage" in Technicolor. . . . With box offices the way they are now, with stars not the automatic alarm clocks they used to be, we are surprised that more of the big shots do not decide to copper their bets with the use of Technicolor. . . . Where it is appropriate. . . . Where it has value. . . . Every now and then we do hear of a company announcement for some picture in Technicolor that we think is a mistake. . . . Because it is apt to be a subject that does not lend itself to the full showmanship values of the medium. . . . J. Cheever Cowdin, leaving for Europe, tells the good news about Universal's outlook for the coming year. . . . About a year from now the writers will be discovering this silent workman, Nate Blumberg, who is doing these quiet miracles in that Universal organization. . . . He isn't wasting any time crashing the headlines, but he is sawing wood.

Lots of Other Items of Interest Around

We were interested in the rumors that Al Lewin might close a producer contract with Universal any one of these days. . . . First of all, because we have a lot of faith in the idea that this Lewin chap has plenty on the ball; second, because it is just another indication of the big league target at which Universal is aiming this year. . . . Gosh, exhibitors will all be able to get back to old line methods of thought as soon as some of these companies that have had their internal financial problems get hitting up there with the sluggers. . . . If anyone asks us, maybe one of the things that happened to the picture business in the past year or so was too closely controlled domination. . . . But, perhaps that is a dangerous subject to touch.

After All Those Years— Sam Wood Moves

One of the news breaks of the industry that deserves bigger headlines than it received was the announcement that Sam Wood had left MGM and signed with Sam Goldwyn. . . . Apparently they will never catch that Sam person napping. . . . But that is aside from the point. . . . Which is: Sam Wood has been turning

(Continued on Page 5)

"SUSANNAH OF THE MOUNTIES" TOPS WEEK; WITH THE LATEST "TARZAN" GOING STRONG

FOX—2 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has two new releases this week. One a new Temple special and the second a better than average programmer.

Following little Miss Temple's big success, "The Little Princess," Shirley has changed the locale of her current release, "SUSANNAH OF THE MOUNTIES," from England to Canada in this story of the famed Northwest Mounted Police. Like previous Shirley Temple pictures this also has opened fairly well on its first runs at around 110% which indicates that the picture will hold up much stronger as Shirley has been top box office attraction in the nabes and subsequent runs for the past four or five years. There are also certain types of houses catering to Western action pictures where Shirley has not gone so well in the past, but with "SUSANNAH OF THE MOUNTIES" and all its action this one should prove an exceptional draw and pull a strong box office.

Supporting Miss Temple are Randolph Scott and Margaret Lockwood (of "The Lady Vanishes" fame) in the romantic leads. And others prominently featured are: J. Farrell MacDonald, Victor Jory, and Lester Matthews. Kenneth Macgowan produced and the reliable Bill Seiter directed.

Fox's second release this week, "IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU," 77%, is a much better than average programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit which will make a very satisfactory filler on the average double bill. Stuart Erwin and Gloria Stuart are co-starred and Raymond Walburn, June Gale, and Paul Hurst featured. David Hempstead supervised and Al Werker directed.

MGM—Also 2 New Releases

MGM's two new releases this week are both quite satisfactory at the box office. "TARZAN FINDS A SON," which is the third in the Johnny Weissmuller series and incidentally the first one released in almost two years, has opened up quite well at a 103% average. The picture has not been particularly strong on its key city first runs but in outlying districts it has really been pulling in the coin. If exhibitors will get behind this with a little added exploitation they can expect excellent results. While this one is aimed primarily at the children it still has a strong adult appeal with Tarzan Weissmuller and his mate, Maureen O'Sullivan, carrying on the romantic interest. Exhibitors who have run the two previous MGM "Tarzans" know where to spot this one and about what to expect at the box office.

Besides Tarzan and his mate, the supporting cast includes such prominent featured players as Ian Hunter, Henry Stephenson, Frieda Inescort, and Henry Wilcoxon. Sam Zimbalist produced and Dick Thorpe, who so capably handled the last "Tarzan" picture also directed this one. Cyril

Of The Seven New Releases In The Past Week Two Rated Over 100%, Two Came Through Okay, Three Were Very Weak

Hume wrote the screenplay from the famous Edgar Rice Burroughs "Tarzan" novels.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's second release this week, "MAISIE," is hardly an "A" attraction and yet it is much better than so-called "B" pictures. On its first booking "MAISIE" is averaging quite well—around 87%—which indicates that this one can even be booked as the top picture on the average double bill.

A couple of years ago RKO starred Ann Sothern in a series of comedy dramas that were very successful at the box office, but when her contract lapsed for some reason or other, no other producer signed her up. A few months ago Miss Sothern was again brought to the attention of the producers when she played the second lead in Tay Garnett's production, "TRADE WINDS," so MGM signed her up and co-starred her with Robert Young in "MAISIE" and the picture has been so well received both by the critics and at the box-office that MGM has now placed her under a long term contract, and she will soon be seen opposite Bob Montgomery in "BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY."

Supporting Miss Sothern and Mr. Young are Ruth Hussey, Ian Hunter and Cliff Edwards. "MAISIE" is definitely a word of mouth picture and exhibitors will do well by giving it full playing time.

J. Walter Ruben produced and Edwin L. Marin directed from Mary C. McCall, Jr.'s snappy screenplay.

UNIVERSAL—1 Release

Universal Pictures have a new release in "THE SUN NEVER SETS," referring of course to the British Empire and therefore being composed of a more or less all English cast. On its first American bookings this picture is doing fairly well at an 84% average which is as can be expected, although in England and the Dominions this picture will undoubtedly pull some heavy grosses. Naturally, American exhibitors, especially in New England, catering to more or less an English minded audience would probably do fairly good with this one.

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Basil Rathbone are co-starred as the two brothers and the fine

supporting cast includes Barbara O'Neil, Lionel Atwill, Virginia Field and C. Aubrey Smith, all of whom should mean something on the average marquee.

Rowland V. Lee was the producer-director.

RKO—1 Release

RKO has a new programmer from the Lee Marcus unit this week, "THE GIRL FROM MEXICO," which is getting by so far with a 72% average. Lupe Velez is very appropriately starred with Donald Woods as the leading man and Leon Errol and Donald McBride featured.

Sometime ago when Miss Velez was seen more regularly in pictures she was a fairly good box office bet. But since she has spent most of the last two or three years appearing in New York reviews and night clubs she may have been forgotten by many of her fans. Although on the other hand her divorce actions from Johnny Weissmuller have kept her more or less constantly in the headlines. "THE GIRL FROM MEXICO" is decidedly an action picture and should have all around good family appeal in the neighborhood box offices.

Robert Sisk produced and Leslie Goodwins directed.

COLUMBIA—Also 1 New Release

Columbia pictures also have another programmer from the Irving Briskin unit, "OUTSIDE THESE WALLS," 65%. Which is not any too strong, probably due to the weakness of marquee names. Michael Whalen who was seen in a number of Fox programmers, is co-starred with the once famous Dolores Costello who has been in retirement more or less the past few years. Virginia Wiedler, always popular with the kids, is also prominently featured. This one will get by on the lower half of a double bill, but be sure and put a strong attraction with it, particularly something lighter, either a feature comedy or a musical. Ralph Cohen supervised and Ray McCarey directed.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

out MGM hits for fourteen years. . . . Sam took the doubtful accolade of being a "commercial director" for many of his years. . . . But he topped it all with "Goodbye, Mr. Chips." If anybody ever had a tougher assignment to make palatable motion picture entertainment, we'd like to hear the nomination. . . . And now MGM let's him get away. . . . What's going on down there these days? And while we are in proximity to the subject, we just noticed that some of the columnists are discovering that of the top money making musical pictures the screen has ever known, William Anthony McGuire had his name on four of them. . . . Shucks, we didn't think it was news. . . . We thought everybody knew it.

7 Releases Not In The Last Issue

2 Over 100%.....2 Okay.....3 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	110	115
2. Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	103	110
3. Maisie	MGM	87	85
4. The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	84	90
5. It Could Happen To You	FOX	77	75
6. The Girl From Mexico	RKO	72	75
7. Outside These Walls	COL	65	70



J. Maurice Ridge

Nebraska Exhibitors Can't Figure It Out

Ak-Sar-Ben.

That is a name to conjure with in this city along the murky waters of the Missouri River.

It screeches at you as you approach their race track—the bridge across the Missouri to Council Bluffs and in divers places throughout the city. It represents an organization of better business men, who have their hands in most all public affairs. It also typifies the show business for it is the spelling of the name of their state backwards. And backwards is the word on the tongues of all exhibitors out here with respect to box office returns.

In some suburban theatres, in fact all we saw, showmen were complaining that their receipts of recent months were off from 15 to 25 per cent from last year at the same time.

"Why?" we asked them all. There were divers reasons offered. In coming across Nebraska, the exhibitors in the small towns ascribed it to one cause primarily. Crop planting and harvest season, which necessitated all farm hands in the fields from sun till sun. In Omaha, some said the races hurt, others thought not. All complained about too great a percentage of mediocre pictures. The one yowl all let out was high film rentals, with an ever increasing number of pictures in the highest brackets. This was universal.

Gradwell Sears' Statement Worries 'Em

According to the statement made at the Allied convention in Minneapolis last week by Grad Sears, the price schedules for this year over last, are to be raised sufficiently to take care of any cancellations allowable under the proposed code, as well as to pay for the shorts whether bought or not. This information spread like wild fire in the buffalo grass in this country. It sure is making it tough going for the sales forces of all exchanges. As

FIELD MEN TRY TO FIND WHAT'S WRONG

THIS WEEK'S REPORT COMES FROM OMAHA

nearly as it can be ascertained all companies are living up to the proposed Code terms. However, the prices fixed in the work sheets against each theatre, are so allocated with respect to pictures in each classification, and prices against them, that in the event the exhibitor exercises his right of cancellation and refusal to purchase shorts, the distributing companies will take as much gross revenue this year as last. There is a possibility

the knotty problem, confronting the industry, and the small fellow is hopeful, that yet there may be injected into the problem, such unselfish and equitable clauses, that it can be used as a basis for a better understanding, between them and their natural partners in this industry, the distributors and producers. Neither can live without the other. Serfdom on one side, can only bring on another Boston Tea Party. The George the Thirds must be replaced

legal talent should be shipped back to the New York World's Fair, and muzzled; that the laymen on both sides should write a simply stated code, devoid of legal technicalities and one that is easily understood, and not a unilateral agreement, such as the present proposed Code appears to him to be.

The Big Wigs Once Called On Williams

It will be remembered that Charley Williams was the man Sidney Kent called to Washington to represent the small exhibitor, in the fight against the old Brookhart Bill, years ago. Charley killed it, so all the big wigs state, before Jim Watson's Senate Committee after scores of executives had so bewildered the Senators, that they did not know which way to turn. As you will recall, the Brookhart Bill proposed many of the things the Neely Bill now sponsors. Charley Williams, a mite of a man from the west, but with as clear a vision as a Lincoln, tremblingly appeared before the mighty Senators, and told them a simple story they could understand, about marketing beef in the west. It took him less than 60 minutes, to convince the Congress, that there was nothing wrong with the industry, that the industry could solve its own problems. And it did. He believes now the application of horse sense is the remedy. He is confident too many Daniel Websters are trying to complicate a simple problem. And folks—it is simple, if each side will stop trying to get an 18 ounce pound out of a constitution for this industry.

Here's A Clearance Problem For You

First run houses in Council Bluffs, Iowa, five miles across the Missouri river from Omaha, Nebraska, have to take a 28 day clearance back of the latter city. There is a toll bridge between the two cities. Council Bluffs is 40,000 and Omaha is 222,000. Admission prices are just the same in each

(Continued on Page 13)



Harry E. Nichols

BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

Yessir—believe it or not—but the Field Men turned up a letter in Des Moines, Iowa, last week that is a classic in motion picture relations. An exhibitor actually asked that the rating—which means the price—on a picture be boosted above the figure for which he had contracted. We give it to you without further comment:

June 9, 1939.

Mr. Harry Shumow
Loew's Inc.
Omaha, Nebr.
Dear Harry:

With the same spirit in mind that I have written to you many times asking for changes in designations on pictures to a lower bracket, I am writing you at this time to suggest that you change **IT'S A WONDERFUL WORLD** for our theatres from the second flat rental group up to the top one.

The way the picture has been booked and the business that we have done on it to date indicate that this is more fair than where you have put the picture. Accordingly we will pay for it in the top flat rental group.

Kindest personal regards.

Very cordially,

(Signed) FRANK RUBEL
PIONEER THEATRE CIRCUIT
Paramount Bldg., Des Moines, Iowa

of a goodly increase from those exhibitors who do not avail themselves of this privilege under the terms of the Code. Grad Sears is on record at the Minneapolis Convention, on this point.

War-Horse Charles Williams Snorts

"Conceived in iniquity, purposed to protect the mighty lords of the industry; offered sugar coated to the little fellow as a panacea for all his economic ills, is the way most of the helpless and struggling fry, observe the proffered Code, that recently received such a rebuff at the hands of Al Steffes' Minneapolis crowd, and the delegates to the Allied convention, held there last week. But that does not solve

with Washingtons, and the Colonists must be permitted to return to their plows, without having to carry muskets to protect their interests" is the attitude taken by Charley Williams, of this city, an old timer in Exhibitor Organization work.

"This whole matter can be amicably settled in three hours, if three honest men from each side sit down around a table, and sincerely try to work out a basic agreement" he chortled. "There are no hard problems to settle," he opined. He believes that it is a case of each side trying to do too much jockeying to get the best of the other fellow. He believes that it is entirely too long and too verbose in its present form. He thinks the high priced

"Second Fiddle" Entertainment Knockout; Lanfield, Power, Henie, Score Heavily

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 140%)

Executive Producer.....Darryl F. Zanuck
 ProducerGene Markey
 DirectorSidney Lanfield
 ScreenplayHarry Tugend
 Based on a story by.....George Bradshaw
 Featured: Sonja Henie, Tyrone Power, Rudy Vallee, Edna May Oliver, Mary Healy, Lyle Talbot, Alan Dinehart, Minna Gombell, Stewart Reburn, Spencer Charters, Charles Lane, The Brian Sisters, John Hiestand, George Chandler, Irving Bacon, Maurice Cass.
 PhotographerLeon Shamroy
 SongsIrving Berlin
 Film Editor.....Robert Simpson
 Time83 minutes

A grand job of showmaking. While it would be rash to prophesy that any picture would soar to the heights of "Alexander's Ragtime Band," this one has been cut to the same formula, pepped up with the same ingredients. It is Darryl Zanuck at the top of his stride.

Direction, screenplay, cast and music, combine in a delightful manner. Whenever a picture ends and you have the feeling that you would have been willing to sit through several of the sequences a few more times—you have a hit. "Second Fiddle" does this. We could have taken more of the song hits. We would have enjoyed more of Sonja skating. We could sit around all night with the characters portrayed by Miss Henie, Tyrone Power and Edna May Oliver. But streamlined Zanuck treatment in the hands of Director Sidney Lanfield gives you just enough of everything to leave you asking for more. And that's meeting the real test of entertainment.

In addition to the top stars for marquee value and the certain wave of popularity that will greet the Irving Berlin songs, you have as interesting a back-scene Hollywood yarn as the screen has seen since "A Star Is Born." It offers Tyrone Power a role with an underlying note of sincerity, that is a relief from his recent "heels," and he makes the most of it. Sonja is given an acting role that almost seems to subordinate her skating, and the result is delightful.

"Forgotten Woman" Fair Programmer

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer.....Edmund Grainger
 DirectorHarold Young
 Screenplay.....Lionel Houser, Harold Buchman
 Original Story.....John Kobler
 Stars.....Sigrid Gurie, William Lundigan
 Featured: Eve Arden, Donald Briggs, Donnie Dunagan, Elisabeth Risdon, Paul Harvey, Ray Walker, Virginia Brissac, Joseph Downing, Norman Willis, George Walcott.
 PhotographerStanley Cortez
 Art Director.....Jack Otterson
 Musical Director.....Charles Previn
 Film Editor.....Charles Maynard
 Time63 minutes

Straight melodrama presented by convincing players makes "The Forgotten Woman" O. K. program fare. Its principle drawback is in the triteness of its plot, which varies little from the age-old line. Still, it will make a satisfactory second feature for smaller houses.

CURRENT REVIEWS

3 Over 100%.....2 Okay.....6 Programmers

		We Est.
1. Second Fiddle	FOX	140
2. Bachelor Mother	RKO	110
3. The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	100
4. Stronger Than Desire	MGM	80
5. She Married A Cop	REP	75
6. Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR	75
7. Forgotten Woman	UNIV	70
8. The Saint in London	RKO	70
9. Mickey The Kid	REP	70
10. Stunt Pilot	MONO	70

The story is something of a gentle satire on the search for a leading woman for "Gone With the Wind." Tyrone is a studio press agent, with an elastic conscience, and willingness to beg, borrow or steal if it is all in the cause of Consolidated Pictures. Sonja is the "discovery" for the big screen role, found in the snowclad Minnesota hills. Power induces her to come to Hollywood, which she does accompanied by Auntie, Edna May Oliver. Publicity requirements call for Tyrone to build up a fictitious romance with Rudy Vallee, male star of the studio. This he does so effectively that it brings about the usual complications when he discovers that he is himself in love with Sonja, and the climax builds to a "halted at the altar" finish as Sonja is apathetically marrying Lyle Talbot, stolid Minnesota farmer.

That's the background. Fast paced direction and writing keep it moving steadily forward at all times, and give it opportunity to drop in song numbers and skating specialties in a most unobtrusive and thoroughly enjoyable way. There is little need to single out any particular number, the public will do its own selecting, but all are in the true Irving Berlin class.

Development of the story gives Rudy Vallee his best screen opportunity to date, though better angles on the photography could have avoided some straight on close-ups of both Rudy and Miss Henie that are not on a par

with the general class of the production.

In the support, Edna May Oliver steals the honors. Her's is a richly humorous characterization. The songbird, Mary Healy, makes an auspicious debut. She is luscious in physical appeal, she can sell her songs. The gal is going places. Tried and true troupers such as Alan Dinehart, Lyle Talbot, Minna Gombell, and George Chandler are seen to advantage.

All in all, a cheerful piece of entertainment that theaters will welcome in coming months, and one which will justify Darryl Zanuck in any assignments he wishes to give Director Sidney Lanfield and Scriptor Harry Tugend in the future.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: It will stand extra days—and prove a life-saver in the midst of the current picture output. Previewed June 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "With a trio of stellar names for the marquee and a fairly substantial vehicle with which to exploit their possessors' talents, "Second Fiddle" has obvious possibilities of doing well at the head of the bill."

VARIETY: "Combination of Miss Henie and Tyrone Power is a happy romantic coupling, shrewdly calculated for box office favor, with Rudy Vallee and the choice Irving Berlin score to consolidate widest popular appeal through the confirmed followings of each of these stellar draws."

The picture marks the first appearance on screen of Sigrid Gurie since "Algiers." With the main burden of the story on her shoulders, she delivers a moving portrayal, although it may be somewhat of a question, on the box office side, whether audiences are in the mood right now for the melancholy Scandinavian school of acting. Outside of Miss Gurie, there is little of potential box office value in the cast.

The story is the one about the rising young district attorney who convicts the innocent girl. Donald Briggs is the D.A. The girl has a baby in prison, her husband, William Lundigan having already been killed, and the child is placed in an orphan asylum. The D.A. adopts the child, etc., etc. The writers even got so lazy as to have the boy, Donnie Dunagan, hurt in an automobile accident in order to clean up their story.

Eve Arden is rather funny as the hard-boiled

pal of Sigrid Gurie; as is Ray Walker as an aspiring detective. The youngster, Donnie Dunagan, is very likeable as the young son. Elisabeth Risdon, Paul Harvey, and others complete the cast.

Picture was directed by Harold Young under associate producer Edmund Grainger. The screenplay by Lionel Houser and Harold Buchman was from an original by John Kobler.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just a programmer, but it will satisfy. Previewed June 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'The Forgotten Woman' Universal has a tear jerker that is liberally spiked with so called 'good audience' stuff."

VARIETY: "Marking Sigrid Gurie's debut as Universal player, 'The Forgotten Woman' unfurls a neat programmer."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

DIRECTED
BY

William A. Seiter

In Preparation
"ALLEGHENY FRONTIER"
for RKO-Radio



“SUSANNAH OF

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



THE MOUNTIES''



"Bachelor Mother" High Spot Screen Farce

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Producer B. G. DeSylva
 Director Garson Kanin
 Screenplay Norman Krasna
 Story Felix Jackson
 Stars Ginger Rogers, David Niven
 Featured: Charles Coburn, Frank Albertson,
 E. E. Clive, Elbert Coplen, Jr., Ferike Bor-
 os, Ernest Truex.
 Time 80 minutes

Probably one of the most thoroughly competent jobs of straight farce production that the screen has seen. It is pure farce, unlegitimized, and it is a continuous succession of chuckles and laughs that were drowned out by the preview audience.

While honors must be equally and generously divided among all concerned, highlight of the picture's success is the convincing evidence that Garson Kanin is big league in the directorial scale. Kanin came up the hard way through the "B" ladder—remember "Great Man Votes"—but should never be allowed to step down the ladder even a rung for many years to come. His uncanny skill, pacing, and smooth handling of his players reminds an old timer of the period when the industry's favorite phrase was "the Lubitsch touch."

Ginger Rogers, on her own this time as a farce player, has never been seen more sympathetically, and more effectively. While she has dance moments in the picture, Ginger gives full proof that she does not have to twinkle her toes to hold her own. Opposite her, David Niven gives a skilfully shaded performance that retains farce feeling with the necessary touch of reality. The picture is going to step him along in popularity. The veteran star of the stage, Charles Coburn—"Ole Bill"—handles the other important part as one would expect of him.

And through it all, direction, writing, and production guidance are evident. B. G. De Sylva's showmanship could not have had better support than that given by Kanin's direction and the corking screenplay by Norman Krasna. The dialogue sparkles without being strained, the situations move with rapidity and plenty of surprise twists and turns.

"Bachelor Mother," based upon the stage play "Bringing Up Baby," uses an automatically live farce premise, when Ginger Rogers finds a foundling dumped in her lap, and then everybody concerned proceeds to get the conviction that she is the mother. Of course this has its effect on the budding romance between

Ginger, a department store clerk, and David Niven, son of the store's owner, Charles Coburn. Then there is a jealousy note in the presence of Frank Albertson, who turns in a fine performance. Also present effectively in support is Ernest Truex, who knows his farce.

Some of the lines are a bit spicy, the tag is possibly objectionably so. But on the whole it is in such skilled hands that we feel certain it will be accepted as all "in the spirit of good fun." We only hope it doesn't encourage less intelligent producers to start making attacks on the Breen walls.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Solid safe fun that they will talk about. Not for the kiddie days. Previewed June 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "A vastly amusing adult picture, dealing hilariously with what are sometimes called the facts of life. As a piece of comedy, writing, direction, production and delivery it has seldom been excelled for popular appeal."

REPORTER: "'Bachelor Mother' is a modernized chromium-plated custombuilt and beautifully streamlined version of 'Bringing Up Baby.' It's brilliant. It has 'class.' It has punch. It has a sock in every foot, and box office written all over it in neon lights."

"Bulldog Drummond's Bride" Will Satisfy

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Associate Producer Stuart Walker
 Director James Hogan
 Original H. C. (Sapper) McNeile
 Screenplay Stuart Palmer, Garnett Weston
 Star John Howard
 Featured: Heather Angel, H. B. Warner, Reginald Denny, E. E. Clive, Elizabeth Patterson, Eduardo Cianelli.
 Time 55 minutes

By this time the makers of the Bulldog Drummond series over at Paramount must know what type of entertainment the followers of this series desire. The demand appears to be for action, with a capital 'A', and with little heed to plausibility or plot. "Bulldog Drummond's Bride" fills all these requirements, for it is almost a continual chase, with the cops, represented by John Howard and his pals, chasing the robber, in the person of Eduardo Cianelli, all over London and parts of France.

But the picture is O. K. hokum and will be enjoyed by most dyed-in-the-wool thriller fans. A few insides into the fine art of perfect

crimes given by Eduardo Cianelli and the humorous antics of Reginald Denny and E. E. Clive are among the better points of the film.

John Howard is, as usual, Hugh Drummond, the budding groom-to-be who can never take time off from his bandit chasing activities to marry his fiancée, Heather Angel. Howard is quite in form with the role now, and handles it competently; Heather Angel, as is customary in these pictures, has very little to do but is most pleasing in her few scenes.

Reginald Denny and E. E. Clive are amusing as the useless aides of Howard. Eduardo Cianelli and Gerald Hammer are the bad men of the film while H. B. Warner and Gerald Hammer uphold the side of the law. Louis Mercier is good as a French provincial mayor.

James Hogan directed and Stuart Walker produced. While this picture is hardly an example of the best work of these men, nevertheless, it is a workmanlike job for the market for which it was produced. Screenplay was by Stuart Palmer and Garnett Weston.

Just for the record, the story opens with a bank robbery by Eduardo Cianelli. He hides the swag in a radio which is mistakenly sent to Heather Angel in France. After many chases over the rooftops of a small French town, Howard eventually blows Cianelli to bits.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will stand up with any of the Drummonds. Previewed June 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Unable to make up its mind, for a time, whether to play 'Bulldog Drummond's Bride' as straight melodrama with comedy or out and out slapstick, Paramount turns to the latter and emerges with a picture that will evoke a lack of enthusiasm from the followers of suave, adventurous Captain Hugh Drummond's escapades."

VARIETY: "In developing 'Bulldog Drummond and the Oriental Mind' into screenplay, Stuart Palmer and Garnett Weston have combined action, drama and comedy. James Hogan has directed with force and speed."

"She Married a Cop" Will Entertain

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer Sol C. Siegel
 Director Sidney Salkow
 Original Screenplay Olive Cooper
 Stars Phil Regan, Jean Parker
 Featured: Jerome Cowan, Dorothea Kent, Benny Baker, Barnett Parker Horace MacMahon, Oscar O'Shea, Mary Gordon, Muriel Campbell, Peggy Ryan, Richard Keene.
 Photographer Ernest Miller
 Songs Ralph Freed, Burton Lane
 Film Editor Ernest Nims
 Time 65 minutes

able picture which is likely to please comically or musically inclined audiences, is "She Married a Cop." All in all, the picture is pretty good entertainment, particularly when Phil Regan is singing or his Irish family arguing.

Phil Regan, in this one, is a singing Irish cop, a role which, according to the press agents, is true to life. In the present instance, his acting is quite up to standard, and he splendidly sings several songs by Ralph Freed and Burton Lane, one of which, "I Can't Imagine," lingers in the memory. Jean Parker is seen opposite Regan in a semi-sophisticated role

which is for her, decidedly unorthodox. However, she is lovely to look at and makes a pleasing foil for Regan.

Jerome Cowan is the head of a motion picture studio in which Jean Parker runs the animated cartoon division. She needs a voice for the character 'Paddy Pig,' and presto, Phil Regan is found. But he is told that he will be a star in his own right and, of course, when the final awakening comes, he is very, very angry. Yes, it's rather silly, and hasn't a drop of social consciousness. But it's entertain-

(Continued on Page 11)

A rather nonsensical but nevertheless enjoy-

"Man in the Iron Mask" Needs Cutting

UNITED ARTISTS

(The Digest Estimates 100%)

Producer Edward Small
 Director James Whale
 Screenplay George Bruce
 Stars Louis Hayward, Joan Bennett
 Featured: Warren William, Joseph Schildkraut, Alan Hale, Walter Kingsford, Miles Mander, Bert Roach, Marian Martin, Montagu Love, Doris Kenyon, Albert Dekker, Nigel de Brulier, William Royle, Boyd Irwin, Howard Brooks, Reginald Barlowe, Lane Chandler, Wyndham Standing, Dorothy Vaughan, Sheila Darcy, Robert Milasch, D'Arcy Corrigan, Harry Woods, Peter Cushing, Emmett King.
 Photographer Robert Planck
 Music Lueini Moraweck
 Musical Director Lud Gluskin
 Film Editor Grant Whytock
 Time 110 minutes

Edward Small's latest production of a classic—remember he gave theaters "The Count of Monte Cristo"—was previewed in Hollywood in a length that reached one hour and fifty minutes. We have little doubt that common sense will dictate the cutting of the picture under much that length before it reaches your theaters. We have no doubt, that it would be a better picture if that were done.

There is a certain inherent quality in those old fogies, Dumas, Hugo, Dickens and Shakespeare, that cannot be licked. They created characters, and they built situations. So—"The Man in the Iron Mask" could not be entirely

a bad picture. That point was settled a hundred years ago.

But the irritating point about this production is the thought that it could have been a so much better picture. Audiences, responding to the attraction that any classic has on the marquee, will not fail to respond to the high moments that Dumas created. The same audiences will acquire boils at Hollywood's version of Dumas.

Any exhibitor or exchange man knows that the toughest thing he has to sell is a costume picture. But he also knows that some of the biggest money makers of the industry have been costume pictures. The difference is in the sincerity of treatment, and the quality of the stars.

This one is serial-like in treatment, and negative in opportunities given its players.

Exchange Louis Hayward for Robert Donat, and you might have a hit—because Donat would refuse to play many of the scenes handed to Hayward. Exchange John Ford for James Whale and you would have had a hit, because John Ford would have refused to let the draggy passages out of the cutting room.

Producer Small threw money into the picture with reckless abandon. A fellow, previously mentioned, named Dumas, put in his best. The producer will come out with a profit, because it is a picture axiom that a classic can-

not miss in eventual grosses. The author will turn over in his grave and wonder why he was not born in the days of \$2000 a week Hollywood writers.

Eddie Small is fighting an uphill battle trying to make a star out of this Louis Hayward. We are afraid he will not make the grade—the boy just hasn't got that Doug Fairbanks or Ronald Colman he-man flair for the adventurous. Joseph Schildkraut theatrically steals what acting honors there are, just because Schildkraut knows too many tricks to let any part lick him. Joan Bennett is likeable, despite some ponderously poetic speeches. Warren William is wasted.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: There is value to the title, and there will be a certain audience to respond. But don't go overboard on it. Previewed June 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Edward Small's 'The Man in the Iron Mask' is an imposing and frequently ingenious tale founded on Dumas' well-known story. . . . It will undoubtedly impress, and its heroics will no doubt appeal to a wide cinema following, vindicating high expectations of its popularity at the boxoffice."

VARIETY: "Edward Small delivers a winner to United Artists in this stirring and splendidly pictured regal melodrama, made from Alexander Dumas' apocryphal tale of the twins of Louis XIII who battled for the crown of France. It offers strong, distinguished and top-flight b.o. entertainment for mass and class."

"Saint in London" Helped By Authenticity

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
 Producer William Siström
 Director John Paddy Carstairs
 Original Leslie Charteris
 Screenplay Lynn Root Frank Fenton
 Stars George Sanders, Sally Gray
 Featured: David Burns, Gordon McLeod, Henry Oscar, Athene Seyler, John Abbott, Ralph Truman, Charles Carson, Carl Jaffe, Norah Howard, Ballard Berkeley.
 Photographer Claude Friese-Greene
 Musical Director Harry Acres
 Film Editor Douglas Robertson
 Time 70 minutes

This is another one of those vastly popular "Saint" pictures which RKO has been turning out during the past year. Judging by the reaction of last week's preview audience, which may or may not be typical, this "Saint" character has built up quite a following. At any rate, "The Saint in London," which, incidentally was made in London, is every bit as good as its predecessors in the series.

This time the Saint tackles a home problem and joins forces with the inevitable Scotland Yard. The plot is simple. An unnamed foreign country is having its currency printed in London and surprisingly enough, there is something fishy going on. The Saint, his current girl friend, Sally Gray, and his assistant, David Burns, stumble in on the case, look it over, and take complete charge. Needless to say, with complete success.

The cast is entirely British. However, this lends to the picture a degree of authenticity

which is very helpful in the midst of some of its more implausible moments, while it may restrict your popular appeal.

George Sanders, of course, is again the Saint. His performance as the flip, debonair soldier of fortune is all that could be asked of any player. Sally Gray, a newcomer to the American screen, provides the romantic interest with her full share of talents and looks. David Burns makes a splendid American gangster, at loose in dear 'ole London. Capable English actors whose names are unknown to American audiences complete the cast.

Director John Paddy Carstairs gave the picture just the right British atmosphere which, along with the usual mystery elements, combine to make up a really interesting picture. Production qualities, as is common with current British pictures, are quite up to the American standards.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Where they have seen the previous Saints, audiences will like it because of the authentic British appeal. In other spots the popularity of the series must overcome the lack of familiar faces. Good show, though. Previewed June 21st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Saint in London' will elevate the prestige of this clever series which grows more diverting with each addition."

VARIETY: "RKO's Saint series takes on added umph with unfurling of 'The Saint in London,' . . . Picture takes on new significance both in matter of entertainment and production values far in excess of standard set by its American-located predecessors."

"She Married A Cop"

(Continued from Page 10)

ment, and this is apparently what audiences want.

Dorothea Kent is seen briefly as a receptionist in the studio, and Benny Baker, is, as usual, a stooge. Barnett Parker is also seen in his customary role of butler and Horace MacMahon is Regan's pal. Oscar O'Shea, Mary Gordon, Muriel Campbell, Peggy Ryan and Richard Keene are the super-Irish family.

Sidney Salkow directed the light story with a clever touch with his best sequences in the Duffy apartment. The dependable Sol C. Siegel was associate producer of the amusing comedy. The original screenplay was by Olive Cooper.

Exhibitor Booking Suggestion: A good bargain buy—there is real entertainment and it will play any day to help out the top of the bill. Previewed June 20th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'She Married A Cop,' Republic has a pleasing comedy romance on the farcial side, which serves as a suitable vehicle for Phil Regan."

VARIETY: "Treated as nabe programmer, 'She Married A Cop' will serve its purpose. Mounted on entertaining ideas, and with Phil Regan warbling some tuneful numbers, it might have rated better fate were it not for occasional trite lines and direction that frequently switches pace."

"Stronger Than Desire" an MGM B-Plus

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer John W. Considine Jr.
 Director Leslie Fenton
 Novel W. E. Woodward
 Screenplay David Hertz, William Ludwig
 Stars Virginia Bruce, Walter Pidgeon
 Featured: Lee Bowman, Ann Dvorak, Ilka Chase, Rita Johnson, Richard Lane, Ann Todd, Paul Stanton, Ferike Boros.
 Photographer William Daniels
 Film Editor W. Donn Hayes
 Time 77 minutes

Here is an ostensible "B" production with some class "A" acting and direction. Its only drawback is its slowness of pace throughout the earlier reels. Otherwise, "Stronger Than Desire" rates as an above average program picture.

The story deals with a top-notch lawyer, Walter Pidgeon, and his devoted wife, Virginia Bruce. It follows the well-worn path of the "all work and no play" husband and the lone-

some, bored wife. Because of this unintentional separation Pidgeon becomes innocently involved with a scheming woman client, Rita Johnson, and his wife, on her side, takes up with a no-good playboy.

The playboy is murdered. Walter Pidgeon, at the request of his wife, takes the case which seems to point step by step to his wife's guilt. It all builds up to a thrilling murder trial at the conclusion of which, of course, comes the unexpected outcome. These last few reels really pack quite a wallop.

Walter Pidgeon and Virginia Bruce are excellent as the married couple. Both of these players deserve spots in some of the bigger MGM productions. Richard Lane is good as the assistant defense attorney, and Ann Dvorak contributes a splendid dramatic highlight. The lesser roles are all capably filled.

Leslie Fenton, directing his second feature, proves by this effort that he will soon be on

the top of the directorial heap. John Considine Jr. deserves credit for the well-balanced production.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory entertainment on the average program if you have something else on the bill to pull 'em in. They will be satisfied, without doing any raving. Previewed June 20th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has a strong staple product in 'Stronger Than Desire.' It is popular fiction of that type which has been the backbone of the theatre for a long enough time to vindicate its persistence. And here it is so well done that the universally understandable text gathers enough forceful dramatic effort to assure holding its own in major bookings.

VARIETY: "Excellent performances and skillful direction give quality to the somewhat timeworn material in this refreshed version of the original 'Evelyn Prentiss,' made by Metro in 1934."

"Mickey the Kid" Okay for Duallers

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer Herman Schlom
 Director Arthur Lubin
 Screenplay Doris Malloy, Gordon Kahn
 Original Alice Altschuler
 Featured: Bruce Cabot, Ralph Byrd, Zasu Pitts, Tommy Ryan, Jessie Ralph, June Storey, J. Farrel MacDonald, John Qualen, Robert Elliott, Scotty Beckett, James Flavin, Archie Twitchell.
 Photographer Jack Marta
 Film Editor William Morgan
 Time 66 minutes

"Mickey, The Kid" is a good program picture which builds slowly to an exciting and realistic climax. This climax is fashioned around the true occurrences in a Rocky Mountain state several years ago, when a heroic schoolboy kept a little group of children alive while they were stranded in a school bus in the midst of a record blizzard. In the film, the melodramatics leading up to the finish are convincing, and Tommy Ryan, as the courageous

youngster, contributes some fine trouping in this sequence and deserves a major portion of the credit for the emotional appeal of the entire picture.

The story: Bruce Cabot, wanted for murder, leaves his son with the boy's maternal grandmother, Jessie Ralph, to gain time to complete his getaway. When the FBI has traced the boy to the village, Cabot grabs him and together, they attempt to escape. To do this, Cabot holds up a school bus, throws out the driver, but keeps the kids in the bus, intending to use them as a shield. When the bus is wrecked, and embedded in the snow, Cabot leaves the kids but Tommy Ryan chooses to stay with them, thus preparing the way for the big finish.

Zasu Pitts, as a sort of useless companion of Jessie Ralph, furnishes the comedy in her usual style. She gets quite a few laughs at that. Ralph Byrd, a country doctor, and June Storey, the neighborhood schoolma'am, supply a very minor bit of "boy meets girl" to the story. The

members of the supporting cast are all capable and will be recognized by most any audience.

Arthur Lubin directed under associate producer Herman Schlom. Both merit praise: Lubin, for the smoothness of the earlier reels and the suspense of the closing ones, and Schlom, for the workmanship of the entire production. The screenplay was by Doris Malloy and Gordon Kahn from an original by Alice Altschuler.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good programmer, especially for the kid and family audience. Nice for Saturdays. Previewed June 21st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The story never approaches the jelling stage at any point, and the minor climatic points which it touches are bogged in a maze of talk of minor import and add little lucidity to the story's doubtful objectives, if any. It is at best, only filler."

VARIETY: "For smaller first run houses, and subsequents, 'Mickey, The Kid' will stand up well in supporting position."

"Stunt Pilot" Upholds 'Tailspin' Series

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer Scott R. Dunlap
 Producer Paul Malvern
 Director George Wagner
 Screenplay Scott Darling, Joseph West
 Based on "Tailspin Tommy"
 Featured: John Trent, Marjorie Reynolds, Milburn Stone, Jason Robards, Pat O'Malley, George Meeker, Wesley Barry, George Cleveland, Johnny Day, Charles Morton, Mary Fields, Buddy Cox.
 Photographer Fred Jackman Jr.
 Film Editor Carl Pierson
 Time 61 minutes

"Tailspin Tommy" is going to get along all right in this highly competitive world. This second picture, "Stunt Pilot" is the new Monogram series produced by Paul Malvern, holds up well to the standard of the first, and exceeds it in a refreshing touch of originality in the story background.

Director George Wagner, a pretty capable

screenplay writer on his record, knows the action demands that followers of the series will demand, and in addition, presents the action with smooth story intelligence. The result is a thriller that gives all the thrills that the most rabid of Saturday matinee audiences would ask, while presenting a story that does not insult adult intelligence.

Good casting also helps this episode in Tommy's adventures. John Trent, in the lead, has personality, and is stepping along in trouping skill with added experience. He is given capable and decorative support by Marjorie Reynolds, in the romantic opposite role.

Playing "safety first," Malvern and Wagner use tried and true veterans and favorites of the screen throughout the support — Pat O'Malley, Milburn Stone, Jason Robards, Wesley Barry, George Cleveland, etc.

This particular adventure in Tommy's life

concerns his trials following on the hiring of his airport by a picture company. O'Malley is the director to whom a stunt pilot's life is just a gesture if he needs it for a scene. There is foul murder done, with Tommy in the suspected spot. But all ends happily. Not before there have been plenty of crashes, stunts and thrills to provide the gasps.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A good bet for the action fans. Previewed June 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This second in the series of 'Tailspin Tommy' pictures is sure to find a niche for itself among the followers of the series variety and is a natural follow-up on the initialer of the group."

VARIETY: "Aimed at subsequent dualers, 'Stunt Pilot' has what it requires to make grade, mixing suspense with aviation thrills as they are staged for talkers."

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

REQUEST: Will all the studios let us know about their Little Theater activities, just as Twentieth Century-Fox does? . . . Not only do we get enjoyment out of their shows, but we have a husky hunch that these are the spots the talent scouts should be covering these days—if they can tear themselves away from the bang-tails, or from those luscious expense accounts that call for a trip to Seattle or points north, seeking some hidden gem. . . . And while we are talking about Twentieth, let us chronicle the happy news that Bess Bearman, Zanuck's able aide, is back on the job after a "vacation" period at St. Vincent's Hospital. . . . Very efficiently, she scheduled her hospital visit almost simultaneously with the chief's absence in New York, and her return for the arrival of the sales big wigs.

COMPETITION NOTE: After his performance in "Second Fiddle" as a studio press agent, we think that Tyrone Power can get a job in Harry Brand's stimulator department at Twentieth Century-Fox any day that he figures his acting days are numbered. . . . Which reminds us, that one of these days some one is going to write a book about what Harry Brand and that gang of his do in concrete selling of personalities and pictures. . . . Brand is not the type to make a Harry Reichenbach twenty-four sheet out of himself, but the proof is in the pudding—and the puddings they cook up out there on Pico—such as the swell San Francisco handling on "Alexander Graham Bell," and the latest splurge internationally by radio on "Second Fiddle" are very tasty to showmen.

plete with Arcadian background. . . . Wonder whom Irene will nominate to sing the leading role? . . . There are a couple of accountants going to have a lot of trouble in future years trying to make their books balance. . . . Janet Beecher is FRAMING the two dollar check that she received as a prize in a candid camera contest. . . . That two dollars which will never get into a bank is going to plague bookkeepers from here to Social Security time.

with a civil war baseball series between the slot-divided neighbors, Los Angeles and Hollywood. . . . Since Gail Patrick's hubby, Bob Cobb, of the Brown Derbies is the pooh-bah of the Hollywood team, and many of the screen folk own stock in the enterprise, it all joined up in a great sport week. . . . Fans who flock to restaurants and theaters to get glimpses of their favorite stars are missing a bet when they don't spend the price of a box seat and sit next to their favorite while he crunches peanuts and munches hot dogs, in between cries to "Kill The Umpire!"

GETTYSBURG WEEK: The town had a hot time this past week

FIELD MEN IN OMAHA

(Continued from Page 6)

town's first runs. Council Bluffs yelps, but nobody hears them. One of the first runs in Council Bluffs is a Fox partnership. The other first run is said to be controlled by an executive of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Independents Are Buying Regardless of Codes

Selling is going on in this territory by all the major companies, and contracts are being signed on the same old forms, without any acceptance of the code, so far as we could find out, by the independent exhibitor. Whether they are just "another scrap of paper," in view of the Supreme Court's recent decision, remains to be tested. However, the exhibitor claims he has to have product and that is the only way in which he can secure it. So they are just taking it in stride, hoping that some Moses will spring up and lead them out of the Wilderness.

Here's a Hot Red Signal To Hollywood

En route through the land of the tall corn, we ran onto an old friend who formerly spent three years in Hollywood. She was studying conditions, making surveys of what goes on out there, and the reasons back of production, so that she might go back to her home state of Ohio, and there inaugurate plans and methods of getting the youth of the Buckeye state, conscious to

the appeal of worthwhile pictures, and to give them unstinted support as well as a wide berth to ones that were trash. Her name is Dorothy Bernard. She is Youth Advisor of Motion Pictures in the schools of Ohio. She is spending the summer vacation in Hollywood, where she expects to interview film producers, and encourage the making of product that she can recommend to the school children in Ohio schools.

The plan is this. Dorothy Bernard organizes clubs in the grade schools where the study of motion picture art becomes an unofficial part of the curriculum. These pupils study the production from every angle, story, art direction, dramatic value, moral effect on the child mind and so on ad infinitum. Worthless productions are unmentioned. It is not set up as a censorship, but rather to promote worthiness and further its showing in each community, in which the clubs operate. Dorothy Bernard is starting a propaganda, that is to be organized in every state in the Union, and with her background knowledge of Hollywood, will likely cause the big wigs no little concern within a very short time, as she has the support of all the Women's Clubs of Ohio. The proposed Nationalizing of the movement, will have a tremendous effect at the box office, where inferior product gets the silent treatment from all the class rooms in so important a state as Ohio.

WARNING: If you hear a voice on the Woodbury radio show on Sunday and decide that Don Ameche is doubling in brass, don't rush to the phone. It will be Don's brother Jim, and when you get over the surprise you can start making your bets about his probable picture future.

SAD NEWS: Looks as though the local news sheets will be on a spot with the new Police Chief's discovery that it is a misdemeanor to publish gambling advertising. . . . The particular law has been on the books for a long time, but no one ever paid any attention to it, while they were running up and down the ladder to Supreme Courts trying to stop the ships. . . . There may not be much attention paid to it now, but the new broom Chief has put himself on a spot if it is not enforced—even if he has to chase Mr. Hearst. . . . Catch in the law is that the publisher must "know" that the ad he is running tells of a place where gambling is conducted. . . . Of course, there have been good editors who were blind, deaf, and dumb.

ODDS AND ENDS: Honest, they tell us it is true, that Irene Dunne is writing the music for a light operetta based on the "Evangeline" poem by Longfellow, re-

We Knew You Would Be Surprised

• We appreciate the enthusiastic critical approval that has been accorded our unusual selection of imported material. But we must say—we knew you would be surprised.

• No tailor in Los Angeles has the connections—and has put forth the effort—that we have, to get the latest in unusual weaves.

• But also—no tailor in Los Angeles gives you the services of such sincere and long-trained craftsmen to turn those woollens into the latest of style.

• And all at a PRICE.

• You will be just as surprised at the price, as so many were last week at the wealth of material—unusual material—from which to choose.

• Come in and see us—or call for a TAILOR to come see you. You'll save a lot of money, we will make some. And we will make a friend.

JOHN D. PARRAL

237 SOUTH LA BREA

Phone for service:
YORK 3608

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182	%
Gunua Din	RKO	180	
Dodge City	WAR	158	
Union Pacific	PAR	145	
Kentucky	FOX	139	
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133	
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131	
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	130	

Stagecoach	UA	126	
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123	
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123	
Jaurez	WAR	122	
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121	
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119	
Love Affair	RKO	118	
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116	
Little Princess	FOX	116	
Made For Each Other	UA	112	
Midnight	PAR	111	
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	111	
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110	
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	108	
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	108	
Honolulu	MGM	107	
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106	
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	103	
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	103	
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102	
Widening Heights	UA	102	
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102	
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	100	
Zaza	PAR	98	

Captain Fury	UA	95	
Man of Conquest	REP	94	
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94	
Talisman	FOX	94	
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93	
The Mikado	UNIV	90	

St. Louis Blues	PAR	87	
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84	
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Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83	
Three Musketeers	FOX	81	

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pyramallon	MGM	131	%
Dark Victory	WAR	128	
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	127	

Huckleberry Finn	MGM	116	
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The Beachcomber	PAR	110	
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Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106	
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Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98	
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	96	
Lucky Night	MGM	96	
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	94	

They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92	
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90	
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	88	
Maisie	MGM	87	
The Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	86	
Fast and Loose	MGM	86	
Oh! The Record	WAR	85	
Sergeant Madden	WAR	84	
Four Girls in White	MGM	84	
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	84	

Cafe Society	PAR	81	
King of the Underworld	WAR	81	
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80	
On Trial	WAR	80	
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80	

Im From Missouri	PAR	79	
Prison Without Bars	UA	79	
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79	
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	79	
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	78	
Never Say Die	PAR	78	
Let Us Live	COL	77	
The Gorilla	FOX	77	

Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76	
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	75	
Bridal Suite	MGM	75	
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74	
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	74	
The Lady and the Mob	COL	73	
Boy Friend	FOX	73	

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81	%
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Devil's Island	WAR	78	
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77	
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77	
It Could Happen To You	FOX	77	
Family Next Door	UNIV	76	
Inside Story	FOX	75	
Pacific Liner	RKO	75	
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	74	
Unmarried	PAR	73	
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73	
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	73	
Boy Slaves	RKO	73	
Disbarred	PAR	73	
Ex-Champ	UNIV	73	
Some Like It Hot	PAR	73	

Trapped in the Sky	COL	75	%
Homicide Bureau	COL	74	
Whispering Enemies	COL	74	

Gracie Allen Murder Case	.....PAR.....	72
Undercover Doctor	.....PAR.....	72
King of Chinatown	.....PAR.....	72
Society Lawyer	.....MGM.....	72
Persons in Hiding	.....PAR.....	72
Society Smugglers	.....UNIV.....	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	.....FOX.....	72
The Girl From Mexico	.....RKO.....	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	.....RKO.....	72
Chasing a Dancer	.....FOX.....	71
Nancy Drew, Reporter	.....WAR.....	71
Strange Faces	.....UNIV.....	71
Pirates of the Skies	.....UNIV.....	71
Sorority House	.....RKO.....	71
Big Town Czar	.....UNIV.....	70
For Love or Money	.....UNIV.....	70
On This	.....UNIV.....	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	.....WAR.....	70
Winner Take All	.....FOX.....	70
Secret Service of the Air	.....WAR.....	70
Ambush	.....PAR.....	70
They Made Her a Spy	.....RKO.....	70
Blind Alley	.....RKO.....	70
Torchy For Mayor	.....COL.....	70
The Kid From Texas	.....MGM.....	69
Buildog Drummond's Secret Police	.....PAR.....	69
Everybody's Baby	.....FOX.....	69
Romance of the Redwoods	.....COL.....	68
Code of the Streets	.....UNIV.....	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	.....FOX.....	68
Within The Law	.....MGM.....	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	.....UNIV.....	68
Almost A Gentleman	.....RKO.....	68
Charlie Chan in Reno	.....FOX.....	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	.....COI.....	67
Missing Daughters	.....COL.....	67
Beauty for the Asking	.....RKO.....	66
Sudden Money	.....PAR.....	66
Fixer Dugan	.....RKO.....	65
Boy Trouble	.....PAR.....	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	.....MGM.....	65
Exile Express	.....GN.....	64
Risky Business	.....UNIV.....	64
Tell No Tales	.....MGM.....	64
Sweepstake Winner	.....WAR.....	64
6,000 Enemies	.....MGM.....	63
Inspector Hornleigh	.....FOX.....	61

Undercover Doctor	.....PAR.....	72
King of Chinatown	.....PAR.....	72
Society Lawyer	.....MGM.....	72
Persons in Hiding	.....PAR.....	72
Society Smugglers	.....UNIV.....	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	.....FOX.....	72
The Girl From Mexico	.....RKO.....	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	.....RKO.....	72
Chasing a Dancer	.....FOX.....	71
Nancy Drew, Reporter	.....WAR.....	71
Strange Faces	.....UNIV.....	71
Pirates of the Skies	.....UNIV.....	71
Sorority House	.....RKO.....	71
Big Town Czar	.....UNIV.....	70
For Love or Money	.....UNIV.....	70
On This	.....UNIV.....	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	.....WAR.....	70
Winner Take All	.....FOX.....	70
Secret Service of the Air	.....WAR.....	70
Ambush	.....PAR.....	70
They Made Her a Spy	.....RKO.....	70
Blind Alley	.....RKO.....	70
Torchy For Mayor	.....COL.....	70
The Kid From Texas	.....MGM.....	69
Buildog Drummond's Secret Police	.....PAR.....	69
Everybody's Baby	.....FOX.....	69
Romance of the Redwoods	.....COL.....	68
Code of the Streets	.....UNIV.....	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	.....FOX.....	68
Within The Law	.....MGM.....	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	.....UNIV.....	68
Almost A Gentleman	.....RKO.....	68
Charlie Chan in Reno	.....FOX.....	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	.....COI.....	67
Missing Daughters	.....COL.....	67
Beauty for the Asking	.....RKO.....	66
Sudden Money	.....PAR.....	66
Fixer Dugan	.....RKO.....	65
Boy Trouble	.....PAR.....	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	.....MGM.....	65
Exile Express	.....GN.....	64
Risky Business	.....UNIV.....	64
Tell No Tales	.....MGM.....	64
Sweepstake Winner	.....WAR.....	64
6,000 Enemies	.....MGM.....	63
Inspector Hornleigh	.....FOX.....	61

The Sunset Murder Case	.....GN.....	72
Streets of New York	.....MONO.....	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	.....MONO.....	71
Woman Doctor	.....REF.....	71
North of Shanghai	.....COL.....	71
Pride of the Navy	.....REF.....	70
Tough Kid	.....MONO.....	70
Mysterious Miss X	.....REF.....	70
I Am A Criminal	.....MONO.....	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	.....REF.....	69
Gambling Ship	.....UNIV.....	69
Convict's Code	.....MONO.....	69
I Was A Convict	.....REF.....	68
Navy Secrets	.....MONO.....	68
Federal Man Hunt	.....REF.....	68
Wolf Call	.....MONO.....	68
The Zero Hour	.....REF.....	67
My Wife's Relatives	.....REF.....	67
Long Shot	.....GN.....	67
Forged Passport	.....REF.....	66
First Offenders	.....COL.....	66
Outside These Walls	.....COL.....	65
Mystery Plane	.....MONO.....	64
My Son Is A Criminal	.....COL.....	64
Code of the Secret Service	.....WAR.....	64
Panama Lady	.....RKO.....	63
Street of Missing Men	.....REF.....	63
Star Reporter	.....MONO.....	63
Undercover Agent	.....MONO.....	63
Boy's Reformatory	.....MONO.....	61

Gracie Allen Murder Case	.....PAR.....	72
King of The Turf	.....UA.....	70
One Third of a Nation	.....PAR.....	70
Stolen Life	.....PAR.....	69
Hotel Imperial	.....PAR.....	68
Zenobia	.....UA.....	66
Spirit of Culver	.....UNIV.....	65
The Flying Irishman	.....RKO.....	63
Smiling Along	.....FOX.....	63
Women in the Wind	.....WAR.....	62
Climbing High	.....GB.....	60

IMPORTANT----To Producers and Exhibitors...!

THERE ARE occasionally cases where THE DIGEST figures on production cost will miss by a few thousand of going up or down in classification. This is because of the peculiar system of picture bookkeeping. A player who has not worked for a year will be assigned to a particular picture just at the closing month of his contract, and then his entire salary for the idle year will be applied to a particular picture. Or, a director expected to make only a satisfactory B will turn out a near-hit, and the bookkeepers rush to put all the charges they find loose on his picture. And so it goes.

But as a general thing, you will find that THE DIGEST is giving a straight shot at the target. We could not be fair to exhibitor or producer if we attempted to take into consideration all the freak things that happen in Hollywood when the bookkeepers are turned loose.

We thought this explanation might be handy because we have producers who tell us they finished a picture at \$499,000, only to find that we list it in the half million dollar class; we have directors who tell us they brought a picture in for \$85,000, only to find it worth a quarter million.

And we have exhibitor subscribers who write to tell us that all the salesmen say that every good picture cost at least a million.

But we are pretty sure that we are right when we say that . . . you won't go wrong following THE DIGEST.

Robert E. Welsh

RENEWALS Tell The Story!

THE DIGEST

Inter-Office Communication

June 28th, 1939

Mr. Welsh:

Below is the list of subscription renewals received in the past week.

E. B. Rostermundt, United Artists Exchange, Omaha, Nebraska
E. J. Tilton, Republic Pictures, Des Moines, Iowa
Terry DeLapp, Hollywood, California
Columbia Publicity Department, Hollywood, California
W. E. Barker, United Artists Exchange, Omaha, Nebraska
P. K. Johnston, Majestic Theatre, Dallas, Texas
M. S. Cohn, Strand Theatre, Council Bluffs, Iowa
Jack Braunagel, Paramount Theatre, Provo, Utah
John Krier, Orpheum Theatre, Twin Falls, Idaho
F. E. Judd, Monogram Pictures, Des Moines, Iowa
W. Benjamin, 907 S. Hanley Road, St. Louis, Missouri
W. H. Creal, Beacon Theatre, Omaha, Nebraska
Jefferson Amusement Co., Dallas, Texas
Joe Mankiewicz, MGM Studios, Culver City, Calif.
Charles Pincus, Center Theatre, Salt Lake City
A. W. Anderson, Warner Bros. Exchange, Des Moines, Iowa
D. V. McLucas, United Artists, Omaha, Nebraska
Marion Davies, Cosmopolitan Corp., Beverly Hills
Frank McDonald, Hollywood, Calif.
J. J. Spandau, Universal Pictures, Des Moines, Iowa
Ray Hendry, Intermountain Theatres, Salt Lake City, Utah
William Borack, Intermountain Theatres, Salt Lake City
Harry Rapf, MGM Studios, Culver City, Calif.
Capitol Theatre, Brigham City, Utah
Ted Mendehall, Paramount Pictures, Omaha, Nebraska
Hedda Hopper, Hollywood, Calif.
Alamo Theatre, Chicago, Illinois
Mrs. Mabel Hockenberry, Liberty Theatre, Oakland, Iowa
Joseph Schnitzer, Hollywood, Calif.
Gordon Douglas, Hollywood, Calif.
J. E. Scott, Fox Film Co., Omaha, Nebraska
Bob Burns, West Los Angeles, Calif.
Henry King, Los Angeles, Calif.
Republic Pictures, Omaha, Nebraska
John Stone, Beverly Hills, Calif.
Mel Evidon, Columbia Pictures, Des Moines, Iowa
George Arthur, Paramount Studios, Hollywood, Calif.
Clifford Gans, Los Angeles, Calif.

T C

R. THOMPSON
Circulation Department.

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT---

THE DIGEST

IS THE FASTEST GROWING PAPER IN THE INDUSTRY!

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 20.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JULY 10, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"MAN ABOUT TOWN" SCORES BIG FOR PARAMOUNT

SEE PAGE 4

NOTHING HOT IN THE WEEK'S NEW PREVIEWS

SEE PAGES 11, 12, 13

FIELD MEN FIND SOME GOOD ADVICE FOR EXHIBITORS

SEE PAGE 6

**The
Only
Authentic
Box
Office
Figures
Published**

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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

★ *The*
"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With
"MAN ABOUT TOWN"—117%



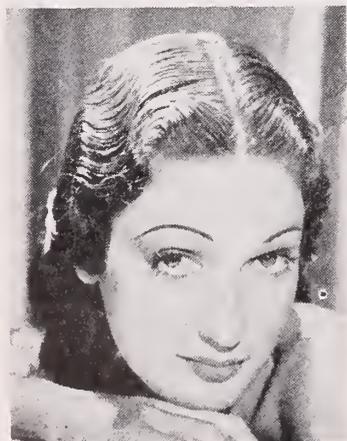
Producer
ARTHUR HORNBLow, JR.



MARK SANDRICH



JACK BENNY



DOROTHY LAMOUR

Featured

EDDIE ANDERSON BETTY GRABLE
E. E. CLIVE ISABEL JEANS
BINNIE BARNES

Screenplay
MORRIE RYSKIND

Based on a Story by
MORRIE RYSKIND - ALLAN SCOTT - Z. MYERS

Photography
TEDDY TETZLAFF

Film Editor
LeROY STONE



EDWARD ARNOLD

THE DIGEST

**The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly**

WE HAVE COMPETITION

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

We wonder if, in all the wonder about current box office problems, the folks of Hollywood have given sufficient thought to the fact that the new day and the new generation—meaning your daughter and my son—have not found quite a number of other things to attract the dimes and nickles on which we formerly thought we of Hollywood possessed first liens.

In other words, do we realize the competition we are up against these days?

Time was, when we could smugly say, "If the masses want entertainment, they have to COME TO US for cheap entertainment."

But motion picture entertainment is no longer cheap. It cuts quite a nick in a family bankroll to take the wifey and two youngsters to a theater charging fifty-five cents a throw.

It makes you very cautious about how many times you go to the theater.

You sit back and wait until word of mouth—your friends, neighbors and relatives—convince you that ONE particular picture is worth that bankroll niche.

* * *

But meanwhile, what do you do?

You have the radio at home. That's free. It gets a bit tiresome with the frequent reappearances of Joe Miller in spectral guise, but anything free can get very tiresome without turning you away.

Then, maybe you find that a two dollar bill at the bowling alley will supply plenty of entertainment. Or a dollar bill at the ball park.

Of course, neither bowling alley nor ball park are as soul-satisfying as a GOOD picture, but then, how can one tell, until after his money is spent, whether he is going to see a GOOD picture?

* * *

We are not writing these words in the profound belief that there is any startling news value in the statement that "We have competition."

We are writing in the belief that maybe the picture

business should take stock of that competition. And we mean—principally on a price basis.

This is treason. We know it.

The Hollywood viewpoint has arrived at the conclusion that our epics are so big and important that a dollar a throw would be cheap for the privilege of seeing them.

The distributor viewpoint has been to gradually, and inexorably, boost the terms and conditions of a contract year by year to the point where admission prices must be as they are.

The exhibitor, struggling soul, has his viewpoint—which results in double bills, Bingo nights, china-ware events, and everything but Irish Sweepstakes.

Aren't we chasing a bull by the tail, and going round and round on a merry-go-round?

* * *

What about a conference of the best minds—who might decide to ditch half of the junk being made, concentrate on the attractions that can meet competition, and maybe—REVOLUTIONARY—return the motion picture to the masses?

It would step on a number of Hollywood toes. It would be tough as hell to be forced to do as the pioneers did—and they made millions—cut the cloth to the market.

But it might be wiser in the end.

Anaemia is a dangerous disease. Principally because you don't know you have it until the bell-ringer approaches.

You can forestall anaemia by catching it early.

Outside of the headaches it might cause in Hollywood—and there will not be a single headache among the capable production executives who really know showmanship—who will be hurt by turning the picture business back to the people?

The answer, of course, is to make all pictures BIG pictures. But if we can't do that, at the least we might try making fewer POOR pictures. We should remember we are selling showmanship in a COMPETITIVE field.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	8 Releases	95
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	30 Releases	93
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	26 Releases	93
4. Warner Brothers	27 Releases	87
5. Paramount	28 Releases	84
6. Universal	18 Releases	84
7. RKO	19 Releases	80
8. Columbia	17 Releases	76
9. Republic	12 Releases	70
10. Monogram	12 Releases	67
11. Grand National	3 Releases	67
12. Gaumont-British	1 Release	63

"MAN ABOUT TOWN" HITTING HIGH DESPITE WEATHER; "DAUGHTERS COURAGEOUS" STRONG

PARAMOUNT—2 Releases

Paramount has the top box office winner this week in "MAN ABOUT TOWN" and also a second release, "GRAND JURY SECRETS," a new programmer.

Jack Benny's latest starring vehicle, "MAN ABOUT TOWN," which had its world's premiere recently in Benny's home town, Waukegan, has since opened up in several other key city first runs and despite summer heat and off conditions is holding quite well so far at a 117% average.

Co-starred with Mr. Benny are Dorothy Lamour and Edward Arnold, while Rochester (Eddie Anderson) is pulling plenty of laughs. Others prominently featured are Binnie Barnes, Betty Grable, Phil Harris and Isabel Jeans.

Mark Sandrich, who for the past three years has been directing the numerous Astaire-Rogers hits for RKO, directed this one as the first on his new Paramount contract. As a result of its success he has since signed a "producer-director" ticket.

Paramount's second release this week, "GRAND JURY SECRETS," is a new programmer from the Harold Hurley unit, which is just doing so-so at a 71% average, indicating that even in spite of a good title that it will have to be double billed with a much stronger attraction due to the lack of marquee names. John Howard of Bulldog Drummond fame, is co-starred with Gail Patrick. Direction was by James Hogan.

WARNERS—4 New Releases

Warners-First National are living up to their reputation this week in two ways. Quality and quantity, for they have four new releases, two of which are fairly good box office pictures, while the other two are just fair programmers.

"DAUGHTERS COURAGEOUS," a sequel to Warners big hit of a few months ago, "Four Daughters," is by far their most outstanding picture of the week, as it is averaging 114% and with hold-over weeks assured it is quite possible that this picture may build considerably. Michael Curtiz directed.

Priscilla, Rosemary and Lola Lane and Gale Page are also starred in "DAUGHTERS COURAGEOUS" and this series is going over so well that Warners are now looking for a third vehicle for the Lane sisters.

Warners' second release this week is a new Dick Powell feature entitled "NAUGHTY BUT NICE," which is doing fairly well at an 85% average. "NAUGHTY BUT NICE" was produced by Warners last fall but as there had been too many Dick Powell pictures released in succession they decided to hold the release on this one over until summer. Incidentally, this was the concluding picture on Dick Powell's seven year Warner Brothers contract and since its expiration he

Of The Fifteen Features Released in the Past Week, Two Rated Over 100%, Two Came Through Okay, And Eleven Were Very Weak.

has not as yet signed up with any other studio, although MGM has an option on his services for one picture.

Sam Bischoff produced and Ray Enright directed.

Warners other two releases are both programmers from the Bryan Foy unit of no special importance. "NANCY DREW, TROUBLE SHOOTER," 71%, is the latest in this series starring Bonita Granville, which although weak as a first run attraction has proven quite popular in the neighborhood houses.

Foy's other programmer, "THE MAN WHO DARED," formerly titled "I AM NOT AFRAID," has a patriotic theme and co-stars Charley Grapewin with Jane Bryan. The picture is not strong enough for single runs but will make satisfactory filler, preferably for a Fri-Sat. booking. It averages 68%.

COLUMBIA—2 New Releases

Columbia has two new releases this week, one of which is going over very well, and the second is a European importation that is taking a nose dive. "GOOD GIRLS GO TO PARIS" is the latest in the comedy series co-starring Joan Blondell and Melvyn Douglas and its first bookings are very good at a 91% average. William Perlberg produced and Al Hall, who has handled all three of the series, also directed this one. Exhibitors will remember the first two comedies of this series, "There's Always A Woman," and "There's That Woman Again" as they have all been fairly good box-office winners.

Columbia's second release this week is an English importation, "CLOUDS OVER EUROPE," which despite its title is a comedy co-starring Laurence Olivier, who was recently seen in Samuel Goldwyn's "Wuthering Heights," the balance of the cast are practically all unknown to American audiences and

thus exhibitors can't expect too much from this one and will probably have to spot it on the lower half of a strong double bill. In New York at the Radio City Music Hall this one held up pretty well as Olivier has a strong following in Little Old New York; but elsewhere throughout the country it has taken quite a nose dive and is only averaging 71%.

RKO—3 New Releases

RKO-Radio Pictures have three new releases this week, one of which is doing fairly good and the other two are rather weak attractions.

"FIVE CAME BACK" has a rather unusual story theme and has been well lauded by the critics, but because of no big star names it is only averaging around 77% on its first booking. Evidently word of mouth advertising may pull this one up a great deal.

Robert Sisk produced under Lee Marcus' supervision and the outstanding direction is accredited to John Farrow.

RKO's other two releases are just fair programmers, also from the Lee Marcus unit. "THE GIRL AND THE GAMBLER," 72%, has been filmed twice before, once under Willard Mack's original title of "The Dove," with Norma Talmadge, and then later "The Girl of the Rio" with Dolores Del Rio. This time Leo Carrillo is starred as "The Best Caballero In All Mexico," with Steffi Duna as "The Dove."

RKO's third and last release is a programmer entitled "ROOKIE COP," 66%. This production will make a good Saturday booking as it has a big appeal for the men and kids. Tim Holt, Virginia Weidler and Frankie Thomas are featured.

UNIVERSAL—1 Release

Universal's only new release this week is a new mystery melodrama, "THE HOUSE OF FEAR," which is just doing so-so at a 69% average. Which is about all that is expected from these cheap programmers that are used as fillers to big percentage pictures. Irene Hervey and Bill Gargan are featured.

FOX—1 New Release

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release this week is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, the latest in the Moto series, entitled "MR. MOTO TAKES A VACATION," 68%. In spite of the fact that this one has a little better than average cast it still doesn't seem to be clicking at the box office, probably indicating that the public is not especially interested in this famous Oriental detective.

REPUBLIC—1 Release

Republic's new release this week, "S O S TIDAL WAVE," 67%, has a very unusual theme that will cause a certain amount of comment as it deals with the future of television. However, due to the lack of any marquee

(Continued on Page 5)

15 New Releases Not in Last Issue

2 Over 100%.....2 Okay.....11 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Man About Town	PAR	117	110
2. Daughters Courageous	WAR	114	110
3. Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	91	90
4. Naughty But Nice	WAR	85	90
5. Five Came Back	RKO	77	85
6. The Girl and the Gambler	RKO	72	75
7. Clouds Over Europe	COL	71	75
8. Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR	71	70
9. Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	71	75
10. House of Fear	UNIV	69	70
11. Man Who Dared	WAR	68	70
12. Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation	FOX	68	70
13. S. O. S. Tidal Wave	REP	67	65
14. Rookie Cop	RKO	66	70
15. Wanted By Scotland Yard	MONO	66	65

THE HIGHLIGHTER FINDS NO REVOLUTIONS BUT PLENTY OF INTERESTING NEWS ITEMS

An American Presented To Americans

The industry did not turn any somersaults this week, so there are none of those Highlights that call for new arrangements of the deck, but it did produce one Highlight that appealed to us as having far-reaching value. . . We refer to the J. P. McEvoy article in The Saturday Evening Post which covered the subject "Darryl Zanuck" under the title, "He's Got Something." . . . Not because it is the first time that any picture or theatrical figure has been glorified in the sacrosanct Post pages, but because it presented to the American public a down-to-earth American who is working on a job just as they work on their jobs—and probably harder than most—in a down-to-earth manner. . . . That's worth money to the industry. . . . McEvoy can be good under the most trying of circumstances, but he is best when happy. . . . And he was apparently happy writing about a Nebraska boy who is still a Nebraska boy at heart in his ability to keep his feet in good American earth when planning entertainment and dividends. . . . The article was a relief from the "poseur" blasts about our big figures which frequently break the national magazines, and do the industry more harm than good. . . . McEvoy saw his subject and told the common folk that out here in Hollywood there is a big guy who is still just as earthy as they are. . . . And in between the lines, he gave the thought to many that they can get just as far as he can—if they are willing to work as hard. . . . The Highlighter will take that over a dozen preachments headed: "I Am An American."

We Hate To Be Skeptical—But—

Local trade papers headline that Grand National's financial problems may be solved by a Government loan from one of those alphabetical agencies. . . . Of course, headlines are scarce these days. . . . But we will be ready to eat a nice, soft cereal-like hat any one of these days if any Government agency at the present moment engages in resuscitating any ailing picture company. . . . And if they ever did it for one—oh, boy, what a rush to Washington. . . . We would be the first in line with some sort of idea for a producing and distributing company. . . . We don't know just what idea at the moment, but we would probably have many weary hours standing in the line to think one up. . . . Just imagine: The president of Hokokus Pictures Corporation sees that collections are going to nose-dive with the approach of the summer season, and as the aftermath of a parade of flops. . . . Does he worry? . . . Naw! . . . He just presses a button and makes a reservation for the Washington plane. . . . "I'm going down to RFD to pick up a half a million. . . . They got it there in bales. . . . I'll be back on tomorrow morning's plane." . . . We think it must be summer in New York, where these stories are originating.

9 Features "Going Up"			
		Was	Now
1. Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	130	135
2. Juarez	WAR	122	127
3. Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102	107
4. It's A Wonderful World	MGM	96	99
5. Captain Fury	UA	95	98
6. The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	78	81
7. Romance of the Redwoods	COL	68	73
8. Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX	68	70
9. Missing Daughters	COL	67	71

Rounding The Corners At The Studios

Studio news of the week, while not abounding in sensations, was plentiful in interesting items. . . . We liked the news that MGM is ready to team Gable and Loy pretty soon, because that means health to box offices. . . . Remember how "To Hot To Handle" came along at a needed moment? . . . Well, just figure that this next one, "Spur of Pride," will be on the heels of "Gone With the Wind." . . . That's something to think of, isn't it? . . . Gosh, how we like showmanship. . . . And then there is Zanuck's teaming of Al Jolson and Don Ameche for "Swanee River." . . . Spell the elements out any way you want. . . . Jolson, who can be ranked in modern day American showmanship with George M. Cohan, and Eddie Cantor and Bing Crosby, knocked 'em over with his surprise hit in "Rose of Washington Square." . . . Perhaps some of the intellectuals out of the cradle thought he was a past day favorite. . . . He showed 'em. . . . Now he's teamed with the boy who is selling himself weekly to the newer generation of fans, Don Ameche. . . . And one of these days they will let Don Ameche go on a key city personal appearance tour that will set him—and the producers—for years to come. . . . On top of that put the swingy, nostalgic, gol-durned happy title: "Swanee River." . . . It can't miss. . . . Borrowing Mark Hellinger's microphone, we must add: "Don't say we didn't tell you so."

The Second Guesser Craves Another Page

And the Second Guesser isn't alone. . . . A number of our readers say that he talks about subjects more pertinent to the ordinary things of motion picture life than our ponderous editorials and blunt reviews. . . . Be that as it may, we didn't have room to give him a page this week, but we must let him in for his big belly-

7 Features "Going Down"			
		Was	Now
1. Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	103	100
2. Maisie	MGM	87	82
3. The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	84	72
4. Mystery of White Room	UNIV	73	70
5. Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	72	66
6. For Love or Money	UNIV	70	66
7. Secret Service of Air	WAR	70	64

ache. . . . First of all, you must know that the Skouras Brothers must have decided that if Warners are American they are too. . . . So there is a great Southern California competition between Warners and the Skouras boys as to who—or should that be whom, or maybe "which"—is the most American. . . . Warners do it with pictures which write American history, so Skouras is counteracting with a trailer which calls on all patrons to stand on their feet and take an oath of allegiance. . . . Funny part about this is, that despite the Warners and Skourases, the United States is still not at war with anybody. . . . Maybe we should put a chip on our shoulder and start a war on behalf of the fraternal brothers Warners and Skouras. . . . We will leave it to them, the Arbitration Boards, the Hays Office, and the Breen Committee to pick the enemy. . . . But, by all good shotgun standards, we will be ready to rush off to war when they get ready. . . . Gosh, we used all these words and we didn't tell what The Second Guesser said. He just droned, "I'm getting tired standing up in the place of amusement which has cost me fifty-five cents to salute my flag. . . . I think I knew the flag in kindergarten. . . . As a matter of fact, I think I saw it once in France. . . . And besides, I like those soft seats they have in picture theaters. . . . Mebbe I'm not an American."

Oh, Shucks, There's More Fun At The Studios

Why let these fellows get us upset about trendscental problems when there are items at the studios that should be chronicled? . . . Should not someone mention that Sam Goldwyn has taken his hat in his hand and—by way of Jimmy Roosevelt—announced that he will make the life history of Horace Mann, father of the public school system—so they say—and John D. Rockefeller. . . . With all due respects to Jimmy Roosevelt, we will await with anxious yawning the day they make a dramatic subject out of austere Horace Mann, or a saint out of John D. Rockefeller.

Releases of the Week

(Continued from Page 4)

names whatsoever, not very much can be expected from this one as a box office draw. The featured players are Ralph Byrd, Kay Sutton, Frank Jenks and George Barbier. John Auer directed under Armand Schaefer's supervision.

MONOGRAM—Also 1 Release

Monogram in falling behind on its production schedule have decided to release a few English pictures to keep their exhibitors satisfied. The first of these English-made pictures is "WANTED BY SCOTLAND YARD," 66%, which was formerly "Dangerous Fingers." As the English cast is unknown to the American public, not too much can be expected from this one.



J. Maurice Ridge

FIELD MEN RELAY ADVICE ON SIGNING CONTRACTS

THIS WEEK'S REPORT FROM THE CORNBELT



Harry E. Nichols

Advice To Exhibitors On Making New Contracts

Your Field Investigators picked up another scrap of paper in an exhibitor's office the other day, that is said to have blown out here from Michigan. It reads in part: "If you are buying a group of pictures at varied prices, be sure that all the pictures are listed on the same piece of paper, the same contract, otherwise they are considered as separate contracts of which the Exchange can reject one and accept the other, unless you have written on the contracts that "this contract is contingent upon the acceptance of all contracts taken this date."

In addition to the above information for exhibitors in making his contract, it shows him how and gives him the wording to be used in a rubber stamp to be placed on all contracts with respect to non-theatrical competition. It appears that there are a lot of free shows being put over out in the small mid-western towns, by merchant associations. Some of them are almost free, and under a tent, or in a corral, and on a Saturday night frequently, much to the financial loss of the exhibitor. Of course none of these practices take place in the towns controlled by A. H. Blank. He knows how to stop it right now. Exhibitors in Iowa and Nebraska would do well to know Mr. Blank and work with him. He could help them out of many a knotty situation, and he is just the kind of a man, who would lend a helping hand, to any worthy cause. He too was a former small theater owner.

The following wording is used by Michigan exhibitors to keep out non-theatrical competition, and is placed on their contracts and initialed by both parties at the time of signing: "It is understood and agreed that none of the above productions will be sold to any school, church or other source except a theater operating as a place of commercial amusement, charging an admission or taking a collection within the limits of this city or for

free showings anywhere within ten miles of this city. If same is done it shall constitute a violation of the protection of this contract. This contract also contingent on following protection being granted, to-wit:"

Exhibitors Learning About Court Decisions

Exhibitors out in the middlewest are just awakening to the situation with respect to the contracts that have been dubbed "Unilateral" by the courts. They never knew until right recently that these contracts that have been held illegal by the courts, cannot be enforced against them. In fact, few have been found who ever knew how sweeping the Supreme Court's decision in the Inter-State's case from Texas was, and how it preserved their legal rights in their contractual relations with the distributor. One exhibitor operating in a small town where several hundred men had been employed in an industry, that permanently closed, cutting his receipts in twain, told us he had applied to one major company for relief in rentals, and was told they could do nothing about it, that it was not their fault the town went dead, and were demanding their pound of flesh, in the face of the fact that his gross receipts were not regularly below the film rental he was paying this company. He was willing to keep the town, prepared to stand a loss, until such time as other industry comes along to absorb the 600 idle men, but could not take it all on the chin. When he was told his rights under his contract, he marveled, and asked why this distributor had not told him his rights. Again and again evidence out here shows that those who want a fair trade practice act approved by the customer, have failed utterly to do those acts, which all other industries spend millions to accomplish, "gain the confidence of the customer, through a better understanding of their mutual problems!"

Tax Grabbers Get New Angle in Des Moines

"If a stock salesman, selling his wares, does a good job, he at least is paid a commission that enables him to 'blow' the town, if it does not pay dividends and blows up like some of the product we have to sell and collect for," chortled one of the Forgotten Men hereabouts, "but we fellows just have to go back to another convention and be cajoled into greater zeal, as each succeeding year rolls around.

An evidence of the unequal distribution of the box office dollar between studio and distribution, is shown right here in Des Moines.

Last year when the film folks were hailed before the Assessors, to tell about the value of the properties within the bailiwick, the cagey tax folks suggested a healthy increase in assessed valuation. This was a new angle to the Forgotten Men. Always it had been they who had been placed in a position to ask ever increased prices for their wares. But now comes along the representatives of the people, and it is said those who are charged with the responsibility of getting more and more money to keep WPA workers happily leaning on shovels, called attention to the salaries paid studio folks, and demanded their pound of flesh. "If you can pay million dollar salaries to studio folks, you can pay more to support your state," quoth the irate tax folks, so the story was related. The Forgotten Men again put up the argument that their stockholders (Chase Bank and others) were the people to be considered. "But let the stockholders run their business like they do in other industries, and clean their own houses," the tax boys came back to the men trying to defend their companies. Up went the taxes. So another evidence of how the stockholders get it in the neck, because of the unequal distribution of profits, between those who actually bring in the revenue, and the folks who run the studios, in so many instances for the benefit of themselves and all the relatives, even un-

to the fourth generations and cousins.

The Lowdown On This Year's Selling Trickery

Now that the selling season is on, the foxy grandpas in the home offices of the companies, have cunningly set about to secure contracts that will guarantee their respective outfits as much gross money this year as last for this season's products, notwithstanding the edict from Washington to observe the Queensbury rules against gouging eyes and hitting below the belt.

Out here in the land of tall corn some companies are offering two plans, or rather two sets of prices for the features; one if the exhibitor buys the shorts and all; the other if he buys only the features. The latter one obviously higher, and sufficiently so to take care of the possible loss from shorts, as well as the possibility of there being a ten to twenty percent elimination, under the proposed code.

Another method employed is for the salesman to go into his exhibitor friend, and cajole him into buying and signing the contract for the shorts, and after that document is signed, sealed and delivered into the hands of the Forgotten Men, he starts calling his shots on the features. If he is successful in this presentation, he has sold his product 100 percent, crammed down the customer's throat, the whole program and technically has not violated the Code with respect to having to buy shorts, in order to get the feature product.

Thus the merry chase goes on. Sincerity of purpose on the part of the Code framers goes on, much like the politicians used to steam roller a candidate through a convention. And yet the distributors are tearing their hair, because exhibitor organizations are refusing to accept a Ten Commandments, for the conduct of their business, proffered by a group of men, who are proclaiming they have gotten "religion."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



THE HONOR BOX WINNER

*Mark
Sandrich*
DIRECTED

In Preparation:
As Producer-Director
"Buck Benny Rides Again"

'MAN

A

ABOUT

PARAMOUNT

TOWN'

PICTURE

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

*Jack
Benny*

Exclusive Management
ARTHUR S. LYONS

'MAN

A

ABOUT

PARAMOUNT

TOWN'

PICTURE

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



EDDIE

Rochester

ANDERSON

In Person at The Paramount Theatre
Los Angeles
Starting Thursday, July 13th

'MAN

A

ABOUT

PARAMOUNT

TOWN'

PICTURE

"They Shall Have Music" B. O. Problem

UNITED ARTISTS

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer Samuel Goldwyn
 Associate Producer Robert Riskin
 Director Archie Mayo
 Screenplay: Irmgard Von Cube, John Howard Lawson.
 Star Jascha Heifetz
 Featured: Andrea Leeds, Joel McCrea, Gene Reynolds, Walter Brennan, Porter Hall, Terry Kilburn, Walter Tetley, Chuck Stubbs, Tommy Kelly, Jacqueline Nash, Alfred Newman, Mary Ruth, John St. Polis, Alexander Schonberg, Marjorie Main, Arthur Hohl, Paul Harvey, "Zero," Peter Meremblum California Junior Symphony.
 Photographer Gregg Toland
 Art Director James Basevi
 Musical Director Alfred Newman
 Film Editor Sherman Todd
 Time 120 minutes

Samuel Goldwyn will undoubtedly turn in a tremendous world market on "They Shall Have Music"; only time will tell what the picture will do in the American mass market.

A reviewer is compelled to begin with appreciation of Sam Goldwyn's sincerity in going all the way to present classical music, and the height of violin technique to the picture public. This fellow, Goldwyn, has a broad red streak down his back, without a tinge of yellow. Then, a reviewer must chronicle the ingenious skill with which the writers and Archie Mayo, director, have woven a down-to-earth, honest-to-goodness picture yarn, in between the musical moments.

It is a great job of picture making. Which still leaves its box office fate at the beck of American mass audiences something of a doubt. On the foreign market: There can be no doubt. It will be a clean-up.

It would seem somewhat presumptuous to report that Heifetz plays the violin as no one has ever played it for the screen. It is news

CURRENT REVIEWS

	None	Over 100%	3 Okay	3 Weak		
1. They Shall Have Music					UA	90
2. On Borrowed Time					MGM	85
3. Career					RKO	75
4. Clouds Over Europe					COL	75
5. They All Come Out					MGM	70
6. Million Dollar Legs					PAR	70

to report that the writers and Mayo contrived to make a pretty good "Dead End Kids With Music" yarn serve for the frame-work. This they do. As a matter of fact, when the picture ended, your reviewer was lowbrow enough to be a bit bored of the excess of concert and symphonic music, while he might have been willing to accept a reel or more of the kid story.

The picture will be a key city clean-up in New York, New England, and most of the Seaboard states. As it goes further hinterland, it will weaken. Most wives have trouble enough getting husbands of twenty years standing out to hear a concert, without expecting they will rush—not run—to the nearest ticket window to spend an evening with symphonic music. The family slippers are too comfortable.

A top-note direction job by Archie Mayo keeps the story interest on high. Built from a "Dead End" premise, it finds capable Gene Reynolds as one of the kids who has the spark of music within his soul. At his worst period, he encounters a school of music which Walter Brennan and daughter Andrea Leeds are conducting for the poor youngsters who can't pay for music lessons. Joel McCrea is a sort of sixth finger, trying to help the impoverished school. The plot works around, after many fine picture scenes that show the Mayo trademark, and which get plenty audience appre-

ciation, to the point where Heifetz saves the day.

As a job of picture-making it definitely puts Archie Mayo back on the pedestal that he should never have left by jaunting to Europe and other spots. The kids are great. In fact, better than that, if you know the right words. McCrea and Leeds are dropped in a background setting that would not be so good if they were not so capable. Walter Brennan does a music master role which no one had the courage to make German, thus Walter was left up in the air without a dialect so he finished being Walter Brennan with a moustache.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: For class audiences, particularly where you have the opportunity for a build-up with local highbrow organizations, a knockout. For run of the mill, marquee appeal, it needs some consideration. Previewed July 6th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Music lovers will unquestionably find "They Shall Have Music" absorbing entertainment. The lay audience will find it both impressive and heart-tuggingly moving because of the dramatic effect of its musical investiture and interlaced story."

VARIETY: "An enchanting impressive picture, built around the brilliant musicianship of Jascha Heifetz is 'They Shall Have Music'—a screen event of the season, from which producer and exhibitors may expect highest satisfaction."

"Clouds Over Europe" Good---But British

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer Irving Asher
 Director Tim Whelan
 Screenplay Ian Dalrymple
 Based on story by: Brock Williams, Jack Whittingham, Arthur Wimperis.
 Stars Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson
 Featured: Valerie Hobson, George Curzon, George Merritt, Gus McNaughton, David Tree, Sandra Storme, Hay Petrie, Frank Fox, George Butler, Gordon McLeod, John London.
 Photographer Harry Stradling
 Musical Director Muir Mathieson
 Film Editor Hugh Stewart
 Time 93 minutes

This is an English picture that the carriage trade will enjoy just as much as any that Hollywood has to offer. The problem, of course, concerns the great mass of American theatre-goers, and whether they will accept the veddy veddy British atmosphere of the picture and its players without having the inducement of a well-known Hollywood star. For Laurence Olivier is as yet hardly to be compared with either Leslie Howard (Pygmalion) or Robert Donat (The Citadel, Mr. Chips) no matter what may happen in the future.

So much for a warning to exhibitors. As for its entertainment values, the film in its light moments, is a thoroughly pleasing adventure yarn. It weakens only when it becomes serious and descends into the "Flash Gordon," "Buck Rogers" school.

The story has extreme timeliness in the fact that it deals with a peculiar succession of naval and aerial disasters of the three great democratic powers. Ralph Richardson, a home office sleuth, believes that foreign agents are responsible and in this view he is quite correct. Gentlemen with heavy Teutonic accents are operating, in a freighter at sea, twenty-fifth century device which apparently puts all machinery, be it miles away, out of commission at the turn of a dial.

Laurence Olivier is a test pilot for a British airplane factory. In bringing down his ship the enemy catches a Tartar for he leads other captured pilots in a desperate attempt to gain control of the freighter. And the English navy, like the U. S. Marines, arrives in the nick of time.

Valerie Hobson, with Olivier, share the romantic roles of the film, but it is Richardson who really dominates the picture. He is very, very good as the whimsical, umbrella carrying

detective. Olivier, unfortunately, has a role which gives him little if any opportunity to match his performance in "Wuthering Heights."

Picture was directed by Tim Whelan, who maintains a fast-flowing pace throughout the entire unfolding of the story. Irving Asher produced the story by Brock Williams, Jack Whittingham and Arthur Wimperis. Scenario was by Ian Dalrymple.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Where there is a top American draw on the marquee a good adventure yarn that will satisfy. Previewed June 29th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Smart and breezy, Irving Asher's British-made 'Clouds Over Europe' will be a welcome relief from formula-patterned domestic product currently bulking in the American market. It has timeliness and a swiftness of pace which will make it particularly enticing as summer theatre fare."

VARIETY: "Sufficiently potent to overcome its only two handicaps—a serious title and lack of American b. o. names—'Clouds Over Europe' is a comedy that will delight all brands of audience on this side of the Atlantic."

HERE AND THEREABOUTS IN HOLLYWOOD

WINTER IN SUMMER: Louis Lighton isn't busy enough with his important pictures, he has turned promoter. . . . But only in the sense that you and I have a hobby. . . . The Buddy Lighton hobby is a new spot at Pine Needles for Summer skiing. . . . Helping to christen the spot—and having a lot of fun doing it were: the Bob Taylors, the Gary Coopers, the Henry Fondas, the Ralph Bellamys, Brian Aherne, Kay Francis, and Heather Thatcher. . . . Gosh, it sounds funny to talk about these show-folk couples in the same marital phrases that the lay newspapers must use in their society columns.

* * *

CIVIL WAR . . . the series between the Hollywood and Los Angeles baseball teams last week brought out the picture colony in force—to root for Gail Patrick's Hollywood team. . . . A number of

them even doubled up by patronizing hubby Bob Cobb's Brown Derby before the game. . . . Among those sighted: Bob Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck, and the Zeppo Marxes. All in sport clothes in preparation for an evening of hot-dog eating and raucous cheering. . . . Seems funny to go from the Brown Derby to a hot dog, but that is what baseball will do to you.

* * *

CHEERFUL NOTE: One of the most pleasant marriages ever occurring in Hollywood was the ceremony which made the younger Gloria Swanson into Mrs. Robert Anderson. . . . Trust the elder Gloria to use good taste. . . . But it was good taste. . . . The youngsters stepped on the gangplank without any urging from candid cameramen—the boys in the profession respected their desire for a really human wedding—they didn't ask

for anything in the way of publicity. . . . As a matter of fact, we guess they just wanted to get married—as ladies and gentlemen do. . . . They did. . . . More happiness to them.

* * *

HOPEFUL NOTE: We chronicled the young Gloria Vanderbilt's first appearances in our Hollywood niteries a few weeks ago, with the thought that in view of the New York courts and grandma, the talent scouts would be wasting their time on seeking that sacrosanct "Vanderbilt" name for a picture. . . . But we may have been wrong. . . . The gal's mother is nibbling. . . . And a nibble to a ten percenter is a whale. . . . At least he can talk afterwards about the big fish he almost had—and which escaped by the slip of a hook.

* * *

SORRY TO HEAR: The death

of Leopold Wyler. . . . Only someone who knows William Wyler, and Robert, and Gaston, can appreciate the iron-bound family feeling that exists under the tent marked "Wyler." . . . Our sympathy to the boys, doubly strong, because we also had the pleasure of many meetings with the proud father.

* * *

SOUR NOTE: Quite a number of our best people are complaining about a local columnist who is running strongly to this sort of item: "Whose wife was seen with what producer's wife just as Director So-and-So left the room, the other night, or was it tomorrow?" . . . Trouble about this sort of writing is that they pick it up in the East and decide that Hollywood is Sally Rand on a rampage. . . . More personal, is the fact that a dozen wives and husbands start checking their Yale keys.

"On Borrowed Time" Not For Masses

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Producer Sidney Franklin
Director Harold S. Bucquet
Play Paul Osborn
Novel Lawrence Edward Watkin
Screenplay: Alice D. G. Miller, Frank O'Neill, Claudine West.
Featured: Lionel Barrymore, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Beulah Bondi, Henry Travers, Grant Mitchell, Eily Malyon, Una Merkel, Bobs Watson, Nat Pendleton, James Burke, Chas. Waldron, Ian Wolfe, Phillip Terry, Truman Bradley.
Photographer Joseph Ruttenberg
Musical Score Franz Waxman
Art Director Cedric Gibbons
Film Editor George Boemler
Time 93 minutes

You will be deluged in highbrow critical raves about this picture. We are willing to stand on our own broken-arched feet and tell you right now that half the critics won't know what they are talking about, and the other half will sincerely be mixing their opinion of a picture with deserved tributes to fine acting.

An evening of talk about Death, interspersed with "relief" in the form of several spots of discussion on mental cases, may find an audience on Broadway, where spectators have to think over what they buy before they timidly approach the ticket speculator, but it is not for the theater that must live with its community.

And, truth to tell, neither is it art. If any-

one beyond the age of sophomoric philosophy can tell us what the message is in "On Borrowed Time," or whatinell it is trying to say, we will take them up on a high mountain and present them with all they see.

Some key spots will open okay on the strength of the vague Broadway reputation; they will die on the word of mouth. Average houses will find their managers trying to alibi to customers for bringing folks out to an evening of gloom and suicide-inspiration.

If you desire to know the story: It seems there was an unpleasant family in which the only two sympathetic characters were Lionel Barrymore and a youngster, Bobs Watson. And in the garden—there is a tree. If someone gets up in the tree and Mr. Barrymore makes a wish—honest to goodness—that party can't get down from the tree.

There appears upon the scene, a Mr. Brink. In case you are dull, we will explain that this means "the brink of eternity." In case you are smart you will probably say this is the type of pun titling that went out of style with Charles Dickens.

So Mr. Brink delivers his message that he is ready to take Lionel, but the latter knows that he wants to stick around long enough to keep Bobs Watson from the hands of a twenty-three aunt. So Barrymore inveigles Mr. Brink up into the tree and the darn fool has to stay there for seven reels.

It is all solved by having both Barrymore

and Bobs go off strolling with Mr. Brink. Cheerful thought.

Performances are great. Barrymore, playing in a wheel chair throughout, and the kid genius, Bobs Watson, turn in highlight jobs. Beulah Bondi is not far behind as Barrymore's sympathetic wife. Eily Malyon does a fine job of the crusted aunt, within the harsh limits of the characterization. Support is excellent.

Sidney Franklin as producer, and Harold Bucquet, as director, combine in a fine technical job in the accepted MGM school. But it is just one of those subjects that will live its box office life "on borrowed time."

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Unless you have a gasping highbrow trade—a la New England—be careful how you spot it. Previewed June 29th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has a laudable entry for Academy honors in "On Borrowed Time." Unquestionably the picture will make a strong plea for critical artistic recognition on the basis of purpose, presentation and histrionics. Its fate at the box office, too, should be viewed with optimism, for it is that type of picture which will build grosses on word-of-mouth."

VARIETY: "This is probably the most novel film within memory of most theatre-goers, admirably adapted from the play Paul Osborn made from the novel of Lawrence Edward Watkin. The picture develops tremendous emotional reaction, and, despite its macabre premise, will have for limited audiences satisfactory entertainment, even amusement, so strangely blended are the earthiness and the spiritual elements of the material."

"Career" Will Satisfy As Programmer

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
Producer.....Robert Sisk
Director.....Leigh Jason
Original.....Phil Stong
Screenplay.....Dalton Trumbo
Adaptation.....Bert Granet
Featured: Anne Shirley, Edward Ellis, Samuel S. Hinds, Janet Beecher, Leon Errol, Alice Eden, John Archer, Raymond Hatton, Maurice Murphy, Barrison Groone, Charles Drake, Hobart Cavanaugh.
Time.....52 minutes

A homespun program feature. Any exhibitor who played "A Man To Remember" can gauge this one in its correct spot, for although it is not in any sense a sequel to "A Man To Remember," it bears the same relation to it as does "Daughters Courageous" to "Four Daughters." That is, it has the same sort of characters and the same type of plot without continuing in any way the story of its predecessor.

Another angle for exhibs will be that in the picture are exhibited two winners of Jesse Lasky's "Gateway To Hollywood" radio program which has doubtless built up a great deal of

strength in its many weeks on the air. And, amazingly enough in this instance, the two winners have definite dialogue roles in the film, one of them, John Archer, having almost as much footage as longstanding Hollywood players.

And, finally, for midwestern exhibs, the story, from Iowan Phil Stong's novel, is in the way of a tribute to his native state. Very cleverly, at the opening and several other times during the picture, a commentator pleasingly tells of the immense agricultural strength of this great midwestern state. This in no way interferes with the story but rather adds to its effectiveness.

The action takes place in the depression years of the early thirties, and deals with a banker, Samuel S. Hinds, who is not as honest as he looks nor as shrewd as the townspeople believe him to be. Edward Ellis, the town's hardworking merchant, realizes the truth and hastens Hinds' downfall but eventually furnishes the means to save him from prison.

Anne Shirley and John Archer are the two young sweethearts of the story. Anne finally renounces the boy to save her father. Leon

Errol is the town drunk who redeems himself with a package-wrapping invention.

Alice Eden, the other "Gateway" winner, and Maurice Murphy are seen in the subordinate romantic roles. Janet Beecher is the wife of Edward Ellis. Raymond Hatton plays a drunken pal of Errol.

Screenplay was by Dalton Trumbo from Bert Granet's adaptation of Stong's novel. Leigh Jason directed, a far cry from his original sophisticated successes. But he acquits himself splendidly, giving the picture a "homey" touch that will appeal to so many American families.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: At its best for the midwest or rural sections, and where interest was aroused in the Lasky air contest. Family fare. Previewed July 2nd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Career' falls accurately into the peculiar category of RKO's earlier 'A Man To Remember.' It is, however, more painstakingly created and given more costly production.

VARIETY: "Unusual amount of legitimate heart tug has been captured in this homespun drama laid against the Iowa cornbelt."

"They All Come Out" A Bit Too Factual

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer.....Jack Chertok
Director.....Jacques Tourneur
Original and Screenplay.....John C. Higgins
Featured: Rita Johnson, Tom Neal, Bernard Nedell, Edward Gargan, John Gallaudet,
Photographers: Clyde De Vinna, Paul C. Vogel
Film Editor.....Ralph E. Goldstein
Time.....70 minutes

There are many spots, metropolitan centers in particular, where "They All Come Out" can be bumped for extra money. Because it is a sincere, documentary treatment, of the prison problem. There are rural spots where they will like this vicarious living with the hard-boiled gentry.

So the picture can be chalked up as a successful effort, without at any time breaking the

bounds of program classification. Heavily exploited, it will make money in key centers, while disappointing many who will expect the Warner Brother bing-bang treatment on any prison yarn.

The picture started out to be a three or four reeler on the lowdown facts of prisons and those who come out of them. It probably was a corking briefie. Stretching it to feature length retains the original inherent values, but results in a bit of tiresomeness, because it had never been plotted for that length.

The theme is the aid that prison authorities give to prisoners as they come forth from the bars. Our characters are a boy and a girl. Prison scenes, and, in fact, all scenes in the picture bear a strong stamp of authenticity.

Jack Chertok has handled the production reins well, with Jacques Tourneur turning in a

direction job that warrants him better opportunities.

fact that what started out as a document wound up missing just slightly as imaginative fiction.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will get lots of money in spots where you can lay heavy on the prison angle. But where they don't enjoy an evening with cons, let it ride by on the bottom end of the bill. Previewed June 30th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'They All Come Out' becomes a bit tiresome and would serve its purpose much better if it were reduced back to four reels."

VARIETY: "This is a documentary film in that it presents facts, but it is also excellent entertainment in that it presents these facts about the U.S. Federal Prisons with dramatic impact in a gripping story."

"Million Dollar Legs" Fair Collegiate

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer.....William C. Thomas
Director.....Nick Grinde
Screenplay: Lewis R. Foster, Richard English
Original.....Lewis R. Foster
Featured: Betty Grable, John Hartley, Donald O'Connor, Jackie Coogan, Dorothea Kent, Joyce Mathews, Peter Hayes, Larry Crabbe.
Time.....63 minutes

Here is another one of those Paramount rah-rah college pictures, this one utilizing as one of its most thrilling moments a big racing sequence lifted almost in its entirety from "Sing, You Sinners." However, they did go to the trouble of removing the close-ups of Bing Crosby and Fred MacMurray.

The picture is also in the way of a sequel to an earlier collegiate film of the year in which Hank Luisetti appeared and strikes about the same entertainment level as that one.

There may be some folk who still for for the old college try in the last reel, but even these usually demand a few musical trimmings and some amusing new angle.

Also, there seems to be no apparent reason for the title "Million Dollar Legs," as the picture deals entirely with crew racing with nary a beauty contest in sight. Of course, Betty Grable does wander about in some very form fitting clothes, but pleasing as this sight may be it is hardly enough to carry a feature picture. At any rate, not this picture.

Story concerns the problem of Peter Hayes, campus go-getter, who decides to make his letter before leaving college. He picks on crew, considering himself a perfect coxswain, and eventually overcoming all obstacles with the aid of his teammates, is instrumental in defeating the rival college in the BIG race.

Incidentally, this Peter Hayes, who looks

somewhat like Fred Waring, registered with a likeable personality at the preview showing. He appears to have the makings of an ace supporting player. Betty Grable, who has little to do, and John Hartly who has less, are billed at the top of the cast. Jackie Coogan and Dorothea Kent are also seen. Donald O'Connor is a youthful jockey.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will just get by where they go for anything collegiate. The title will cause disappointment. Previewed July 5th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount's 'Million Dollar Legs' is a trim little affair which moves along at a merry clip tossing off nifties in the vernacular of the current collegiate generation."

VARIETY: "Light comedy of collegiate pattern, with plenty of action and picturesque sports contests, 'Million Dollar Legs' will do okay as summer fare programmer, especially in houses catering to youth."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunee Din	RKO	180
Dodge City	WAR	158
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	139
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	135
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131

Juarez	WAR	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Love Affair	RKO	118
Man About Town	PAR	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Midnight	PAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	103
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	100
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	100

Zaza	PAR	98
Captain Fury	UA	98
Man of Conquest	REP	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Talisman	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93

The Mikado	UNIV	90
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87

Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
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Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pyemallon	MGM	131
Dark Victory	WAR	128
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	127

Huckleberry Finn	MGM	116
Daughters Courageous	WAR	114
The Beachcomber	PAR	110

Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
--------------------------	-----	-----

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	94

They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	91
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	88
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
Naughty But Nice	WAR	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Maisie	MGM	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	81
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
The Gorilla	FOX	77
Five Came Back	RKO	77

Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	75
Bridal Suite	MGM	75
The Lady and the Mob	COL	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	74

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
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Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
It Could Happen To You	FOX	77
Family Next Door	UNIV	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	74
Unmarried	PAR	73
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Ex-Champ	UNIV	73
Some Like It Hot	PAR	73
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	73
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	73

Trapped in the Sky	COL	75
Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	74

Streets of New York..... MONO..... 71
 Mysterious Mr. Wong..... MONO..... 71
 Woman Doctor..... REP..... 71
 North of Shanghai..... COL..... 71

King of Chinatown PAR..... 72
 Society Lawyer..... MGM..... 72
 Persons in Hiding..... PAR..... 72
 Society Smugglers..... UNIV..... 72
 Mr. Moto's Last Warning..... FOX..... 72
 Twelve Crowded Hours..... RKO..... 72
 Winner Take All..... FOX..... 72
 Chasing Danger..... FOX..... 72
 The Girl and the Gambler..... RKO..... 72
 Undercover Doctor..... PAR..... 71
 The Saint Strikes Back..... RKO..... 71
 Nancy Drew, Reporter..... WAR..... 71
 Pirates of the Skies..... UNIV..... 71
 Sorority House..... RKO..... 71
 Grand Jury Secrets..... PAR..... 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter..... WAR..... 71
 Mystery of the White Room..... UNIV..... 71
 Missing Daughters..... COL..... 71
 Big Town Czar..... UNIV..... 70
 On Trial..... WAR..... 70
 Torchy Blane in Chinatown..... WAR..... 70
 Ambush..... PAR..... 70
 They Made Her a Spy..... RKO..... 70
 Blind Alley..... COL..... 70
 Torchy For Mayor..... WAR..... 70

Stolen Life PAR..... 71
 Clouds Over Europe COL..... 71

Pride of the Navy REP..... 70
 Tough Kid MONO..... 70
 Mysterious Miss X REP..... 70

The Kid From Texas MGM..... 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret Polict..... PAR..... 69
 Everybody's Baby..... FOX..... 69
 Code of the Streets..... UNIV..... 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger Island..... FOX..... 68
 Within The Law..... MGM..... 68
 Adventures of Jane Arden..... V..... 68
 Almost A Gentleman..... RKO..... 68
 Charlie Chan in Reno..... FOX..... 68
 Fixer Dugan..... FOX..... 68
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation..... FOX..... 68
 Lone Wolf Spy Hunt..... COL..... 67
 Missing Daughters..... COL..... 67
 Secret Service of the Air..... WAR..... 67
 For Love or Money..... UNIV..... 66
 Beauty for the Asking..... RKO..... 66
 Sudden Money..... PAR..... 66
 Boy Trouble..... PAR..... 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'Connor..... MGM..... 65
 Sweepstakes Winner..... MGM..... 65
 Exile Express..... GN..... 64
 Risky Business..... UNIV..... 64
 Tell No Tales..... MGM..... 64

King of the Turf UA..... 70
 One Third of a Nation PAR..... 70
 Hotel Imperial PAR..... 70

I Am A Criminal MONO..... 69
 Fighting Thoroughbreds REP..... 69
 Gambling Ship UNIV..... 69
 Convict's Code MONO..... 69
 House of Fear UNIV..... 69
 I Was A Convict REP..... 68
 Navy Secrets MONO..... 68
 Federal Man Hunt MONO..... 68
 Wolf Call MONO..... 68
 The Man Who Dared WAR..... 68
 SOS Tidal Wave REP..... 67
 The Zero Hour REP..... 67
 My Wife's Relatives REP..... 67
 Long Shot GN..... 67
 Forged Passport REP..... 66
 First Offenders COL..... 66
 Rookie Cop RKO..... 66
 Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO..... 66
 Outside These Walls COL..... 65
 Mystery Plane MONO..... 64
 My Son Is A Criminal..... COL..... 64
 Code of the Secret Service..... WAR..... 64
 Panama Lady RKO..... 63
 Street of Missing Men REP..... 63
 Star Reporter MONO..... 63
 Undercover Agent MONO..... 63
 Boy's Reformatory MONO..... 61

6,000 Enemies MGM..... 63
 Inspector Hornleigh FOX..... 61

Boy Friend FOX..... 69
 Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR..... 66
 Zenobia UA..... 66
 Spirit of Culver UNIV..... 65
 The Flying Irishman RKO..... 63
 Smiling Along FOX..... 63
 Climbing High GB..... 63
 Women in the Wind WAR..... 62

IMPORTANT --- To Producers and Exhibitors...!

THERE ARE occasionally cases where THE DIGEST figures on production cost will miss by a few thousand of going up or down in classification. This is because of the peculiar system of picture bookkeeping. A player who has not worked for a year will be assigned to a particular picture just at the closing month of his contract, and then his entire salary for the idle year will be applied to a particular picture. Or, a director expected to make only a satisfactory B will turn out a near-hit, and the bookkeepers rush to put all the charges they find loose on his picture. And so it goes.

We thought this explanation might be handy because we have producers who tell us they finished a picture at \$499,000, only to find that we list it in the half million dollar class; we have directors who tell us they brought a picture in for \$85,000, only to find it worth a quarter million.

And we have exhibitor subscribers who write to tell us that all the salesmen say that every good picture cost at least a million.

But we are pretty sure that we are right when we say that . . . you won't go wrong following THE DIGEST.

But as a general thing, you will find that THE DIGEST is giving a straight shot at the target. We could not be fair to exhibitor or producer if we attempted to take into consideration all the freak things that happen in Hollywood when the bookkeepers are turned loose.

Robert E. Welsh

For The New Universal

*Joe
Pasternak*

Producer

Just Completed

"THE UNDERPUP"

Now Shooting

"FIRST LOVE"

with Deanna Durbin

For The New Universal

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 21

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JULY 17, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"BACHELOR MOTHER" TOPS THE WEEK FOR RKO-RADIO

SEE PAGE 5

FIELD MEN FIND STORM CLOUDS OVER CHICAGO

SEE PAGE 6

THE HIGHLIGHTER WORRIES ABOUT THE NEELY BILL PROBLEMS

SEE PAGE 4

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"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **RKO** Wins With

"BACHELOR MOTHER"—114%



Executive Producer
PAN BERMAN



Producer
B. G. DeSYLVA



Director
GARSON KANIN



GINGER ROGERS

Screenplay
NORMAN KRASNA

Original
FELIX JACKSON

Photographer
ROBERT DE GRASSE

Film Editor
HENRY BERMAN

Featured

CHARLES COBURN

E. E. CLIVE

FRANK ALBERTSON

ERNEST TRUOX

ELBERT COPLEN, Jr.

FERIKE BOROS



DAVID NIVEN



HIGH-PRESSURE SELLING

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

It has become very popular of late, particularly in our modern stream-lined versions of the Bible, LIFE, TIME, and FORTUNE, to exhalt and rave about the accomplishments of mythically favored geniuses of the arts of advertising and publicity.

The thought comes to us because we had a visit a week or so ago from one of these agency executives, an old friend, who, in all good spirit spent most of an evening telling us about the exhaustive research that goes into the monumental decision of a cigarette slogan for the coming year.

He must have feared that we had something else on our mind—maybe he even thought we were being bored—because he suddenly said to us:

"You don't seem to be impressed. What's the trouble?"

* * *

And we sparred for an opening:

"Listen, Jim, you have just told me how your best clients spend fifty thousand to four times that amount making surveys that are supposed to tell you what to advertise.

"And when all the surveys are done—and all the money spent—you still have only ONE product to advertise.

"How would you like to be in a business where you have FIFTY pieces of commercial product to advertise each year, and all the survey help you get must come out of your own brain cells?"

We continued:

"If a man is selling corn-flakes he must discover only that 'they float' or some other slogan and he is set for a year. If he is selling cigarettes, he need only discover for print that they 'pick you up when you feel like lying down,' and that sets a year's campaign.

"If he is selling intangibles like Miami or Florida, he need only decide as to whether to use near-nude bathing girls or socialites well-muffled, for his publicity.

"And he can set a campaign that carries on FOR A YEAR."

* * *

By this time we were going strong. So we just give it to you verbatim:

"Consider the motion picture advertising and publicity expert. One cigarette is the same as the next if turned out by the same factory. One bit of climate is the same this year as next, if the good Lord doesn't change his mind.

"But every motion picture is a different piece of merchandise. Fifty times a year in some cases. And they do not come along with opportunities for surveys and Harvard Business School recommendations, they bounce right up at the advertising and publicity men fifty-two times a year."

This friend of ours, to whom we were talking, is a friend of long standing. And he did not object in the least to our almost loud talk about picture advertising problems.

Instead, he said to us:

"I wanted to get you going. I knew what you might say, but I was wondering if any of you picture people had the nerve to say it." Then he went on with his conclusion:

"Your big shot picture executives are wondering what has happened to box offices, aren't they? Don't they realize that they have, concentrated under a single tent, what is the high-tensioned advertising and publicity brains of the present commercial world?

"Do they think that all the good box office weeks occur by accident, that all the stars are built up by 'wishing' and that bad news is kept out of the papers by accident?

"But why don't they give these proven workmen a chance to go to town? A big cigarette company will appropriate

\$50,000 for a bunch of sophomore students to study the tobacco tastes of the nation, but let a picture advertising and publicity department head ask for an extra appropriation to take care of the three cent stamps—and he must finish in the confessional with the comptroller."

Our friend finished by saying:

"You are all nuts."

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Distributor Name, Releases, and Batting Average. Lists 12 distributors including United Artists, Twentieth Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont-British.

HIGHLIGHTER SEES HEADACHES IF NEELY BILL PASSED AT TOP OF SELLING SEASON

This week there is no question or doubt as to what is the Highlight. . . . As we go to press it seems inevitable that the Neely Bill will become law. . . . Half of Hollywood is so busy at the races that it has never had time to read the Neely Bill; the other half is made up of the group that does the worrying and pays the salaries. . . . But along about tomorrow morning a number of socialite producers will have to start reading the Bill, for the simple reason that their bosses will have been up all the night before studying its provisions. . . . With all our sympathy for exhibitors and their battles, we must admit that the enactment of the Bill at this moment of the selling season, is not a very good thing for either producers, distributors, or exhibitors. . . . Producers need the assurance of revenue before they can spend millions—and that means millions on making pictures for the forthcoming year—exhibitors need assurance of the best product for their particular theatres before they can plan a year's budget. . . . Coming at this time, in the midst of a very slow selling season, the enactment of the Neely Bill is just going to throw us all into a gigantic headache. . . . Send for the aspirin.

But Maybe The Phonies Will Have To Work

However, there is one cheerful thought about the possible enactment of the Neely Bill—it may make some of our Hollywood producers who have been getting by on nothing but their social presence actually go to work to deliver a dollar to the exhibitor who pays the freight. . . . If, by legislation or any other means, exhibitors are given the privilege of selecting the pictures they play it is going to pay off with quite a number of Hollywood "poseurs." . . . There are producers in Hollywood who have held jobs for five years or more who have contributed less to the box office than small-pox would; there are others who have retained their spots on the strength of a few high powered top executives. . . . It may be a day of reckoning when producers start worrying about each individual picture as an individual piece of merchandise—with profit or loss charged to the individual who claims his credit title as "producer."

Universal Keeps Aiming At Showmanship

Frankly, we did not believe that "I Stole A Million" was exactly the best type of story for Frank Tuttle's direction, but before the picture was over we began to realize that Nate Blumberg had a showmanship package up his sleeve. . . . We were not worried about Tuttle's handling of the melodrama because, as we have said before, Tuttle has shown his skill a dozen times in handling anything that is a motion picture. . . . We were just worried about whether Tuttle was being sold down the river

5 Features 'Going Up'

		Was	Now
1. Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	135	138
2. Maisie	MGM	82	94
3. The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	81	87
4. Unmarried	PAR	73	77
5. Tell No Tales	MGM	64	70

for the sake of a box office certainty. . . . But as it turns out, everybody is happy—and Blumberg's showmanship is going to come through with a cash register hit for Universal, while if our rumors are correct, the next few weeks will probably see a producer-director deal for Frank Tuttle and Universal. . . . Gosh, how much we bore you readers with talk about producer-director set-ups being the salvation for this industry. . . . But we will still keep on talking.

Jumping Around From Here To Points Further West

A number of interesting items to talk about this week after a jaunt around the studios. . . . But first, we would like to get a worrisome problem off our minds. . . . This is it: Each time a sales manager for a distributing company arrives in Hollywood he always gives out the stock interview that sales for his company are up twenty, thirty, or forty per cent over the previous year. . . . We started out figuring one day and we stopped when the figures showed us that since 1929 the sales figures of a half dozen companies—according to the stock interviews—were up six hundred per cent. . . . And then they wonder why the exhibitor laughs at most of the stuff he reads in trade papers. . . . Read that article about Jack Kirsch and the independent exhibitors of Chicago that we have on Page 6 of this week's issue. . . . Even if you don't care much about the exhibitor dollars and cents of this business. . . . The story gives an inkling of what Mr. Balaban and other big shot producer-exhibitor executives are apt to be up against in their own back yards when the Neely Bill is passed. . . . And that affects you, even if you are a genius. . . . Even genius must eat.

There's Money In Music In This Day and Generation

Kay Kyser comes into town, in the face of the only hot weather that Los Angeles has felt since the time the Chamber of Commerce was formed, and sets records. . . . Artie Shaw does

5 Features 'Going Down'

		Was	Now
1. It Could Happen to You	FOX	77	74
2. The Girl From Mexico	RKO	73	70
3. Clouds Over Europe	COL	71	69
4. Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	71	68
5. Secret Service of the Air	WAR	67	65

the same thing, perennially, not only here but across the country. . . . So MGM wisely grabs Artie Shaw for a picture, while Kay Kyser will do a RKO-Radio chore. . . . Both of these box office values have been built up by radio. . . . Which reminds us of the continual urging we get to start a down to earth review section on radio. . . . People tell us that most picture executives haven't got the time to listen to the radio so they would appreciate a showman's tip-off now and then. . . . What do you think? . . . Speaking of radio popularity, we think one of the classics of columning was an article about Don Ameche which Morton Thompson wrote for the Hollywood Citizen News this past week. . . . One of these days we are going to find space enough in this tight service paper to reprint the article, not as publicity for Ameche, but as a prize example of the type of public notice for players that the industry could well seek. . . . And since we started this item with a note about Kay Kyser's record-breaking at the Paramount, what do you think of the news that the Paramount Theater, Los Angeles showcase, will close down for a couple of weeks during the hot weather? . . . "Alterations." . . . But all happening at the time that the producer-theater owners are telling the bread and butter independent theater owner to keep his house open at all costs for the sake of the "morale" of the industry. . . . Your morale and my pocketbook. . . . Two different things.

Two Unusual Shorts Presented During The Week

Two short subjects with unusual audience value caught the eye of The Highlighter during the past week. . . . One was the March of Time subject that gives a snappy, but fairly comprehensive, history of the motion picture. . . . It is that rare combination of entertainment and unobtrusive propaganda, and will do the industry as a whole a lot of good, aside from the welcome spot it will find on any bill. . . . Has some surprises, too. . . . The youth who sat next to us was audible in surprise that despite the change in projection speed from silent days, "The Birth of a Nation" scenes stood right up there foursquare and needing no apology to anything in the reel. . . . The same youth only reacted with the audience as a whole when Valentino appears in a few "Four Horsemen" scenes. . . . Valentino was really the only player to get applause as an individual. . . . That boy had something. . . . He still has it in his celluloid image, no matter what the ravages of time on negatives and the defects of dupes. . . . The other short subject that brightened The Highlighter's week was the initial Andy Panda cartoon in Walter Lantz' new Universal series. . . . "Life Begins For Andy Panda," starts the little imp off under very auspicious circumstances. . . . In the best of Technicolor, it marks Universal's entry into the class cartoon market. . . . Strange isn't it,

(Continued on Page 5)

"BACHELOR MOTHER" RIDING ON HIGH; BUSINESS STILL SPOTTY OVER NATION

RKO—1 New Release

RKO walks away with top honors this week with a new Ginger Rogers production, "BACHELOR MOTHER." Despite the usual summer slump, the world fairs, and general off conditions RKO-Radio's new farce comedy, "BACHELOR MOTHER" has opened up real well at a 114% average and judging from audiences' reaction it looks like this one will be able to hold up its ground. In normal times this percentage could be boosted at least 10%.

Seen opposite the popular Miss Rogers, is David Niven as her new leading man, and others prominently featured are: Charles Coburn, Frank Albertson, and Ernest Truex.

B. G. DeSylva produced this one with RKO's new rising directorial genius, Garson Kanin, back of the megaphone. In the past year Kanin directed two 'B' pictures for RKO that went over so well that he was promoted to the 'A' ranks and he has certainly done very well with "BACHELOR MOTHER," his first "A" effort.

Norman Krasna wrote the sparkling screenplay. "BACHELOR MOTHER" should prove a great summer tonic for those exhibitors who have bought the RKO production, as at the present time we find that there are many 'B' pictures as well as re-issues being released that are doing so poorly that an exhibitor can't even get "off the nut."

WARNERS—Also 1 Release

Warner Brothers-First National seem to have a good box office attraction in their latest "Dead End Kid" picture, "HELL'S KITCHEN," which on its first bookings is knocking off a good 86% average. In this moving action melodrama the "Dead End Kids" are supported by Margaret Lindsay, Ronald Reagan, Stanley Fields. Bryan Foy produced and E. A. Dupont started the direction until the "kids" got too tough for him and the picture was finished by Lew Seiler.

In many first run situations where action pictures and exciting melodramas are the vogue, this one can probably stand top billing and hold its own up very nicely.

MGM—2 New Ones

Leo the Lion can't roar quite as loud this week for MGM's two new releases are both weak performers as far as the box office is concerned. "STRONGER THAN DESIRE," 72%, is another of the series co-starring Virginia Bruce and Walter Pidgeon, being far the best. But so far it doesn't seem to be pulling beans at the box office. However, it is a picture that will certainly satisfy the average audience, "IF" you can get them in to see it. But evidently it will be wise to bill this one with a much stronger attraction. Exhibitors will probably remember that "STRONGER THAN DESIRE" was

Of The Five New Releases In The Past Week, Only One Rated Over 100%, One Came Through Okay and Three Were Very Weak

filmed once before by Metro about five years ago under the title of "Evelyn Prentiss," co-starring William Powell and Myrna Loy.

Supporting Miss Bruce and Mr. Pidgeon is a well balanced cast including Lee Bowman, Ann Dvorak, Rita Johnson and Richard Lane. John Considine produced and Leslie Fenton directed.

MGM's second release, "THEY ALL COME OUT," is another programmer from the Joe Cohn unit and while it is fairly entertaining, it is entirely lacking in marquee names. Rita Johnson and Tom Neal are co-featured. This Federal prison story was originally produced as a three or four reel short which MGM executives finally decided to lengthen into a feature attraction. Perhaps the reviewers who said it would have made a better short were right, judging by the box office figures coming in on this one. Jack Chertok produced and Jacques Tourneur directed.

REPUBLIC—1 Release

Republic's new release this week, "MICKEY THE KID," 67%, is just another fair programmer that will probably make a good filler on the average double bill. At any rate it has a few fairly good marquee names in Bruce Cabot, Zasu Pitts and J. Farrell MacDonald. Other featured players include Ralph Byrd, Jessie Ralph, and Tommy Ryan. Herman Schlom produced and Arthur Lubin directed.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

what habit does? Nowadays even when you see a well conceived, and neatly executed cartoon in black and white, it doesn't just seem to have that oomph. . . . And speaking of Technicolor, there is good news in the fact that George Cave now assumes the title of General Sales Manager, along with the duties he has been carrying on to fit the title for many years. . . . The title has been vacant since the untimely passing of Andy Callaghan. . . . His

many friends feel a deep pang when they think of the pioneering days of Doctor Kalmus and his able aide, Andy, as contrasted with Technicolor's strong position today.

Frank Capra Finally Makes The Break

The long-expected news concerning Frank Capra's plans for his own company finally broke the headlines. . . . It will be, also not unexpected, a combination of Frank Capra and Robert Riskin, with the probabilities a United Artists release. . . . Don't expect anything to happen in very much of a hurry, though. Capra is still finishing the editing of "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington," while Riskin is vacationing in cool Scandinavian climes as a welcome contrast to his months of service with Sam Goldwyn. . . . Latest information is that "Gone With The Wind" is down to four hours running time. . . . Only the last long mile to go. . . . Lew Landers, after turning out RKO pictures like a day and night worker for three years, will free lance. The boy knows his stuff and hit a pretty good average under budget conditions. . . . William Keighley is back from his round the globe jaunt and his intelligent reports of world conditions are getting quite a play in the local press.

Radio Has Two Big Ones In The Works

Radio is aiming at high box offices on two of the pictures now in work: "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," and "Alleghany Frontier." . . . With Dieterle and Seiter behind the megaphones, both have all the forecast signs of the sneaker sensation that George Stevens came up with last year in "Gunga Din." . . . Paramount must like the job that James Hogan did on "\$1000 A Touchdown," because he is being rushed right back to the starting gate with another Martha Raye subject, "The Farmer's Daughter." . . . Have you caught those box office figures that "Man About Town" chalked up in New York? . . . Looks as though the Sandrich-Benny combination was just what the doctor ordered. . . . Warners close an exclusive three-picture-a-year deal with George Raft after the sneak preview reactions on "Each Dawn I Die." . . . Raft will be competing with himself during the next few months, with Universal presenting a pretty good piece of merchandise in "I Stole A Million." . . . Zanuck is going the limit on the streamlined 1930 version of "Little Old New York," and with Henry King handling the reins it appears pretty safe that this one can be put down in the advance book as a certain top money-maker for next season. . . . It was a gold mine once before in silent days, and with Zanuck waving the wand this time, the answer should be obvious.

5 New Features Not In The Last Issue

1 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....3 Weak

		%	We Est.
1. Bachelor Mother	RKO	114	110
2. Hell's Kitchen	WAR	86	85
3. Stronger Than Desire	MGM	72	80
4. They All Come Out	MGM	68	70
5. Mickey The Kid	REP	67	70



J. Maurice Ridge

FIELD MEN FIND STORM CLOUDS OVER CHICAGO

PLENTY OF EXCITEMENT IN WINDY CITY



Harry E. Nichols

Chicago Has A Two-Fisted Fighter

Edmund Burke in British Parliament pleaded in vain for the conciliation of the American Colonies, prior to the Revolution. Had his now immortal utterances been heeded this nation might well have been like Canada, a province of the British Empire. So now comes another conciliator only in the field of business. He is Happy Jack Kirsch, who in this day of strife pleads for conciliation between the warring factions in the motion picture industry, and like Burke, his pleadings so far have not brought results.

In his well appointed offices in Chicago today he re-uttered his appeal to the Allied Convention in Minneapolis two weeks ago. "As representative of 170 Independent Exhibitors of this city, I am asking for a square deal. If we are going to live, we must let live. As Charley Pettijohn pointed out last year at a testimonial dinner, 'live and let live,' this could be changed to 'live and help live.' That policy specifically applies to our problem. If we keep on fighting among ourselves we must all lose."

Kirsch is a conciliator to begin with, but he believes, that if this fails, then stronger methods, drastic ones if necessary, must be invoked, even to government intervention, if the exhibitors are to reap their just reward.

Kirsch Would Like To Be Conciliatory

Continuing he said, "I, as an independent exhibitor do not wholly subscribe to government regulation of our problems except as a last resort in our efforts to obtain justice; but, failing to obtain consideration by any other method, I certainly favor resorting to legislation and litigation to get the consideration to which we are entitled."

Evidencing his determination to win, even though persuasion failed, he stated, "A member of my organization complained that three

features were being shown by a theatre belonging to an independent circuit and also an affiliated theatre in the same zone in Chicago, and doing serious harm to his theatre as well as all other subsequent run theatres in that zone. When advised of this situation, the independent circuit theatre assured me the practice would cease and one feature was immediately dropped from the program.

"When I asked the affiliated circuit to cooperate by eliminating one feature from their program also, their answer was that they would check their books and if the triple feature policy were not profitable, they too would drop one feature. While in New York shortly thereafter, I related this story to one of the executives of a major distributor who has been particularly active in promoting peace and harmony in the industry. He expressed astonishment and suggested I take the matter up with the affiliated circuit upon my return, which I did. The answer was—they were doing 21 per cent more business with this triple feature policy and as long as they continued to show profit this policy would be maintained. Of course they showed a profit—and why wouldn't they? They monopolize all the product, the theatre is first run in the zone and the independent exhibitor is deprived of any clear pictures whatsoever. And mind you this has all happened recently, while the parent company of this affiliated circuit has been clamoring for a code of fair trade practices. How do you account for this arrogant attitude on the part of the affiliated chain? Are they as sincere in their desire to adjust the problems of the industry as Mr. Rodgers?

"I made many trips to New York to adjust the clearance problems in Chicago, to no avail. Thus more than 100 suits were filed in the courts by the independent exhibitors. Despite these suits I have made every effort to adjust these claims. I have continued to try to

arbitrate the unfair clearances of situations with no results."

So failing at conciliation, President Kirsch of the Independents has decided that if it is a fight—then a real fight the distributors will get in the Windy City. Some fireworks are promised, for the fall sessions of court on the part of the independents. They are determined that the affiliated circuits of the producers, shall not take over Chicago theatres, as completely as Capone did the rackets.

Omigosh! See What Chicago Gives For A Dime!

Barnum was a piker. Had he lived to see theatres in Chicago, he would have re-painted his white elephant pink, green, cerise, lavender and Hollywood blue. Then he would have had to give away pink lemonade and toy balloons, to get the people to even take a look at his monstrosity, even though he paraded it in a free street show; that is, if he wanted to compete with Balaban and Katz.

Folks get a load of this: At the Congress Theatre, a 2500 seater in a good neighborhood, and for a dime for kids, and a quarter for adults, one can get this dish of entertainment. A Deanna Durbin feature, "The Hound of the Baskervilles," a Popular Science short, a glimpse of Australia, a Disney Cartoon, together with free candy and a soft drink, and a chance on a bicycle and free tickets.

This was their program for June 24, in the present year of unusual yelps on the part of the exhibitors. Then the producer-exhibitor sells its pictures behind these houses' run, to independent theatre owners, who in the true Chicago style, mildly squawk, as 10 cents is all they can get for kids.

The independent exhibitors according to "Happy Jack" Kirsch of their organization, remonstrated with John Balaban over the situation. He claimed they were being slowly driven out of business by a chain owned and operated theatre,

with a tremendous seating capacity, to which Mr. Balaban said it was the only way they had of filling their seats, and if they did not like it they could reduce their price of admission, to compete.

The exhibitors pointed out that it has only been a few years ago, that the producer-owned theatre, when they were on a building spree argued that they were unable to get prices for their film out of independent theatres, with which to make bigger productions. In self-defense the producer claimed he built these great emporiums.

Analyzing this one particular situation, the Chicago meek exhibitors shyly ask this question: In a 2500 seat house in a good section of town, where not more than four shows a day could possibly be shown, with a frequent change of bills, how much film rental could possibly be garnered, in order for the house to show a profit? And of the Government these same exhibitors are asking the question, whether such tactics are not designed to crush competition, rather than give the public a Barnum show?

There are 170 Independent exhibitors in Chicago who belong to the Allied organization. These men control a lot of theatres, that are affected by the policy of the producer controlled houses. With the trial going on today in Chicago before a Master in Chancery, against alleged monopolistic practices of the big operators, it is believed on South Wabash avenue, that before Turkey Time in November, there will be some mighty important evidence offered, which may have a big influence on the industry throughout the country.

Cooperation Saves The Day In One Territory

There is a spot in these United States, where 16 theatre operators, in Davenport, Ia., Moline, East Moline and Rock Island, Ill., unanimously and with one voice say that

(Continued on Page 11)

"Spring Fever" Upholds Andy Hardy

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

DirectorW. S. Van Dyke II
 ScreenplayKay Van Riper
 Based on the characters created by Aurania Rouverol.
 Featured: Lewis Stone, Mickey Rooney, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, Sara Haden, Helen Gilbert, Terry Kilburn, John T. Murray, George Breakston, Charles Peck, Sidney Miller, Addison Richards, Olaf Hytten, Erville Alderson, Robert Kent.
 PhotographerLester White
 Musical ScoreEdward Ward, David Snell
 Film EditorBen Lewis
 Time87 minutes

MGM is doing so well with these Andy Hardy pictures that, for the sake of quick revenue, they rush them to the key city houses almost before the sacred group of previewers have a chance to see them.

This latest episode in the Andy Hardy tribulations has already set its box office figure in Los Angeles and numerous other key cities, so nothing remains for a reviewer but to consider the subject from the exalted position of a critic.

In such a capacity, we report that "Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever" is one of the best of the series. The adult plot is kept in its proper place, the spotlight is centered on Mickey Rooney. The result is all-satisfying.

W. S. Van Dyke directed this episode in the Andy Hardy career, after the character had

CURRENT REVIEWS		
1 Over 100%.....5 Okay.....4 Weak		
		We Est.
1.	Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever.....	MGM.....135
2.	I Stole A Million.....	UNIV.....95
3.	Naughty But Nice.....	WAR.....90
4.	Hell's Kitchen.....	WAR.....85
5.	The Magnificent Fraud.....	PAR.....80
6.	Blondie Takes A Vacation.....	COL.....80
7.	News Is Made At Nigrt.....	FOX.....75
8.	Unexpected Father.....	UNIV.....75
9.	Mr. Wong in Chinatown.....	MONO.....75
10.	Should Husbands Work?.....	REP.....70

been fully established by George Seitz. Van Dyke keeps to the key, both in his handling of Mickey and Lewis Stone, while the writers must be so well acquainted with this family's entertaining internal problems by now that they dash off a scene or two between the orange juice and the cereal in the mornings.

This time the family gets itself in really good pictorial spots, because the basement of the plot concerns an amateur play in which Andy is to appear with sweetie Ann Rutherford, while the second flight concerns some financial headaches that are brought on, and which need adult assistance to solve.

It is all great audience stuff, particularly good small town family fare. They can keep on making them for the next hundred years without disappointing small town families who are happy to see how happy they are.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: You know Andy Hardy. This is close to tops in the series—alongside "Love Finds Andy Hardy"—so you can be guided accordingly. Previewed July 7th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Andy Hardy forges on to new adventures in the seventh and latest MGM treatise on the popular family. And this one, 'Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever,' continues to advance the steadily growing prestige of the series, exerting the same hilarious and heart-tugging forces which is this group's unerring purpose and premium."

VARIETY: "The b. o. value of the Hardys has been established. This one will thoroughly delight the confirmed patrons and will add its share of the steadily increasing customers."

"News Is Made At Night" Routine Meller

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive ProducerSol M. Wurtzel
 ProducerEdward Kaufman
 DirectorAlfred Werker
 Original ScreenplayJohn Larkin
 StarsPreston Foster, Lynn Bari
 Featured: Russell Gleason, George Barbler, Eddie Collins, Minor Watson, Charles Halton, Paul Harvey, Richard Lane, Charles Lane, Betty Compson, Paul Fix, Paul Guilfoyle.
 PhotographerErnest Palmer
 Film EditorNick DeMaggio
 Time70 minutes

This is one for those newspaper-reporter mystery story pictures. It will fill the bill nicely as the supporting feature on most any theater's marquee. Unfortunately, it has neither the cast, nor the story, to merit any higher rating but, after all, the picture was not aimed at any but the supporting spots.

The yarns follows the tried and true path in narrating the adventures of a "Front Page"

managing editor of a big town newspaper who is never seen managing or editing his paper. He spends most of his time tracking down a gangster-murderer in order to save the life of an innocent man. Preston Foster handles the straightforward characterization in a smooth manner.

Lynn Bari, the girl from back home in the midwest, is an aspirant to a job on the newspaper. Eddie Collins, Foster's butler, gets more than his share of laughs as is his usual wont. Russell Gleason, the son of the paper's owner, is amusing, too, in his owl-eyed way. Paul Guilfoyle, Minor Watson, and Paul Harvey are also seen in the competent cast.

Alfred Werker's direction is O.K., getting all the suspense and laughs possible out of the whodunit story. He keeps the film moving along at a good steady clip. John Larkin wrote the original screenplay and Edward Kaufman produced.

The story itself deals with the attempts of Foster, through the use of his paper, to save the life of Paul Guilfoyle, sentenced to die in the gas chamber. In his wanderings, Foster and Lynn Bari, his self-appointed assistant, break into houses, land in jail and force their unfortunate allies to enact fake deathbed scenes. Eventually, however, all is saved, with Preston rescuing Lynn from the nasty 'ole villain in the brink of time.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Can be billed as a supporting feature under any epic and will likely please. Previewed July 7th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'News Is Made At Night' emerges as a fast and furious newspaper melodrama that will more than hold up its end of a double bill and in some spots will hold up as the top feature."

VARIETY: "An amusing comedy drama, only weakness of 'News Is Made At Night' lies in efforts of its makers to stretch a 60-minute story into a 70-minute feature."

Latest "Mr. Wong" Best in Series

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive ProducerScott R. Dunlap
 ProducerWilliam T. Lackey
 DirectorWilliam Nigh
 ScreenplayScott Darling
 Based on stories byHugh Wiley
 StarBoris Karloff
 Featured: Grant Withers, Marjorie Reynolds, William Royale, Peter Lynn, Huntley Gordon, James Flavin, Lotus Long, Bessie Loo, Lee Tong Foo, Little Angelo, Richard Loo, Guy Usher.
 Time70 minutes

The election votes can be counted and the report delivered: Monogram is holding up on this "Mr. Wong" series. In our opinion "Mr. Wong in Chinatown" is the best of the series. That may be a matter of opinion only, but at least exhibitors buying Monogram product can take our word for it that the picture offers a good piece of meller.

Producer Bill Lackey and Director William Nigh combined to give audiences what they probably want when they respond to a marquee sign that reads, "Boris Karloff in 'Mr. Wong'."

With a fast-stepping script by Scott Darling they go to town.

This time the plot starts right on Mr. Wong's own doorstep, for it concerns a Chinese princess murdered in his own home. There are suspects aplenty, and even dangers for Mr. Wong before he unravels the mystery. Oh, yes, there is a timely element, because the princess was in this country to purchase airplanes for her suffering compatriots.

Karloff is turning in a good job as the hero

(Continued on Page 11)

"Hell's Kitchen" Okay For Its Spots

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Producer Bryan Foy
Associate Producer..... Mark Hellinger
Directors..... Lewis Seiler, E. A. Dupont
Screenplay..... Crane Wilbur, Fred Niblo, Jr.
Original Crane Wilbur
Featured: Billy Halop, Bobby Jordan, Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, Gabriel Dell, Bernard Punsley, Margaret Lindsay, Ronald Reagan, Stanley Fields, Frankie Burke, Grant Mitchell, Fredric Tozere, Arthur Loft.
Time 80 minutes

"Hell's Kitchen" has all the fire and verve of the Warner Brothers in its title, but the dynamite stops about there — for once, the Warners didn't go through with the job the whole route.

All the ingredients are present. The Dead End Kids, Stanley Fields, Mark Hellinger for authenticity, Crane Wilbur and Fred Niblo Jr., for screen workmanship. But when it was all over we just had the feeling that they made a

B in order to give Mark a chance to feel his producer oats.

It seems that Fields is a racketeer who is given his chance to go straight, and uses the opportunity to run a sort of Warner Brother version of Father Flanagan's Omaha "Boys' Town." From that point on there are problems aplenty with some of the boys, and plot in abundance—too much plot in fact.

First of all, we have Grant Mitchell, as a two-faced hypocritical manager of the school to which Fields gives his services. This angle of the story—boys versus Grant Mitchell—is laid on twice as heavy as David Copperfield in bold print. All plot works around to a sacrificial moment for Stanley Fields, who reverts to old racketeering methods to raise necessary money, and ends the picture with jail facing him.

There was an idea here. But we have a suspicion that the American public is getting a bit tired of snot-nosed twisted-brained young-

sters being semi-heroized on the screen. There are a number of our cash customers who are parents of ordinary American boys and girls. They harbor a faint hope that their boys and girls are clean of mind. They are building up a bit of resentment at paying cash money to take their own children to pictures which prove that you have to be all wrong before the last reel can make you half right.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: For the Loop trade in Chicago and such allnight metropolitan centers, okay. For family trade—forget it. For Canada—"Remember that word 'Hell'." Previewed July 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A minor shocker, 'Hell's Kitchen' is program product slotted for secondary billing in the dualers and for those spots which want their melodrama broad if not too believable."

VARIETY: "Starting out with real promise 'Hell's Kitchen' rapidly loses itself in its own plot entanglements, with result it emerges as second-place fare for dualers."

"Naughty But Nice" Summer Fare

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Executive Producer Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer Sam Bischoff
Director Ray Enright
Original Screenplay: Richard Macaulay, Jerry Wald.
Stars..... Ann Sheridan, Dick Powell, Gale Page
Featured: Helen Broderick, Ronald Reagan, Allen Jenkins, Zasu Pitts, Maxie Rosenbloom, Jerry Colonna, Luis Alberni, Vera Lewis, Elizabeth Dunne, Bill Davidson, Granville Bates, Hallwell Hobbes.
Time 94 minutes

"Naughty But Nice" is one of those pictures which probably started out being a B-plus, and ended being just short of an A. Or should we, to be correct, say an A-minus?

The exhibitor can judge for himself on the marquee value. There are spots where Dick Powell means money, there are other spots where they will want to see the picture first. There has been quite a publicity build-up for Ann Sheridan as an "oomph" girl, but we don't think it is ripe enough yet to sell tickets.

So let's treat "Naughty But Nice" just as a picture. We report: It is a very satisfactory piece of Summer entertainment. There is a

fairly intelligent premise which gives excuse to sufficient of plot and a plentitude of melody, with the advantage that plot never gets in the way of melody.

There is nothing new about the plot, but who expects anything new in the good old Summertime? Once again we have the conflict between classical music and swing—and once again swing comes out on top. Hurray for swing and the motion picture!

Chief credit for the picture measuring up above its fundamental elements must go to Producer Sam Bischoff, who crammed the cast with selling personalities, and to Director Ray Enright, who kept his job moving with all the verve of an old-time Palace Theater Monday matinee. "Never a dull moment," and all that sort of thing.

Among the surefire names that can be mentioned in connection with our tribute to Bischoff and Enright above, are Zasu Pitts, Ronald Reagan, Allen Jenkins, Helen Broderick, Maxie Rosenbloom, Luis Alberni, etc., and then a couple of more etceteras.

Harry Warren and Johnny Mercer, tried and

true, turned in five good songs that will have plenty of jive and radio popularity behind them when you are playing the picture.

All in all, good Summer entertainment. It just misses being an A because maybe they did not aim it that way.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Nothing great but good semi-musical for program balancing during the Summer. The youngsters will like it a lot. All ages will relax. Previewed July 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Naughty But Nice' is cut to a summer pattern of gay nonsense on the zaney side, highlighted with music and song and given to occasional outbursts of boisterous hijinks. It will balance quite ably in the duals but will scarcely rate in the upper bracket."

VARIETY: "While neither denizens of Tin Pan Alley or of courts of law will be able to understand just how its authors got that way, 'Naughty But Nice' is a thoroughly amusing farce featuring melodious song numbers most of which already have been given their ether baptism. While it falls short of standard demanded for top spot in most choosey situations, it will safely make grade in No. 1 bracket in subsequents."

Blondie's "Vacation" Strong on Gags

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Robert Sparks
Director Frank R. Strayer
Screenplay Richard Flourney
Original Story: Karen DeWolfe, Robert Chaplin, Richard Flourney.
Based on the comic strip by..... Chic Young
Stars..... Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake
Featured: Larry Simms, Dalsy, Danny Mum-mert, Donald Meek, Donald MacBride, Thomas W. Ross, Elisabeth Dunne, Robert Wilcox, Harlan Briggs, Irving Bacon.
Time 68 minutes

"Blondie" is in danger of becoming a formula, but we will give the producers one more chance to throw their dice before we become too critical. The current issue has the timely advantage of a summary theme, it has the gags and situations suggested by the popular comic strip, and it still has a remarkable baby—Larry Simms.

One of the things it has, with which it could well dispense, is the company's idea that scripts of the sort that made two reel comedies in the silent days will stand up today for feature length attractions.

But enough of that—if Columbia itself cannot realize what a money bet they have in "Blondie" who are we to run up a red signal on the traffic lane.

Currently, Dagwood and family are trying the perennial problem of seeking a vacation. They land at a summer spot and in the care of a hotel where everything is haywire. There is Donald McBride, as a musical comedy villain, there is Donald Meek as a nutty firebug. There is the baby. And—yes, believe it or not in 1939—there are skunks.

You don't need much more from us.

But the folks who like "Blondie" will like

this edition. The only thing we don't like to do is to encourage Columbia to keep traveling down this alley. There may be more skunks at the end of the trail.

Frank Strayer is directing with all the skill that could be expected from his years of experience. Arthur Lake and Penny Singleton continue to be our idea of Dagwood and Blondie.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: It will stand up in the "Blondie" series. Great family fare. Previewed July 14th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Columbia's latest edition of Chic Young's comic strip, 'Blondie Takes A Vacation,' is tailored to the same pattern as its predecessors."

VARIETY: "Maintaining standard set by its predecessors in this series, 'Blondie Takes A Vacation' is timely fare."



William A. Seiter

Now in Production
"ALLEGHANY FRONTIER"
For RKO-Radio

Current Release: "SUSANNAH OF THE MOUNTIES"—20th Century-Fox

"The Magnificent Fraud" An In-Betweener

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Harlan Thompson
 Director Robert Florey
 Original Charles G. Booth
 Screenplay Gilbert Gabriel, Walter Ferris
 Featured: Akim Tamiroff, Lloyd Nolan, Mary Boland, Patricia Morison, Ralph Forbes, Steffi Duna, Ernest Cossart, George Zucco, Robert Warwick, Frank Reicher, Robert Middlemass, Abner Biberman, Donald Gallagher.
 Time 75 minutes

"The Magnificent Fraud" is an adroit combination of the mythical kingdom and the perfect impersonation themes. It is not as a heroic a piece as it might have been, but on the whole, it is good adventure drama and should do more than get by with the average audience.

Akim Tamiroff plays the dual role of a renowned French actor-impersonator, and that of President Alvarado, chief of state of the republic of San Cristobal. The part gives Tam-

iroff much opportunity to give full vent to his known histrionic abilities, and this he does with splendid results.

Lloyd Nolan is an American adventurer high up in the confidence of the President. When the President is dying, it is Nolan who concocts the scheme of a great impersonation, placing the French actor, a fugitive from justice, in the presidential chair. This, to insure Nolan and his treacherous cohorts, Robert Warwick and Frank Reicher, the stranglehold on a ten million dollar American loan which could be obtained only by the president.

Patricia Morison is the girl in the case, the fiancee of Ralph Forbes, the American financier. Heretofore, Miss Morison has appeared in several Paramount "B's" and in this picture she evinces the same pictorial and dramatic abilities which should carry her still farther along. In the story it is Miss Morison who "reforms" Nolan, causing him to place an honest man, George Zucco, in the presidential chair, put

the ten million dollars in the state treasury, and whatnot.

Mary Boland is also in the cast in a markedly artificial and ill-conceived role. Steffi Duna performs several torrid South American dances. Ernest Cossart is a detective of the French Surete who has trailed Tamiroff for seven years.

Robert Florey directed the film and Harlan Thompson produced. Screenplay is by Gilbert Gabriel and Walter Ferris from the story by Charles G. Booth.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Nothing for the marquee, but fairly safe audience B, well dressed, for the bottom end of any bill. Previewed July 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Magnificent Fraud' is sterling entertainment.

VARIETY: "Based on synthetic and theatrical story which never quite reaches the level of reality, 'The Magnificent Fraud' impresses only superficially and must expect the b. o. returns of mediocre entertainment."

"Unexpected Father" Brings Sandy Back

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer Ken Goldsmith
 Director Charles Lamont
 Original Screenplay: Leonard Spigelgass, Chas. Grayson.
 Star Baby Sandy
 Featured: Shirley Ross, Dennis O'Keefe, Mischa Auer, Joy Hodges, Dorothy Arnold, Anne Gwynne, Anne Nagel, Donald Briggs, Richard Lane, Paul Guilfoyle, Mayo Methot, Jane Darwell, Spencer Charters, Ygor and Tanya.
 Time 73 minutes

"Unexpected Father" is a good Universal program picture boosted above this status by the appearance of Baby Sandy, last seen in "East Side of Heaven." The kid is really a scene-stealer, and although grown much larger, matches every one of his antics shown in his previous appearance. However, it will be interesting to note if audiences remember enough of Baby Sandy's performance in "East Side of Heaven" to switch "Unexpected Father" from

the average program group into the real money-making class.

Shirley Ross, Dennis O'Keefe and Mischa Auer are the unfortunate adults who are forced to compete with Baby Sandy for the laughs and suspense of the picture. Miss Ross and O'Keefe, of course, are the romantic leads, in a romance which is never taken very seriously; Mischa Auer has one of his usual inane characterizations with which he never fails to amuse the audience.

The story deals with the efforts of these three aided by a group of chorus girls, to save the baby from the twin evils of an orphan asylum or the greedy hands of slatternly distant relatives. For the baby at one time seems to have commercial possibilities, when he breaks up a vaudeville number by tottering about the stage. Baby Sandy's second big moment comes near the finish of the film when he wanders around the ledge of a skyscraper in a

manner reminiscent of Harold Lloyd in his heyday.

Paul Guilfoyle and Mayo Methot portray the dowdy uncle and aunt of the baby. Donald Briggs is the martinet theater manager and Joy Hodges and Anne Nagel are some of the showgirls.

Charles Lamont directed under associate producer Ken Goldsmith.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good family fare. Not quite strong enough for top billing. Previewed June 11th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Obviously seeking to make capital of the sudden popularity of Baby Sandy of 'East Side of Heaven' note, Universal apparently played so heavily on speed at the cost of quality that 'Unexpected Father' rates no better than mediocre supporting fare."

VARIETY: "... Universal, having on hand a pay-off asset in the person of little Sandy Lee ... has turned out a neat piece of pleasant and sentimental hokum which will more than meet its b. o. requirements."

"Should Husbands Work" Good Higgins

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Sol C. Siegel
 Director Gus Meins
 Original Screenplay: Jack Townley, Taylor Caven.
 Featured: James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Marie Wilson, Mary Hart, Tommy Ryan, Berton Churchill, Henry Kolker, Arthur Hoyt.
 Photographer Jack Marta
 Film Editor William Morgan
 Time 62 minutes

Republic is building a real series out of this "Higgins Family" topic. We will agree that they will never reach the Andy Hardy-Mickey Rooney value in marquee strength, but as long as they keep along this path they will be able to guarantee good, solid, family entertainment.

At the start the exhibitor must count on an over-heavy percentage picture at the top of

the bill to pull them in, but before many episodes he may find they are coming to see that crazy bunch, The Higgins Family.

The current episode leans heavily on comedy. First of all, that is a wise decision because families these days are not buying theater tickets in order to learn about the sorrows of life. They have enough of that at home—they came to the picture theater to get away from such thoughts.

Secondly, in the hands of the Gleasons as players, Gus Meins as director, and Townley and Caven as scripters, the subject is kept down to near slapstick earth. The producers decided to play for all the laughs there are around the average family life, and they get them. Aplenty—to such an extent that they may soon be wondering what to use for the next picture in the series.

Marie Wilson, vapid ingenue, is added to the

cast for this one to good effect, while the usual Higgins roster is seen in expected roles: the three Gleasons, Jimmy, Lucile and Russell; Harry Davenport, Tommy Ryan, and such standbys as Berton Churchill, Henry Kolker, Arthur Hoyt, etc.

The story, draped around the sure-fire family stuff, concerns some sort of a mess in which Jimmy finds himself when he loses his cosmetic company, has the day saved by Lucile, and then stands by while Lucile takes the reins. Marie Wilson enters as a prospective daughter-in-law.

All in all, it's okay family fare. Gus Meins directed with his knowledge of gag timing on the tried and true gags, while Sol Siegel's production guidance kept it half way between slapstick and farce. The result is good audience meat.

(Continued on Page 11)

"I Stole a Million" Will Get Money

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Producer Burt Kelly
 Director Frank Tuttle
 Screenplay Nathanael West
 Original Story Lester Cole
 Stars George Raft, Clair Trevor
 Featured: Dick Foran, Henry Armetta, Victor Jory, Joe Sawyer, Robert Elliott, Tom Fadden, John Hamilton, Stanley Ridges, George Chandler, Mary Forbes, Phil Tead, Wallis Clark, Irving Bacon, Hobart Cavanaugh, John Butler, Mira McKinney, Jerry Marlowe, Jason Robards, Claire Whitney, Sarah Padden, Harold Minjir, Ed Chandler, Frances Morris, Mary Foy, Edmund MacDonal, Constance Romanoff, Lee Murray, Ernie Adams, Al Hill, Hal K. Dawson, Henry Roquemore, Mike Lally, Jim O'Gatty.
 Photographer Milton Krasner
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Associate William Fox
 Film Editor Ed Curtiss
 Time 73 minutes

Thanks to the class touch of Frank Tuttle's direction, a good showmanship idea comes through for Universal in a picture that should make a lot of money. And in weaker hands, it might have laid an awful egg.

For, truth to tell, "I Stole A Million" is not any great shucks of a story. It could very easily be dated as 1929 meller. But Tuttle gives it the touch, from George Raft and Claire Trevor he gets fine performances, and behind it all the time there was something of a showmanship idea. So producer Burt Kelly and Universal come through with a money-maker.

The picture has been tailor-made to an exhibitor's conception of what patrons desire to see George Raft portray. In this case, George is a hustling taxi driver who gets enmeshed with the law early in his career, and later, when romance has crossed the wires, must always face the penalty for his first slight error. The

result is six or seven reels in which George, always trying to be a regular guy and a loving husband to Claire—not to mention the fact that he also becomes a father—is continually being caught in struggles with the law. The final scene finds him being bumped off. We liked the shot-gun ending, because we think there was no other possible ending for the picture if a vote is given to intelligence; we think Raft fans will like it. A rapid fire of revolver shots ends his career as a sacrificial hero. Raft fans will take that.

Aside from the fact that the picture gives Raft an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with audiences, highlight of the picture is the fine acting job that Tuttle has secured from Claire Trevor. One of these days that gal is going to get her real break in an outstanding story.

Support is excellent, including Dick Foran, in a rather stolid straight role, Henry Armetta, good for his usual quota of laughs. Screenplay could have saved itself some over-flowery moments, and some flights of sophomoric poetry.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: George Raft and a near-crime picture. You know your spots for this sort of unrelieved melodrama. Previewed July 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "I Stole A Million, true to its title, is an unrelenting study of crime, its genesis and its inevitable end. It is a story which will exert pulse-quickening effect on audiences of both sexes, and with its marquee-selling title and cast, it should prove a substantial box office success at the top of the bill."

VARIETY: "In a vehicle well tailored to his specific talents George Raft turns in one of his best and most persuasive performances in a picture which will justify itself on any bill and stand as a credit to Universal's best showmanship."

"Mr. Wong In Chinatown"

(Continued from Page 7)

of Hugh Wiley's stories. The series can easily continue on to sustained popularity. In the current release he receives excellent support from a group of troupers who may not have names, but who do know trouping.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Probably a bargain buy for you when you need some red meat for the bottom end of the zill. And will stand on its own where you can sell Karloff. Previewed July 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This latest in Monogram's series of detective thrillers based on Hugh Wiley's 'James Lee Wong' character is by far the best of the group to date. Backed with a good screenplay, careful direction and nice production, 'Mr. Wong In Chinatown' emerges as suitable fare on any bill."

VARIETY: "Third in Monogram's series starring Boris Karloff, 'Mr. Wong in Chinatown' develops an air of suspense, mixed with just enough comedy, to put it head and shoulders vore its predecessors."

"Should Husbands Work?"

(Continued from Page 10)

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: One of those bandy family subjects for the bottom end of the bill on any day. It may send a lot home happy who did not care for the epic. Previewed July 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOW SAID:

REPORTER: "This third in the series of amazing Higgins Family pictures is a pleasing comedy farce that should provide an entertaining hour to its audiences."

VARIETY: "With each succeeding edition of its Higgins Family series, Republic has aimed for and supplied increased flow of laughter, and 'Should Husbands Work?' is no exception."

Allied Wants Peace; But Ready to Fight

(Continued from Page 6)

business is better than last year. Your itinerant scribe was thunder struck. But these boys stuck to their guns. Yes, siree. Chain operator, "Abe" Blank and Paramount, and four independents, all join hands in Bank Nite. The prize frequently reaches two thousand dollars. Drawings are held in all houses contemporaneously. They also have other box office inducements like a trip to the New York World's Fair or \$750.00 in cash. Everybody in these towns is trying to build up the spirit of theatregoing. Not one scintilla of evidence could be found of pettiness. Results, good attendance and profitable business, right in the heat of the summer. Its another case of the story of the father and the seven sticks, we used to read in McGuffey's reader. They all stick together and nothing can break them.

All that remains to make it illegal to run a show in Illinois more

than one hundred and thirty-five minutes, is for Governor Horner to put his John Henry on a bill that has passed both houses at Springfield. The bill was sponsored by the Independent Theatre Owners of Illinois, under the leadership of "Happy Jack" Kirsch, their president. Obviously the bill is aimed at double billing. It had the support of the theatre owners in the main of the entire state. However, there was considerable opposition on the part of a few of the producer owned theatres through their partners. It appears that the producer owned theatres want double bills, has been evidenced by another article in this column.

The question of the constitutionality of the bill was raised by those who opposed it. However, that is a matter for the courts. Exhibitors in Chicago area are hopeful that it will stand the test, as they firmly believe that one of the evils confronting the industry, is the quan-

tity of show that is being foisted on the people, instead of quality of entertainment, which they declare they would be able to give if they could arrange their programs without having to compete with producer controlled situations, where double bills, with shorts galore and giveaways are the order of the day.

As we trek across the country, and now Chicago, one attitude on Salt Lake City, Omaha, Des Moines the part of the distributor's representatives has impressed us with an unusual situation. As is well known in the industry, apparently every home office executive is bending might and main to have the Code approved by the exhibitors, both independent and organized ones, throughout the country. Substantial sums have been spent in sending corps of high salaried lawyers, and their entourage to exhibitor conventions, to sell the highly touted cinema "Koran," by and under the terms of which, Mecca is sup-

posed to be reached by the whole industry. But how about their own boys who are charged with the responsibility of selling their contracts? In the manifest majority of the cases these field representatives give little heed to the Code.

Here in Chicago today one salesman for one of the Majors in response as to how he sold under it, retorted in true dogmatic style, "What the hell, they have to buy the stuff; the exhibitors all know it; they have to have pictures, so we just sell 'em as usual." This seems about the composite attitude, on the part of the field men.

The thought occurs to one from the outside looking in, how in the name of goodness can an industry impress its customers of its sincerity, its desire to work out fair trade practices, when they have not put their own houses in order, and have not sufficiently sold their own help, that this is a good "Bills of Rights" for all concerned.

HERE AND THEREABOUTS

IN HOLLYWOOD

TOURIST BLACKOUT: About the only consolation the studio operating heads and publicity chiefs—good will men—can get out of the current deluge of tourists—pausing on the way to San Francisco—with prime letters of introduction, is the thought of how much worse it would be if the studios were still located in New York and Fort Lee, New Jersey. . . . The bars are up, and the bans are down at practically all the studios now, because the job of trying to be nice had just reached the point where pictures could not be made on anything near schedules. . . . The publicity men vote that the next World's Fairs be held at Cape Horn and Cape Good Hope.

* * *

WEDDINGS and BANQUETS: The town had a bit of social flair last week, what with the marriage of Betty Warner, daughter of Harry Warner, to Milton Sperling, writer, bringing the elite out to the Beverly-Wilshire, and the reception to Doctor Buchman and aides of the "Moral Rearmament" movement catching our top dignitaries at the MGM studio. . . . Will Hays and Louis B. Mayer did the speech making honors in fine style. . . . And now the industry is morally rearmend.

* * *

FLITTING AROUND: Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon are two welcome returned exiles to the Hollywood doings, particularly the Inglewood track. . . . Two regular people whom everybody is glad to see back, even if only for a visit, but who are pretty well claimed to the heart of the British public now. . . . The Watterson Rothackers put on quite an evening for Mr. and Mrs. Will Hays out in Hidden Valley when the industry's genial czar arrived on his semi-routine Hollywood jaunt. . . . Those hard working members of the Assistance League have found another job to do. . . . They are sponsoring the opening performance of the Pilgrimage Play this year in the Hollywood Hills, with an imposing group of social names behind the undertaking. . . . It's a fine example of American spirit at its best,

too, when you figure the mixed creeds represented in those unselfish Assistance League workers.

* * *

BIG DOINGS TUESDAY . . . What looks like the preview of the past year will be the debut of the new "Beau Geste" at the Carthay on Tuesday. . . . Apparently everybody will be there—if everybody is fortunate to get seats. . . . Rumor has it that J. Carrol Naish is an outstanding hit in the picture, so there should be no surprise that the J. Carrol Naishes have returned from vacation siestas at Lake Arrowhead to be on hand for the preview. . . . Cesar Romero squired Ann Sheridan when the Ralph Blums entertained at dinner last week. . . . This Romero fellow gets around quite a bit.

* * *

CHARITY AND FUN: That annual charity baseball game between the Leading Men and the Comedians, for the benefit of Mount Sinai, is now pretty firmly established as a Los Angeles institution. . . . There were some thirty thousand cash customers out last Saturday, with full cash contributions still to be checked because many buy tickets who are unable to attend. . . . Best part of the game is the outlook for the future, because the boys put on such a good show for the money that it is now something the cash customers look forward to annually.

* * *

ODDS AND ENDS: The MGM folks, from stars to props, turned out in hearty welcome to William Powell when he returned from his long skirmishes with the medicos last week to start on "Return of the Thin Man." . . . The exhibitors will do the same thing when they get that picture. . . . What a natural! . . . Richard Greene was another fugitive from the hospital last week, but Greene's session was just a restful week-end compared with the long seige Bill Powell has undergone. . . . That fox, Yates, shipped two of Gene Autry's Palomino horses to England for arrival simultaneously with his own disembarking singing cowboy star. . . . That's showmanship. . . . British mobs and British pictorial pa-

pers—the most hungry in the world—will go for Gene and those spectacularly tinted equines like New York went for the King and Queen.

* * *

HEADACHE DAYS: We hinted a few weeks ago that the way picture moguls, near moguls, and half-baked writers are being taken on the local race tracks by every known device since the days of the notorious Guttenberg New Jersey track, and the era of half-mile races with Indian ponies, would one of these days make a great yarn. . . . Now they are telling the story that Harry Warner, a bit peeved at being at the wire so often and so distant on each occasion, one day last week or so insisted on letting the stable boy ride his entry—and the swipe came through with an

\$80 winner. . . . Louis Mayer isn't having much better luck. . . . Maybe it would be better to stick to such horses as Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, William Powell and such true-running fillies as Myrna Loy, Jeanette MacDonald, Eleanor Powell, and Maureen O'Sullivan.

* * *

AND BY THE WAY: They are also telling the story about the tout, notorious on Eastern and Florida tracks, who was only in town two weeks before he had sold a scenario writer into buying a stable which he would train. . . . They claimed a couple of nags out of dog races. . . . Next week the studio failed to lift the scribbler's option. . . . Now he is living on oatmeal. . . . Incidentally, the tout-trainer is gun-shy when within six feet of a horse.

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Mr. Robert E. Welsh
The Digest
5373 San Vicente Boulevard
Los Angeles, California

Dear Mr. Welsh:

Ever since the time, several years ago, when I accidentally stumbled across your magazine, I have religiously read each subsequent issue from cover to cover and have derived a great deal of knowledge from it.

Your sincerity and wide knowledge of the fundamental principles governing showmanship has had a great deal to do with the pleasure I have derived from reading your pages.

The new series of articles, which is being written by Maurice Ridge and Harry Nicholls in the field, are of a special interest and the facts they bring out should be of paramount importance to every exhibitor.

With kindest regards and best wishes for your continued growth and success, I am

Sincerely yours,

INDIANA ILLINOIS THEATRES INC.

by: Jack Rose.

JR:GL

NO WONDER . . .

THE DIGEST IS THE FASTEST GROWING PAPER IN THE INDUSTRY!

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunsa Din	RKO	180
Dodge City	WAR	158
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	139
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Juarez	WAR	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Love Affair	RKO	118
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Bachelor Mother	RKO	114
Man About Town	PAR	112
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Midnight	PAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	103
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	103
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	98
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Captain Fury	UA	98
Man of Conquest	REP	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Talispin	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	92
The Mikado	UNIV	90
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pysmalton	MGM	131
Dark Victory	WAR	128
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	127
Daughters Courageous	WAR	114
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Maisie	MGM	94
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	88
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	85
Off The Record	WAR	85
Naughty But Nice	WAR	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Five Came Back	RKO	77
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
The Gorilla	FOX	75
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	75
Bridal Suite	MGM	75
The Lady and the Mob	COL	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	74

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Hell's Kitchen	WAR	86
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Unmarried	PAR	77
Family Next Door	UNIV	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
It Could Happen To You	FOX	74
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	74
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Ex-Champ	UNIV	73
Some Like It Hot	PAR	73
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	73

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

D. BELOW \$100,000

Trapped in the Sky	COL	75
Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	74

Streets of New York.....MONO.... 71
Mysterious Mr. WongMONO.... 71
Woman DoctorREP..... 71
North of ShanghaiCOL.... 71

Pride of the NavyREP.... 70
Tough KidMONO.... 70
Mysterious Miss XREP.... 70

I Am A CriminalMONO.... 69
Fighting ThoroughbredsREP.... 69
Gambling ShipUNIV.... 69
Convict's CodeMONO.... 69
House of FearUNIV.... 69
I Was A ConvictREP.... 68
Navy SecretsMONO.... 68
Federal Man HuntREP.... 68
Wolf CallMONO.... 68
The Man Who DaredWAR.... 68

SOS Tidal WaveREP.... 67
The Zero HourREP.... 67
My Wife's RelativesREP.... 67
Long ShotGN.... 67
Mickey The KidREP.... 67
Forged PassportREP.... 66
First OffendersCOL.... 66
Rookie CopRKO.... 66
Wanted by Scotland YardMONO.... 66
Outside These WallsCOL.... 65
Panama LadyRKO.... 65

Mystery PlaneMONO.... 64
My Son Is A CriminalCOL.... 64
Code of the Secret ServiceWAR.... 63
Street of Missing MenREP.... 63
Star ReporterMONO.... 63
Undercover AgentMONO.... 63

Boy's ReformatoryMONO.... 61

The Girl From MexicoRKO.... 73
Missing DaughtersCOL.... 73
King of ChinatownPAR.... 72
Society LawyerMGM.... 72
Persons in HidingPAR.... 72
Society SmugglersUNIV.... 72
Mr. Moto's Last WarningFOX.... 72
Twelve Crowded HoursRKO.... 72
Chasing DangerFOX.... 72
The Girl and the GamblerRKO.... 72
The Saint Strikes BackRKO.... 71
Nancy Drew, ReporterWAR.... 71
Pirates of the SkiesUNIV.... 71
Sorority HouseRKO.... 71
Nancy Drew, Trouble ShooterWAR.... 71
Mystery of the White RoomUNIV.... 70
Undercover DoctorPAR.... 70
Winner Take AllFOX.... 70
Tell No TalesMGM.... 70
Big Town CzarUNIV.... 70
On TrialWAR.... 70
Torchy Blane in ChinatownWAR.... 70
AmbushPAR.... 70
They Made Her A SpyRKO.... 70
Blind AlleyCOL.... 70
Torchy For MayorWAR.... 70

The Kid From TexasMGM.... 69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret PolicePAR.... 69
Everybody's BabyFOX.... 69

Grand Jury SecretsPAR.... 68
Code of the StreetsUNIV.... 68
Mr. Moto in Danger IslandFOX.... 68
Within The LawMGM.... 68
Adventures of Jane ArdenWAR.... 68
Almost A GentlemanRKO.... 68
Charlie Chan in RenoFOX.... 68
Fixer DuganRKO.... 68
They All Come OutFOX.... 68
Mr. Moto Takes A VacationMGM.... 68
Lone Wolf Spy HuntCOL.... 67
Missing DaughtersCOL.... 67

For Love or MoneyUNIV.... 66
Beauty for the AskingRKO.... 66
Sudden MoneyPAR.... 66

Boy TroublePAR.... 65
Burn 'Em Up O'ConnorMGM.... 65
Secret Service of the AirWAR.... 65
Sweepstakes WinnerWAR.... 65
6,000 EnemiesMGM.... 65
Exile ExpressGN.... 64
Risky BusinessUNIV.... 64
Tell No TalesMGM.... 64

Inspector HornleighFOX.... 61

The Sun Never SetsUNIV.... 72
Stronger Than DesireMGM.... 72

Stolen LifePAR.... 71

King of The TurfUA.... 70
One Third of a NationPAR.... 70

Clouds Over EuropeCOL.... 69
Boy FriendFOX.... 69

Hotel ImperialPAR.... 66
Gracie Allen Murder CasePAR.... 66
ZenobiaUA.... 66

Spirit of CulverUNIV.... 63
The Flying IrishmanRKO.... 63
Smiling AlongFOX.... 63
Climbing HighGB.... 63
Women in the WindWAR.... 62

IT'S NEVER SUMMER INSIDE
A THEATRE THAT'S PLAY-
ING A GOOD PICTURE!



HARD GUY!



He had a swell start. Born
a gutter-rat, graduated to
be a city savage! Life wore
thin the way he lived it...
his arms that reached for
love embraced sudden
death instead! **HE HAD
TO BE HARD!**



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starring

GEORGE RAFT • CLAIRE TREVOR

with DICK FORAN • HENRY ARMETTA • VICTOR JORY
Directed by FRANK TUTTLE • Associate Producer BURT KELLY



The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 22.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JULY 24, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"SECOND FIDDLE" RIDING ON HIGH FOR ZANUCK

SEE PAGE 5

"MR. CHIPS" PROVING FREAK HIT OF THE YEAR

SEE PAGE 3

FIELD MEN FIND MORE PEPPER AND SOME DYNAMITE

SEE PAGE 6

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DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Producer
GENE MARKEY



Director
SIDNEY LANFIELD



SONJA HENIE

Screenplay
HARRY TUGEND

Photographer
LEON SHAMROY

Featured
EDNA MAE OLIVER
LYLE TALBOT
ALAN DINEHART
MINNA GOMBELL

Film Editor
ROBERT SIMPSON



TYRONE POWER



RUDY VALLEE



IRVING BERLIN



MARY HEALY

CALLING: "MR. CHIPS!"

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

There are many freak things that happen in the course of a week poring over box office reports that come to The Digest's desk.

But we do not think they have ever been so unusual as the manner that "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" keeps socking us between the eyes.

Let's look all the facts and preconceived opinions in the face. First of all, here is an English picture. With all the drab connotations—and memories—that exhibitors associate with any picture not made in Hollywood.

Then, it is also a picture built on a rather "intelligent" subject. At least it hasn't forty white horses, not even an earthquake or a near-flood. Of course, it does offer Robert Donat.

But ordinarily this type of picture would open up at its top strength in the key cities, particularly those of the Eastern seaboard, and then start a slow but steady decline.

On the other hand, we have the freak situation of "Mr. Chips" actually JUMPING from week to week—and remember it is now playing to "the masses."

* * *

Why do we, who so seldom mention particular pictures or companies on this editorial page, pause for this week to talk about the freak situation on "Mr. Chips"?

Primarily, because we like to occasionally let our readers in on some of the experiences that we encounter going over the week's reports on pictures.

There are, for example, such subjects as "Alexander's Ragtime Band" that a blind man could peg as a hit, but which automatically from the first day of release soar to figures that you didn't have the nerve to use. There are such subjects as the Shirley Temples, also in the "automatic" class as profit-makers, but on which you can never get the correct guage until they have been out for four weeks or so and begin to get the family trade. There are sensational Holly-

wood hits that must be preceded on their course by rumor poison, so quick is their demise in the figures.

It keeps a staff jumping. It also keeps it on its toes. (If you can mix those metaphors.)

But it is also a grand job—when exhibitor customers assure you that you are not making any more mistakes than they would, and fewer than most other sources of information they have available.

* * *

And now we come to our second reason for mentioning "Goodbye, Mr. Chips."

This is it:

Is it possible that American audiences are shopping to such an extent for pictures on which they are willing to spend their money, that they are also growing intelligent? Or, rather, that they have been intelligent all along, but now, that even pocket money is scarce, they are narrowing down the objectives for spending?

We hope it is true.

But we also hope this:

That a group of our Hollywood sophomores don't take the cue from "Mr. Chips"—as they did on screwball comedies, gangster gruesomes, and outdoor epics—and go way out on the Imitation Limb.

If they do, we are going to kill the intelligent cycle with only one entry in the race.

* * *

Remember the time when half of Hollywood's associate producers and their stooges felt that the only necessity for a hit was a picture in which the leading man kicked the glamour girl in the fanny, and she retaliated by hurling a bucket of champagne at his head?

Remember, before the Legion of Decency vacuum cleaner, when you could save any dull moment by having the comedian of the picture accidentally walk

(Continued on Page 5)

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Distributor, and Batting Average (Releases/Percentage). Includes United Artists, Twentieth Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont-British.

HIGHLIGHTER GOES OVERBOARD ON COLOR AND GIVES YOU OTHER HIGHSPOTS OF WEEK

Highlight of the Week to us was the conviction, after seeing "Four Feathers," that within two years no producer will have the nerve to make a "big" picture without using Technicolor. . . . "Four Feathers" clinched the argument. . . . First of all, here was a picture without an automatic marquee name. . . . Second, and last, it had to bear the comparison with "Beau Geste," made with marquee names, and with a million dollars of extra box office value behind it. . . . "Four Feathers" comes through the comparison with no apologies needed. . . . And without taking away from a fine cast and good picture making job, it must be stated that Technicolor is what makes it the "show" it is. . . . And just now box offices need more "shows" and fewer "messages."

We Are In For A Tough Year My Hearties!

Every sign from Washington indicates that the picture industry has been elected to occupy most of the headline space until the 1940 election comes up, with the emphasis on those periods when Congress is not in session, and headlines are scarce for perspiring press agents. . . . Anti-trust suits are sprouting all over the county, and apparently placed geographically according to the political importance of the states involved. . . . Income tax suits against big shots are budding, and will burst in bloom within a few weeks. . . . What's it all about? . . . We have one hundred per cent sympathy with the independent exhibitor in connection with the many abuses current in the buying and selling of pictures. . . . We know that the independent exhibitor was just born in the deep, dark shadow of an eight ball. . . . But no family ever made a reputation in a neighborhood by putting out dirty linen on the backyard clothes line, and no family has a chance if the neighborhood politicians decide it can be picked on—and so internally disorganized—that it is easy white meat for headline-picking.

The Field Men Get Your Highlighter Worried

We hope you faithful subscribers get time to read the articles our Field Men are sending in from the hinterlands and the outerlands. . . . Because it must be an education in the picture business to come in contact with your retailers, and through them with your customers. . . . For instance: Just after you have read a pompous Hollywood interview which states that all the troubles of the picture business could be settled if a few lowly independents would only eliminate double bills, you can turn to a DIGEST page and find that one of the leading semi-controlled producer circuits in Chicago follows out what its Hollywood interviews preach by giving the kids three features, an ice cream cone, a glass of lemonade, and to their mothers a chance on dishes—for the sum of ten cents! . . . Who is kidding whom? . . . Isn't it

6 Features 'Going Up'

	Was	Now
1. Mr. Chips	MGM	138 151
2. The Hardy's Ride High	MGM	127 130
3. Man About Town	PAR	112 117
4. Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	108 112
5. Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	103 107
6. The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	72 75

about time we all stopped kidding each other? . . . Or would we rather have Uncle Sam, and every crackpot who is running for office, do the job for us? . . . Are there not enough "regular fellows" among us to get a round table discussion in a man to man fashion? . . . Or is it true that the picture business is just "dog eat dog?" . . . If that is true, we deserve no more happy days than a dog gets in the flea season. . . . We invite the fleas.

Let's Take A Jaunt Around The Studios

Your Highlighter is occasionally asked why he does not comment on the current union battle in Hollywood, which is doing its share to make an omelette situation into a dish of scrambled eggs. . . . Our stock answer has always been, and we may as well repeat it for the cash customers, that if the Associated Press, the United Press, the International Press cannot in their daily wires from Pittsburgh, Detroit, Minneapolis, New York, and what have you, present an intelligent account of what is the boil in the union situation, who are we to scamper in playfully into the situation? . . . We do know this: We worked for some ten years with the technicians of Hollywood—the film editors, grips, gaffers, props—and as a group they have a great deal more loyalty to the industry-art that pays them off, a finer sense of appreciation of the big top's genius that makes a lot a money-maker, than you find in other ranks of the business when you

12 Features 'Going Down'

	Was	Now
1. Daughters Courageous	WAR	114 102
2. The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	87 83
3. Hell's Kitchen	WAR	86 81
4. The Mikado	UNIV	90 83
5. The Lady Vanishes	FOX	80 75
6. Unmarried	PAR	77 73
7. Missing Daughters	COL	73 70
8. Stronger Than Desire	MGM	72 66
9. They All Come Out	MGM	68 65
10. Stolen Life	PAR	71 64
11. Mickey The Kid	REP	67 64
12. Panama Lady	RKO	65 62

get up above the normal salaries for human beings and get into the socially conscious class. . . . If we wanted to start a war tomorrow we would ask for nothing better behind us than a solid group of film technicians; if we started the same war with a half dozen assorted associate producers and some near-writers behind us, we would whisper to mother and ask if we had our winter underwear double coated on our back.

The Neely Bill Will Slumber—With Nightmares

Don't let producers and distributors get too happy over the fact that the Neely Bill will slumber in Washington—because the House of Representatives is in such a hurry to get away from the notorious Potomac heat. . . . It would have been better if the House had either killed the bill or passed it. . . . For the reason that the threat hanging over your head is always more terrifying than the one that gives you quick oblivion. . . . It won't do the picture business any good to have exchange managers and exhibitors go through the July and August buying season with the shadow of the Neely bill hanging over, and the shadow being the plaything of politicians. . . . It will help the Hays office lobby fund. . . . It will help the professional politician. . . . But whom else will the uncertainty help? . . . Why doesn't the picture business clean its own house, and save all the worry and money that are donated to such legislative unrest as the Neely bill? . . . We have a pretty clean house, balanced against any other world-wide industry. . . . Let's clean up a few of the dusty corners, and invite the neighbors in.

But Why Be So Serious When There's News To Report?

Your Highlighter could have reported that Paramount's "Ruler of the Seas" is now "Rulers of the Sea." . . . But he isn't worried about a little thing like a title, when it is Frank Lloyd on a maritime subject. . . . Remember "The Sea Hawk?" . . . And the money that gave box offices? . . . Ray Johnston seems to be doing a good job for Monogram in England. . . . And while you are reading the international headlines in the papers these days, Mr. American Exhibitor, you might just as well put in the book that the budgets on your pictures are pretty well determined by the combination of British and American markets. . . . There ain't much else. . . . Hottest rumor spot of the week is RKO where everybody is wondering just what new deal Prexy George Schaefer, newly arrived, will set with Pan Berman, who has been sitting in the producer's chair for a couple of years. . . . It appears that Loew's, Inc., may move to eight million profit for the year, and that Universal will probably top the million mark. . . . Leo the Lion isn't a bad guy to have around a larder, neither is Nate Blumberg.

"SECOND FIDDLE" TOPPING BOX OFFICES FOR 20th FOX; "ON BORROWED TIME" SECOND

FOX—1 New Release

Darryl Zanuck's new production, "SECOND FIDDLE," comes through with flying colors as a top attraction of a hot, dull, summer week. Leading exhibitors and circuit buyers will undoubtedly recall the big exploitation plug that Darryl Zanuck gave this new Power-Henie special production three weeks ago when parts of the story and the new Berlin musical numbers were broadcast over an international N. B. C. hook-up from Hollywood, New York, London, Rio de Janeiro and Oslo (Norway). This outstanding exploitation stunt has already helped the picture here considerably on its first bookings, for in spite of the heat and off conditions, we find the picture averaging 123% in the U. S. A. Equally fine box office figures will undoubtedly be had on its foreign bookings.

Supporting Henie and Power is a well balanced cast of marquee names, such as: Rudy Vallee, Edna May Oliver, Lyle Talbot, Alan Dinehart and a very promising new-comer, Mary Healy.

MGM—Also 1 New Release

MGM's new release this week "ON BORROWED TIME" adapted from the popular stage success of the same name, has opened in several key cities and is doing even better than we had estimated at a 91% average. While this artistic success is a fine critic's picture we were not so sure that it would be an outstanding grosser; but the first figures are quite satisfactory, although on its second and third suburban runs where the play is not so well known, it may take a considerable drop due to the fact that this is a rather highbrow subject. We strongly advise exhibitors to book a much lighter picture, either a feature comedy or a musical with this one.

Lionel Barrymore is starred and among the featured players are: Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Beulah Bondi, Grant Mitchell, Una Merkel, Bobs Watson and Nat Pendleton. All in all this combination of names should pull some business and if your audiences are of the highbrow kind this one will probably get by satisfactorily. However, in small towns, particularly in the West, you had better book an action picture with this one for your main box office draw.

"ON BORROWED TIME" serves as an initial production effort of former director Sidney Franklin, who has been in retirement the past couple of years, because of ill health—his last cinema job being the direction of "The Good Earth." Harold S. Bucquet directed from Paul Osborn's original stage play.

REPUBLIC—1 Release

Republic has a much better than average programmer in "SHE MARRIED A COP" which is doing better at a 73% average than the majority of recent pictures of this type and cost. In this one Republic was smart enough to put in two good marquee

Of The Eight New Releases In The Past Week, Only One Ran Over 100%, One Came Through Fair and Six Were Weak.



names; Phil Reagan and Jean Parker.

Reagan was starred in several successful musicals and ever since MGM's famous "Sequoia" four years ago, Jean Parker has held a pretty good following. There is no doubt that if Miss Parker were under a contract to one studio instead of constantly free-lancing, her name would mean much more at the box office.

"SHE MARRIED A COP" will fit in satisfactorily in the average double bill and should do well on its own, particularly in the nabes.

Sol Siegel produced and Sidney Salkow directed from Olive Cooper's original screenplay.

UNIVERSAL—3 New Ones

Universal has released three new programmers in the past week, one of which "INSIDE INFORMATION" is fair at 70%, while the other two appear to be weakies.

"INSIDE INFORMATION," 70%, co-stars June Lang with Dick Foran, and Mary Carlise and Harry Carey are featured. Irving Starr produced and Charles Lamont directed.

Universal's second release, "THEY ASKED FOR IT," 66%, hasn't quite as strong a cast. Michael Whalen and Joy Hodges are co-starred and William Lundigan, Isabel Jewel and Lyle Talbot are featured. Max Golden produced and Frank MacDonald directed.

Universal's third and weakest release is "FORGOTTEN WOMAN," 65%, starring Sigrid Gurie. A year or two ago Miss Gurie was exploited by Samuel Goldwyn as a great new "find" but after her sole appearance under the Goldwyn banner as Gary Cooper's leading lady in "Marco Polo," her contract was dropped and since then she has only been seen in one role, the second feminine lead in Walter Wanger's "Algiers." However, there was evidently not enough general enthusiasm for Miss Gurie or else her name has been forgotten in the past year as the figures coming in so far on "FORGOTTEN WOMAN" are especially weak. Of course she hasn't much of a marquee cast to back her up in this one and if she is to continue on with Universal as it is planned, it would be well to put more box office names into her pictures, as she alone appears to have a very limited draw. William Lundigan, Eve

Arden, and Donald Briggs, all of whom mean very little, head the featured cast.

"FORGOTTEN WOMAN" was produced by Edmund Grainger and directed by Harold Young.

RKO—1 Release

RKO-Radio's much ballyhooed "Gateway To Hollywood" production entitled "CAREER," has finally been released nationally but evidently is not taking a hold, even in a small manner, as the majority of the bookings (outside of the world premiere) are only averaging around 62%. Other than Anne Shirley there are no real marquee names in this one. Jesse Lasky's weekly national radio broadcast to find new talent on his "Gateway-To-Hollywood" program was supposed to have created considerable interest in this picture, which introduces his two new screen finds, John Archer and Alice Eden.

However, in Iowa and the corn belt where this picture is laid and, as a matter of fact in most small farming communities, it will fare a bit better.

"CAREER" will probably please the average audience once you can get them in, but it can hardly be classed as a good ticket seller. Robert Sisk supervised for the Lee Marcus program unit and Leigh Jason directed from Phil Stong's novel.

GRAND NATIONAL—1 Release

Once again we hear from the ill-fated Grand National studios, who this past week have a new release in "PANAMA PATROL," which is just doing so-so at a 62% average. With the exception of westerns, "PANAMA PATROL" is the fourth Grand National release this year since January 1.

"PANAMA PATROL," as the name implies, is a satisfactory action picture co-starring Leon Ames and Charlotte Wynters, if that means anything on your marquee.

CALLING: "MR. CHIPS"!
(Continued from Page 3)

through the door labelled "Ladies Room?" Recall how many character actors have gone to ignominious prison cells and electric chair deaths, while only Warner Brothers can send their stars to sacrificial heights?

We would like to see a cycle of intelligent pictures follow "Mr. Chips." But we hope the boys who try it, know what they are doing.

We don't want the picture industry to forget the word "motion" again, and go back to static fly-paper themes just because James Hilton, Ben Goetz, Sam Wood and Robert Donat showed once that there is a way to do the intelligent thing.

Maybe we better call for help. Perhaps we should page a sympathetic, all-understanding old school teacher like Mr. Chips. Call for Mr. Chips!

8 New Features Not in the Last Issue			
1 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....6 Below Par			
		%	We Est.
1. Second Fiddle	FOX	123	135
2. On Borrowed Time	MGM	91	85
3. She Married A Cop	REP	73	75
4. Inside Information	UNIV	70	75
5. They Asked For It	UNIV	66	70
6. Forgotten Woman	UNIV	65	70
7. Career	RKO	62	75
8. Panama Patrol	GN	62	65



J. Maurice Ridge

FIELD MEN MEET AN UNUSUAL INDEPENDENT

THIS WEEK'S REPORT A MID-WEST RAMBLE



Harry E. Nichols

Here's A Salesmanager Who Likes The Chains

When this writer left California, many producers, as well as others interested in box office values in pictures, requested information from the field with respect to "what is the matter with business in the theatre." An earnest sincere effort has been made to ascertain why. Already it has been stated in this column, what the mid-western showmen believed was a contributing factor. Now comes another version, and this time from a salesmanager of one of the largest independent distributors that does not own any theaters.

"For my part, I wish the chains owned every theatre in the country," he blasted. Continuing he opined, "The chains pay us more film rental per thousand of their possible drawing population, than independents. They quibble less over small matters, they show their books and overheads without fiction, and they pay their bills punctually without bellyaching. They properly conduct their houses and they exploit productions to the nth degree. On the other hand you can find scores of independent exhibitors here on Wabash Avenue every day, complaining about film rentals, instead of being in their respective communities trying to get business for their houses."

Some of these same exhibitors about whom our salesmanager friend was talking, told us that the reason they were suffering was because the chains resorted to unfair tactics, which made it impossible to get a fair return on product when it reached their houses. As President Kirsch of the Independent Theatre Owners pointed out last week, bargain matinees were given by the chain operated first run houses in the several price zones, thus milking the pictures before they could show them, depriving them of the possibility of putting over campaigns that normally would fill their theaters. "They milk a zone dry, before our boys

get the pictures," was the way President Kirsch analyzed it.

Who Threw The First Brick Is Chicago Problem?

B & K through their executives claim that the independents were the first to start this war in the price zones. The independents claim otherwise. Data by the ton is being compiled by many folks besides the Government for the impending suit against the chain of B & K and their producer affiliate. In one office there are volumes of photostat copies of the amusement pages and advertising columns of all Chicago papers for years back, which show the programs of all theatres, independent and B & K. This information is being compiled to show how consistently and thoroughly the chain operators have borne down on the independent with programs that have had long runs with the best pictures, double and triple bills with many types of giveaways such as candy, soft drinks, free tickets, bicycles, automobiles and everything besides dishes, the favorite bait, to milk a prize zone. The independents claim that showing matinees in the three and four thousand seat houses for a dime, milks the zone of the children's patronage, before they get a chance at the picture.

As one of the leading independents stated this week, "Sure we could get the picture day and date with the chain operators, if we play it at the same admission price, but again buying power comes into the situation. We buy for one or two houses. They buy for scores. They have their annual settlement day, and they are said to get film rentals adjusted to show profits. We only get laughed at."

Evidence of the independents' accusations with respect to big bills is found daily in the Chicago papers. In the Chicago Tribune July 12th, under Balaban and Katz ad column, is the Belmont, a 3500-seater, which reads "BELMONT 3 hits! Mickey Rooney — "Hardy's Ride High" and "Calling Dr. Kil-

dare," and "Society Lawyer." This house is in a "B" price zone which calls for children matinees at 10c, adults 25c. Nights children 25c, and adults 40c. Thus the merry-go-round in Chicago goes on. "Where she ends, nobody knows," in the language of our good friend Major Bowes. B & K argue it is necessary to get a profit out of their big houses. The independents claim it is being done to gradually drive them from these price zones and leave the field all to the chain operators. Looks now like Uncle Samuel from Washington and Gaum will have to settle the squabble, and when children get to squabbling over the old folks estate, the lawyers, court costs, executors and administrators usually get the lion's share for their services. But to a man up a tree looking on, the funny part of the whole "tragedy" of "Errors" is that Mr. John Public has never been mentioned in these squabbles, and after all his nickles and dimes make it possible for all of us to eat in this industry. Nobody in this industry, to this writer's knowledge, has ever taken the position of International Rotary, which believes that "HE PROFITS MOST WHO SERVES BEST."

Court Decision Just Forecasts More Trouble

Adjournment of the case before a Master in Chancery until September was taken last week. The issues in this case grow out of a consent decree with respect to clearances and bookings, between B & K and the independents, which the independents claim now have been violated, and constitute contempt of a court order. This case will be resumed in September. It has nothing to do with the Government investigation with respect to alleged violations of the Sherman Anti-Trust law, which is said to be coming up in the fall. This is the case that has the boys in daily conferences. When one calls on some of the larger offices here, one gets the same word that comes out of so many Hollywood offices, "He is in

conference." But the funny part of this Windy City set-up is, they are really in conference, and apparently it is not entirely the humid weather that is causing the perspiration to bead on their wrinkled brows, in their air cooled offices. Looks like Chicago will be a hot place all winter, even when the blasts come in from Lake Michigan in sleeting zero weather. If all signs do not fail, the independents are trying mighty hard right now to put a banana peel coated with ice on the pavement in front of the Chicago Theatre Executive offices entrance and exits.

Here's An Exchange-man Who Talks Straight

"We, in my district, are living up whole-heartedly to every word in the Code, and that man who willfully violates either the letter or the spirit of it, will be asked to resign," is the way District Manager "Jack" Flynn of Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Indianapolis of MGM tersely put it, in discussing the proposed fair trades practice act. Mr. Flynn stated that of course they had shorts to sell, and that any good sales force was justified in trying to sell them on their merits. "I think we have the best shorts in the business, and I want all my boys to use every legitimate sales argument to sell them at their market price and get them played along with our other product. But no one in MGM is attempting to cram them down any exhibitor's throat, in order for him to get the features," he added.

Mr. Flynn has an enviable reputation with this company. No man enjoys greater respect in these parts in this industry. He has been here a long time. His offices are in a healthy condition. His reputation for fair dealing extends over all the years he has been in this industry. More men like Jack Flynn would insure less reasons for a code and Government suits to put our motion picture house in order.

(Continued on Page 12)

Korda's "Four Feathers" Great Spectacle

UNITED ARTISTS-KORDA

(The Digest Estimates 120%)

Producer Alexander Korda
 Associate Producer..... Irving Asher
 Director Zoltan Korda
 Story A. E. Mason
 Screenplay R. C. Sheriff
 Featured: Ralph Richardson, C. Aubrey Smith, John Clements, June Dupre, Jack Allen, Donald Gray, Robert Rendell, Archibald Batty, John Laurie, Derek Elphinstone, Frederick Culley, Hay Petrie, Henry Oscar, Clive Baxter, Allan Jeayes, Major John Scott.

"Four Feathers," as produced by Alexander Korda, is a great piece of showmanship. The subject was able to stand on its own feet in silent days—very strongly so—but there is no comparison between the silent version and the elements of pictorial appeal and audience value that Korda has crowded into this modern version.

First of all, it has a story that was always good; secondly, it has eye-soothing Technicolor; thirdly it has sweep, size, magnitude and all the other adjectives your dictionary affords for the purpose; and lastly it is played by a great cast of troupers in the hands of careful direction.

Our best tip to exhibitors is to not let it slip into the wrong booking dates for fear that it is "British." It IS as British as the Union Jack, but it is also as universal in showmanship as a circus.

"Circus" might not be a bad word. Used in the most reverent sense. Because, against the broad canvas of Kitchener's triumphant campaign against the mad dervishes and fuzzy-wuzzies of Africa, that added a link to Britain's empire, Korda has used every resource from the finest of acting to the most spectacular of

CURRENT REVIEWS

1. Beau Geste	PAR	135
2. Each Dawn I Die	WAR	125
3. Four Feathers	UA	120
4. Frontier Marshal	FOX	110
5. Winter Carnival	UA	85
6. Way Down South	RKO	80
7. The Spellbinder	RKO	75

mass-scale effects. That's a combination that could scarcely miss.

The cast may be comparatively unknown for marquee value, so sell it for its magnitude. After seeing the picture, they will remember the players. They will recall Ralph Richardson, probably because of his work with Robert Donat in "The Citadel," they will know C. Aubrey Smith, who is here playing on his own cricket field, they will be willing to see John Clements, June Duprez, Donald Gray and Jack Allan again—they are that capable and personable.

But mainly they will be talking about the "epic" effect that Director Zoltan Korda has achieved from his combination of Technicolor and hordes of people, horses, camels, guns, and landscapes. The picture is breath-taking in many of its moments, while not the least delightful of the benefits of color, is the "homey" atmosphere secured in the strictly English scenes.

If you must hear the story again—it concerns the fellow who was dedicated in the cradle to an army career, but who was afraid he didn't have the courage to stand up under the test of bullets. His resignation on the eve of the regiment's departure for action brings

sardonic white feathers from three former pals. He sets out to prove himself to himself, through fire and storms, and incidentally to return the white feathers to their donors.

Script job by R. C. Sheriff gets all the values of the semi-historic theme, while keeping dialogue on an appreciated intelligent basis. Irving Asher, who formerly handled Warners British production, acted as associate producer under Alexander Korda, and box offices will be giving him many a Warner laugh in the months to come.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A great show. But until word of mouth or your advertising get to work maybe you'd better put some cluck with marquee names on the bill also. Previewed July 20th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Alexander Korda has brought to the screen in 'Four Feathers' one of the most impressive subjects ever to be photographed from the pages of British history. It is a massive production done on a most extravagant scale, all in Technicolor and acted and directed by a most competent group of motion picture creators."

VARIETY: "Magnificently produced, impressively related blood-and-iron melodrama of fighting men in their hours of high passion and crucial tests."

"Each Dawn I Die" In Warner Stride

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Executive Producer..... Hal B. Wallis
 Associate Producer..... David Lewis
 Director William Keighley
 Novel Jerome Odlum
 Screenplay: Norman Reilly Raine, Warren Duff
 Stars..... James Cagney, George Raft
 Featured: Jane Bryan, George Bancroft, Maxie Rosenbloom, Stanley Ridges, Alan Baxter, Victor Jory, John Wray, Edward Pawley, Willard Robertson, Emma Dunn, Paul Hurst, Louis Jean Heydt, Joe Downing, Thurston Hall, William Davidson, Clay Clement, Charles Trowbridge, Harry Cording.

Photographer Arthur Edeson
 Music Max Steiner
 Film Editor Thomas Richards
 Time 99 minutes

The Warner Brothers still hold the monopoly on knowledge of how to do a prison picture. They know all the tricks and plot turns—they repeat them without a blush—and they lay it on thick. They pull no punches.

"Each Dawn I Die" will stand up in the parade. Its box office value will be enhanced by the marquee names of Cagney and Raft, the fine direction, and a cast picked by experts in underworld types; its box office value will be weakened where they have begun to grow a bit tired of going to prison with the Warner Brothers. ("Twenty Thousand Reels in Sing Sing" may wear on any one.)

But taken as an individual picture, aside from its capable presence in the eternal cycle, "Each Dawn I Die" is a job of picture making. There is fundamental strength in the original story that overrides the fact that as a screenplay it must necessarily become formula; there are Cagney and Raft just as "ratty" as any fan could ask his favorite rat to be.

And there is the Keighley direction, which gives both his stars and his supporting players full opportunity for the "moments," which keep the plot moving, and holds its suspense and gets a punch out of its climax.

Keighley, with Raft and Cagney going to town in a big way, also gets socko value out of those near-hysterical type of scenes that Warners demand from their prison formula. There are powerhouse scenes in this, some of the best work the two stars have given to a jittery scene.

The story plants Jimmy Cagney as a too-fresh reporter who is framed by fairly logical means to life behind the bars. He is still a revolutionist, even when behind bars. Raft is a repeater-convict who takes on some of the reporter's worries. There are the internal plottings and rumbles of prison life, and if you are wise you will save yourself the trouble of going to prison, because you can learn all about it from this screen enactment.

We have a suspicion that the picture will keep a lot of people from going to prison; on the other hand there are those who will decide that prison isn't a bad place if they can come through as heroic as Jimmy Cagney and George Raft.

Top notch support is highlighted by George Bancroft's characterization of the warden, and by the fact that this neglected comer, Jane Bryan, gets an opportunity to show something. No other cast mentions are necessary because they can be covered with the statement that neither Hal Wallis nor anyone else has ever packed a picture of this melancholy type with so many sure fires. Just look at the credits above.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Big money where they go for red meat. Two great marquee names and bang-bang treatment. Previewed July 17th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Each Dawn I Die' is one of the best pictures to come out of this industry in many a day. It's a typical Warners dramatic socko that hits as hard as any picture you have ever seen. It's a stark, heavy two-fisted melodrama from the first to the last foot, with hardly any relief during an inch of its unreeling."

VARIETY: "Grim and powerful prison melodrama, grooved for widest popular appeal, is 'Each Dawn I Die.' Names, story nature of the material, and performances that will be talked about give it a natural b.o. hit setup."

**STAR
VALUES!**

**MUSIC
VALUES!**

**PRODUCTION
VALUES!**

**NAME
VALUES!**

**STORY
VALUES!**

**SHOWMAN-
SHIP
VALUES!**

Sonja *Tyrone*
HENIE POWER

in
Irving Berlin's
SECOND FIDDLE

with
RUDY VALLEE
EDNA MAY OLIVER
MARY HEALY • LYLE TALBOT
ALAN DINEHART

Directed by **SIDNEY LANFIELD**

Associate Producer **Gene Markey**

Screen play by **Harry Tugend**

Based on a story by **George Bradshaw**

Lyrics and music by **Irving Berlin**

Skating ensembles staged by **Harry Losee**

DARRYL F. ZANUCK in Charge of Production

...IT CHECKS

**Only from 20th
Century-Fox could
you expect a picture
of such magnitude
at this time—when
you need it most!**



THE KEystone OF YOUR FUTURE

Para's "Beau Geste" Below Expectations

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer-Director..... W. A. Wellman
 Second Unit Director..... Richard Talmadge
 Novel..... Percival Christopher Wren
 Screenplay..... Robert Carson
 Stars: Gary Cooper, Ray Milland, Robt. Preston
 Featured: Brian Donlevy, Susan Hayward, J. Carrol Naish, Albert Dekker, Broderick Crawford, Charles Barton, James Stephenson, Heather Thatcher, G. P. Huntley, Jr., James Burke, Arthur Aylesworth, Harry Woods, Harold Huber, Stanley Andrews, Donald O'Connor, Billy Cook, Martin Spellman, David Holt, Ann Gillis, Harvey Stephens, Henry Brandon, Barry Macollum, Ronnie Rondell.
 Photographer..... Theodor Sparkuhl
 Musical Score..... Alfred Newman
 Film Editor..... Thomas Scott
 Time..... 120 minutes

"Beau Geste" will be a money-maker. There is such inherent vitality in this Percival Wren story that, given anything in the way of expensive production, it seems impossible to imagine how it could fail.

But "Beau Geste" will be a disappointment to exhibitors who remember the silent version, and to many patrons whose memory is also long. Because it is an irritating feeling to realize that after ten years the picture business has not progressed so that it can improve on a previous job, but, in fact, cannot quite measure up to it.

Maybe we are asking too much of the producers and the director. The story is still there, as it was when written, the producer and director should be congratulated for not damaging its structure. But we haven't got a

cast that includes Ronald Colman, Neil Hamilton, Ralph Forbes, Noah Beery, William Powell—at the height of their powers.

Not to say that anything is fundamentally wrong with the present cast. But the casting isn't right. Gary Cooper, is not the chivalrous "Beau Geste" of our imaginations, of Ronald Colman interpretation. Ray Milland turns in a good job, but Ray could have played the part the same way if his birthplace had been labelled "Brooklyn." Robert Preston, in the original Ralph Forbes role, comes the nearest to a visualization of one of the brothers.

Somewhere along the line Director Wellman must have decided that he was in trouble. So the result is that he pointed the picture towards his heavies. And the result of that is that acting honors are stolen by Brian Donlevy and J. Carrol Naish. Donlevy—he is the brutal Noah Beery sergeant, now called Markoff because we don't hurt the French feelings anymore—gets the nasty scenes, the meaty speeches, and trust a good troupier to know what to do with those elements. Naish is so darned good that for a couple of reels you won't realize that he is in the picture. You will be checking your program to find out who is playing the part of Rasinoff. And even then you will find it hard to believe that it is the same fellow so heavily typed in so many gangster pictures. It's a grand job.

Coming back to the picture as a whole, we must repeat: It is going to make money. Plenty of money. There is a hidden ore value in the Foreign Legion theme; there is a tricked mystery-adventure suspense about the story struc-

ture; there are fine performances. Probably most of the members of your audience were not born when the silent version was produced, so they won't be making the comparisons that picture people cannot avoid.

Incidentally, it should be reported that the company gets off to an insincere start with a title to the general effect that the picture has nothing to do with the Foreign Legion—"past or present"—and continues the note by seeing that every near-heavy must scrupulously avoid a French name. Every guy who snarls is a Russian or a German. If the picture has nothing to do with the French Foreign Legion, we are personally wondering what we saw in the two hours.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good for extra money, because audiences are wide open for outdoor adventure, and you couldn't have a better marquee than Gary Cooper and the book's fame. But don't go overboard, unless you are in a spot to stake all your chips on Cooper. Previewed July 18th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount's 'Beau Geste' should meet a healthy response at the box office in all situations. This remake of the 1926 silent hit has strong marquee strength in cast and it should build subsequent business on the basis of word of mouth from patrons who are certain to find this story an absorbing tale."

VARIETY: "By the usual criteria, it is a man's picture. The Cooper name however, has strong feminine pull, and it should satisfy from this angle, even if the usual romantic considerations are minimized and subordinated to the emotions of fraternal love."

"Winter Carnival" Could Have Been Better

U. A.

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Producer..... Walter Wanger
 Director..... Charles F. Reisner
 Original story and screenplay: Budd Schulberg, Maurice Rapf.
 Star..... Ann Sheridan
 Featured: Richard Carlson, Helen Parrish, James Corner, Robert Armstrong, Alan Baldwin, Joan Brodel, Virginia Gilmore, Cecil Cunningham, Robert Allen, Marsha Hunt, Susan and Molly McCash, Morton Lowry, Jimmy Butler, Kenneth Stevens, Benny Drohan, Martin Turner, Tudor Williams Male Chorus.
 Photographer..... Merritt Gerstad
 Musical Score..... Werner Janssen
 Song..... Werner Janssen, L. Wolfe Gilbert
 Film Editor..... Dorothy Spencer
 Time..... 87 minutes

There are so many things that are wrong with "Winter Carnival" that you are apt to be deceived by first glance at critical reactions. The picture suffers from the fact that they tried to cram at least four plots into one subject—or maybe there wasn't any plot in the first place—but, nevertheless the picture has its audience values. So be careful as you read the critics.

First of all the picture has real youth—not screen youth—and sincerity in its college treatment; secondly, it has something 'different' in background; thirdly, it has wholesome, clean players whom you would invite into your own home; and lastly, and probably most important, it has a directorial job by Chuck Reisner that

keeps it bubbling even while the truth must be told that there is nothing to bubble about.

The background is Dartmouth in winter-time—snow, skiing, then some more snow and some more skiing. With some of the best process photography the screen has seen, it becomes a refreshing background. It is different—and you only carp because they give you too much of it. But there are lots of cash customers who won't carp.

The story? Well, Walter Wanger, Dartmouth alumnus, and a couple of other Dartmouth boys got together on the story and script, and we have a suspicion they must not be fraternity brothers, because no one told the other fellow what story he was writing.

We have a father-son yarn; an elder sister and innocent younger sister story; a glamour girl and a junior Mr. Chips story; and for good measure, we are supposed to have some worry about who breaks a skiing record, so that adds a sport story to the hash.

But in between the unraveling, you have good direction and a number of nice youngsters keeping you fairly well satisfied just because the things that are happening are interesting and the people are nice to look at.

The "oomph" girl, Ann Sheridan, paced with gauze and close-ups, and neatly handled by Reisner, comes through to advantage; this Richard Carlson boy, first seen in a David Selznick picture, will do until he gets a better

part. Helen Parrish plays a capable younger sister. All the background characters mentioned in the credits above deliver capably.

Oh, yes, we didn't finish the story. Well, since space is short we will make a proposition. Just write, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, and state which story you want to hear. The mimeograph department will take care of it. Designate your choice: The father-son story, the Barbara Hutton-Professor Chips tale; the innocent girl and the tempter yarn; or the winning athlete routine.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: They will go for it big in New England because of the color of Dartmouth's annual carnival. Okay for other college towns if your play date is not till Fall. Good in Texas because of Ann Sheridan. But not big enough over the average to bank your night's expectations on it. Previewed July 19th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Winter Carnival' is the story of the Annual Winter Carnival at Dartmouth University and it looks as if it was written, directed, acted and produced by the students of that school, because it has about that much intelligence. On the whole, the best that can be said of the picture is that it will fill time between the running of the other picture on the bill."

VARIETY: "Light, spirited, refreshing comedy of youth on a holiday, which will serve as the frappe complement on any bill of genuine entertainment."

"Frontier Marshal" Rip-Roaring Meller

20th CENTURY-FOX
(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Executive Producer.....Sol M. Wurtzel
Director.....Allan Dwan
Screenplay.....Sam Hellman
Story.....Stuart N. Lake
Stars.....Randolph Scott, Nancy Kelly
Featured: Cesar Romero, Binnie Barnes, John Carradine, Edward Norris, Eddie Foy, Jr., Ward Bond, Lon Chaney, Jr., Chris-Pin Martin, Joe Sawyer.

Time.....70 minutes

Darryl Zanuck must have called Sol Wurtzel into the office and said, "If they want action and MOTION pictures, let's give 'em a hum-dinger like the old slam-bangs I used to make for Warners."

The job has been done.

"Frontier Marshal" is Tombstone of the bloody Boothill Cemetery days, and Wyatt Earp at his shootingest. It is told just the way those hell-bent-for-election pioneers would probably have told it themselves.

The result is a picture that action fans will eat up—and talk about—and the sophisticates will enjoy, even while they pretend to be above enjoyment of he-men and two-fisted women pop-popping at each other with snarls and bullets.

The picture is a honey for most theaters of America. The marquee value is in the hands of Randolph Scott, who turns in one of the best "silent hero" characterizations of his career, and who, in our opinion, deserves a lot more recognition that he gets, because he has never

let a picture down. In this one he is the small boy's idea of a Frontier Marshal, and at the same time the fellow women may decide they could have fallen for.

Sub-values are contained in the names of the fast-growing Nancy Kelly, the safe and true Binnie Barnes, a real spot for Cesar Romero, and a supporting cast of people who know their stuff when you turn them loose in a town like the frontier-day Tombstone.

Direction, in the hands of Allan Dwan, is handled superbly for his subject. He takes plain ordinary red-meat, shows that he knows when to spice it with a touch of class, when to spread it with a touch of size, but he never forgets that he is handling raw meat.

Based on the book by Stuart Lake, the picture's story is to some extent the saga of Tombstone in the days when men were men, but extraneous plots and biographical facts are sidetracked to bear down towards a straight line. So we get a concentrated, old-fashioned Western dressed with production values, capable direction, and fine trouping.

We have said what we think about Scott. We go on to report that this Nancy Kelly girl improves with each picture. And we will surprise no film follower with the news that Cesar Romero wraps up his part in fine style. Binnie Barnes plays a hard-boiled gal of the night with full conviction.

The story barely needs repetition. It concerns an outlaw town into which a fearless

individual—Randolph Scott—enters, who takes on the job of enforcing the law. Romero is the sympathetic killer, with a respectable past back in the Middle West. Nancy Kelly is the girl who has followed him. There is shooting, shooting, and more shooting, and in the end the town is on the way to a clean-up.

Support is fine. Chris-Pin Martin, as a Mexican saloon-keeper, gets a chance to go to town and he does. Safe troupers like Joe Sawyer, Del Henderson, etc., handle odd parts well. And Eddie Foy, Jr., plays his beloved father to the limit. He is a bit handicapped here by the fact that he is actually doing an "impersonation" of a fabled figure—and his own father—but one of these days some producer will discover that the Foy talent for showmanship runs in all the Foy family.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A knock-out for action audiences. And don't pay any attention to sophisticated critics who will be trying to find out why it isn't art. Previewed July 21st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Frontier Marshal' with all its swell entertainment, big name cast and extravagant production has not been able to get away from the formula plot—but this plot has some mighty able writing and is given an excellent screen adaptation."

VARIETY: "Potent combination of rowdy comedy and lurid melodrama is written into this episode of Tombstone's heyday, gauged to general audience level and certain to please in majority of situations."

"Way Down South" Best Breen Yet

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer.....Sol Lesser
Director.....Bernard Vorhaus
Original story and screenplay: Clarence Muse, Langston Hughes.
Star.....Bob Breen
Featured: Alan Mowbray, Ralph Morgan, Clarence Muse, Steffi Duna, Sally Blane, Edwin Maxwell, Charles Middleton.
Songs.....Clarence Muse, Langston Hughes
Time.....62 minutes

Bobby Breen is growing up; Sol Lesser is letting the production quality grow up with him. In "Way Down South" he has the best of the Breen subjects to date; he has a good picture no matter who is presented.

We are not promising you an epic, but we

are telling you of a good piece of entertainment. Satisfactory as picture, and highlighted by some fine musical moments.

New Orleans is the particular portion of "Way Down South" that is treated in the picture. The period is before the Civil War. There is the plantation owner, Ralph Morgan, whose humane treatment of his slaves leaves his son, after Death passes over, the heir to bankruptcy. There is a heavy, Edwin Maxwell, who moves in as executor. There is enough plot to carry the interest, and to let young Bobby, aided by Alan Mowbray, save the day.

All in all, a good show. Victor Young has provided a good musical score, and silver-throated young Breen is helped by spot numbers from Clarence Muse and the Hall Johnston

Choir. Breen looks more human and less "made-up" than in the past, and it helps him a lot.

Producer Lesser and Director Vorhaus can feel well satisfied with the picture they have delivered to RKO.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good family fare. Will not disappoint in its right spot on the bills. Previewed July 18th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Producer Sol Lesser's 'Way Down South,' starring Bob Breen, is above the standard set by the producer in his previous efforts with the young singer."

VARIETY: "Breaking away from sharper lines of formula around which previous Bob Breen vehicles have been fashioned, 'Way Down South' is by far best of juve singer's pictures."

Lee Tracy at Home in "The Spellbinder"

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
Producer.....Cliff Reid
Director.....Jack Hively
Screenplay: Thomas Lennon, Joseph A. Fields
Story.....Joseph Anthony
Star.....Lee Tracy
Time.....64 minutes

They did a better job by Lee Tracy in this one, "The Spellbinder," than in his first picture after a return from London stage triumphs. Principally because it is tailored to Lee Tracy from start to finish. And it is hard to go wrong with Lee Tracy if you give him half a chance.

But we hope he does not have to go on playing fast-talking shyster lawyers for the rest of his life, fine as his job is in this one. Mainly because we think he is too good an actor, but also because we know there are exhibitors who began to feel saturated with this type of yarn—with Tracy and Otto Kruger alternating as the smooth-talking lawyers.

But on its own feet, "The Spellbinder" will stand up well for program purposes, and Tracy gives them a socko personality job of acting. This time he is the attorney who can perform miracles with the twists of his tongue, and performs them so well that he gets his daughter into a jam, and himself behind bars. Then

he has to Houdini himself out of the spot by killing a nasty villain.

There is a good script job, and Jack Hively's direction keeps it moving at a smart pace.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A bit better than the average program attraction because of the values given by Tracy's presence. Previewed July 20th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This innocuous little offering of the joys and sorrows of a charlatan of the courtroom is strictly filler fare."

VARIETY: "'The Spellbinder' comes through as an excellent programmer. It carries plenty in way of dramatic action and suspense."

HERE AND THEREABOUTS

IN HOLLYWOOD

FRIENDSHIP NOTE: Benny Rubin is discovering what it means to have made friends—and held them—now that he is meeting all comers at the Victor Hugo. . . . The news didn't get around as fast as it could have, but as fast as it did, the "regulars" started showing up to let Benny know what they think of him. . . . Incidentally, what is an audience pleaser like Benny Rubin doing away from a screen or stage?

* * *

SAD NOTE: You are going to find the advertising for local gambling boats conspicuous by absence in the future. . . . Reason: The police department's polite requests. . . . The Digest beat the bloodhounds by deciding some two months ago that maybe a film digest could get along without such advertising. . . . Some of the boys just waited until the copper called.

* * *

COMING AND GOING: Nick Schenck, and wife, Pansy, in to town quietly, a few days at the studio, a lunch with Dr. A. H. Giannini, a brief spurt of entertainment evenings by their many friends here, and back on their way to New York before many less important people could have okayed their schedule of interviews to the local press. . . . Walter Pidgeon left town for a breath of fresh air, and returned without any ballyhoo. . . . Charlie Chaplin didn't do himself any good with the autograph hounds at the "Four Feathers" preview. . . . Some were heard to mutter something about "Dictators." . . . He wasn't helped by the hauteur of his companion, Constance Collier. . . . But Paulette Goddard did her best in the cause of better twenty-four sheeting.

* * *

GREEN-EYED DEMONSTRATION: You would be surprised at the number of pseudos who think they had a great week because of the Saturday Evening Post article about Louella Parsons. . . . The phonies would sell off a relative to change places with her any day, and Louella would be willing to swap articles with a boss named

Hearst any day. . . . You gotta be big before you are target enough for small time marksmen to throw bricks at you.

* * *

PROUD EXHIBITOR: M. A. Lightman, Tennessee exhibitor prominent in organization affairs, can go back to Memphis pretty proud of local conquests. . . . And we bet he has some nice photos recording his evening at the Trocadero with none other than sweet Marjorie Weaver for his partner.

* * *

TOO BAD: That squabble between the grand old trouper, Sophie Tucker, and the Eddie Cantor faction of the American Artists Federation. . . . Players should always stick together no matter what the immediate problem, and if there is something to be settled, do it behind closed doors. . . . Our own memory goes back to the original White Rats strike, and the Equity strike in New York that saw Eddie Cantor leading a parade down Broadway. . . . And we repeat: Players should not fight with each other. If the opposition isn't Albee, Murdock, and Shubert, then it might be Billy Rose and two other guys. . . . But the opposition is the fellow you are supposed to fight.

* * *

IT'S A BOY! . . . It's a boy at the Don Ameche household. . . . Which is an item worthy of a paragraph entirely by itself, if you just measure by the width of Don's smile. . . . No, we can't report the chosen name yet, but would it be too fancy to read: Mr. Chase Sanborn Ameche?

* * *

WORKING GAL: Mrs. Rowland Vance Lee—maybe you like the initials this way: Mrs. Rowland V. Lee—has been doing trojan work, keeping office hours, and spurring up activity for the group of plays which may resurrect the Los Angeles speaking stage. . . . Helen Hayes brings the curtain up tonight with Herbert Marshall's assistance in "Ladies and Gentlemen." . . . The cream of Los Angeles so-

ciety is assisting Mrs. Lee, not to mention, in our modest way, some of the best of our picture folk.

* * *

ACQUISITION: Eddie Small has made himself an acquisition in getting Lou Smith as a production aide. . . . Smith came from Paramount's New York publicity office to be an associate with Frank Lloyd on "If I Were King" and "Rulers of the Sea," and not only knows his production stuff now, but retains the personality that helped him in publicity work. . . . Which means that people will work with him, and people enjoy meeting him.

* * *

SERIES STUFF: Paramount officials must figure they have the makings of one of those nice nest eggs—a consistently successful series—as a result of the sneak previews of "What a Life," starring

Jackie Cooper. . . . Because they are already planning two more. . . . Ted Reed directed "What a Life," but what is more interesting, he was largely responsible for the purchase of the vehicle, after viewing it as a stage play in New York.

* * *

IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL: With all the turmoil of player squabbles, Eddie Cantor remains a family man. . . . We glimpsed him at the Onyx Club last week, "with family." . . . And when you say that about Eddie, you are saying something. . . . We don't know whether Leo Gorcey does himself any good or not when you glimpse him at those local badminton courts. . . . Because you hear the jay-squawkers saying: "He's just the same as he is on the screen."

We Knew You Would Be Surprised

- We appreciate the enthusiastic critical approval that has been accorded our unusual selection of imported material. But we must say—we knew you would be surprised.
- No tailor in Los Angeles has the connections—and has put forth the effort—that we have, to get the latest in unusual weaves.
- But also—no tailor in Los Angeles gives you the services of such sincere and long-trained craftsmen to turn those woolens into the latest of style.
- And all at a PRICE.
- You will be just as surprised at the price, as so many were last week at the wealth of material—unusual material—from which to choose.
- Come in and see us—or call for a TAILOR to come see you. You'll save a lot of money, we will make some. And we will make a friend.

JOHN D. PARRAL

237 SOUTH LA BREA

Phone for service:
YORK 3608

Field Men Meet

(Continued from Page 6)

A Great Tribute To A Great Fellow

More than a thousand show people, mostly from the motion picture industry will gather in one of Chicago's large ball rooms July 24 to do honor to Clyde Eckhardt, commemorating the silver anniversary of his advent into the field of amusement. This Eckhardt Silver Jubilee could be celebrated for no finer personality in this industry. In 1909 Clyde started out with the Leslie Carter company, has been a field man for pictures, a home office executive with Winfield Sheehan, and for the past twelve years Branch Manager of 20th Century-Fox in Chicago. He is always called upon to head up charity drives, general promotions in the industry in Chicago, and universally respected by the entire industry. Volumes might be written about his unsung benefactions, but to say he is respected by all branches of the industry, honored and followed as a real man, will be attested at the Eckhardt Silver Jubilee.

THE SECOND GUESSER SAYS THAT WRITERS SHED TOO MUCH GLOOM AND PROVES HIS POINT

The Second Guesser entered the office with a chip on his shoulder. He didn't take long to get into verbal action. . . . He said: "I suppose you fellows with typewriters have to report the facts when general business isn't good—but don't you think there can be too much of the tear-shedding? . . . Or, rather, don't you think you could blend it with a little more healthy-lunged cheering now and then when some picture is really helping exhibitors to carry the mortgage? . . ."

The Second Guesser Gives Some Examples

"Why don't you take a couple of subjects like 'Alexander's Ragtime Band,' and 'Kentucky,' and go into real raves about the grosses they are piling up, and how they actually seem to improve with age? . . . What if 'Kentucky' may be playing the hamlets and way stations by now? . . . Hamlet box offices need nourishment, and producers rate a pat on the back—a couple of pats—when they deliver product that stands up as these pictures have. . . . Or, you could say a good word for that "B" unit over at Radio under Lee Marcus' direction—which consistently shows willingness to try new ideas. . . . Formula "B" pictures can be turned out by sausage grinding machines, say an occasional kind word for a gang that is brave enough to stray from formula."

Then He Goes To Town On "Man About Town"

By this time The Second Guesser was going strong. . . . "Instead of those ponderous editorial headaches you fellows get about problems and vexations, why don't you sometime jump aboard something like the job Mark Sandrich did for Jack Benny and Paramount? . . . And, incidentally, for box offices. . . . Of course, you do print the figures, and your ratings show what is happening, but why not print a few of those many reviews that stream across your desk? . . . Once you had a department in The Digest which reprinted New York reviews, and when you eliminated it you said your reason was the fact that New York does not give expression to the thoughts of the country—that they leaned too far to the sophisticated. . . . Well, did you see what they said about a mass appeal musical with a mass appeal star? . . . Those boys aren't so bad, if the show is good." . . . At this point The Second Guesser leaned across our desk and picked up a sheaf of clippings.

The New York Hi-Brows Really Did Go For It

We allowed The Second Guesser to ramble on as he started to choose from his handful of clippings. "Look," he chuckled, "See what the sacrosanct New York Times had to say: 'Mark Sandrich, who became a national institution when he made Astaire and Rogers one, has directed skillfully . . . and a gentleman's gentleman—or comedian's comedian—called Rochester, has restored Jack Benny to the comic map and cleared a sizeable place for him-

self.'" . . . The Second Guesser looked up from the clipping and staring us straight in the eyes, snapped: "Isn't a review like that the sort of news that you should print more often?" But he wasn't finished yet. . . . "Here's another one," he went on, "And from the Herald-Tribune, which is a fairly stalwart pillar of New York dignity. . . . Listen to this: 'Man About Town' is just about tops in its frivolous field of screen comedy. . . . Mark Sandrich, who directed several of the Astaire-Rogers shows, makes the most of the Benny-Rochester encounters, timing them beautifully to sustain laughter through one sequence into another."

We Might Just As Well Let Him Take The Page

Just getting into his stride, The Second Guesser now started popping reviews at us like a machine gun. . . . "Listen to the angle Eileen Creelman took in The Sun: 'The Paramount Theater doesn't have to worry about the World's Fair for a while. It has 'Man About Town.' . . . Bland Johaneson in the New York Mirror says: 'A smart director, Mark Sandrich, finally gives the fans the Jack Benny they know and enjoy.'" . . . William Boehnel, writing for the World-Telegram says: 'Don't let anything keep you away from the Paramount Theater these days where the incomparable Jack Benny and the equally incomparable Eddie Anderson

are providing bushelsful of laughter in what is just about the gayest, merriest, cockeyedest comedy.' . . . And Arthur Winston finishes the chorus in The Post with this, 'There's good news at the Paramount Theater where 'Man About Town' is surpassing the enthusiastic reports that preceded it. It's a good show and a mighty good picture, the best of its kind.' . . . Then think of the syndicate kings, with their national coverage, Hellinger, Sullivan, for example. . . . Hellinger says, 'The best Jack Benny opus to hit the screen is 'Man About Town,' sure fire entertainment.'" . . . Sullivan echoes with: 'They'll see the best musical comedy Paramount has sponsored'."

"What I mean is, that every picture coming out of Hollywood undergoes a pretty tough raking over from critics whose readers cover the globe, who pull few punches, and then starts its career with a variety of personal opinions helping or injuring it. . . . Of course, a hit is a hit, and usually goes out on a wave of fine adjectives. . . . But after that first wave you writing fellows usually forget the enthusiasm, and return to scribbling about the doldrums and the drought. . . . Don't you think you could make an extra dollar for the business once in a while by sticking longer with such as 'Alexander's Ragtime Band,' 'Gunga Din,' 'Kentucky,' 'Man About Town'?" . . . Well, that's The Second Guesser's current peeve—and we have given it to you verbatim.

An Independent Writes

THE CAPITOL THEATRE

W. VOSCO CALL, Manager
Phone No. 11
BRIGHAM CITY UTAH

Brigham City, Utah, June 21, 1939.

The Digest,
Mr. Robert E. Welsh, Editor,
5373 San Vicente Blvd.,
Los Angeles, California.
Gentlemen:

In The Digest of June 7th at page twenty-two, you say I am in correspondence with the Department of Justice over conditions of clearance service in Brigham City. That is only part of my complaint, the whole of which contains other grievances and involves companies represented by Intermountain Theatres Inc., in this city, but I want to make plain, and correct any impression left by your article, that Companies represented by me are not subjects of said complaint. Twentieth Century-Fox has shown every courtesy to me, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, represented by George Hickey in this territory, has been more than fair. In fact, I consider that Mr. Hickey has saved my business here with his consideration and co-operation. If all the distributing companies throughout the country would employ men of intelligence, discrimination and the power to see the problems of the small theatre owner in a way that Mr. Hickey sees them we would have no occasion to complain of conditions to any one.

Besides difficulties of clearance my complaint includes price cutting practices, taking from me companies I had represented prior to entry of the Paramount Pictures Inc. subsidiary in this territory, and they have also used other unfair methods in an effort to put me out of business.

I have been in business in Brigham City for more than twenty-five years and I don't intend to let any one put me out if I can prevent it by honest means. There is considerable agitation in this territory for a Grand Jury investigation and if nothing short of that will suffice we will welcome it. The recalcitrant money powers of the Motion Picture industry may yet have to be taught that the small man still has rights under our Grand Old Flag.

Yours very respectfully,

W. VOSCO CALL.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	151
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	137
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131

Juarez	WAR	127
Starecoach	UA	126
Second Fiddle	FOX	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Love Affair	RKO	118
Man About Town	PAR	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Bachelor Mother	RKO	114
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	112
Midnight	PAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110

Honolulu	MGM	107
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	100
Captain Fury	UA	100

Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Tallish	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	92

St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
The Mikado	UNIV	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128

The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	105
Daughters Courageous	WAR	102

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Maisie	MGM	94
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	93
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
On Borrowed Time	MGM	91
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	85
Off The Record	WAR	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Naughty But Nice	WAR	83
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	83
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Five Came Back	RKO	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
The Gorilla	FOX	75
Bridal Suite	MGM	75
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	75
The Lady and the Mob	COL	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	74

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Hell's Kitchen	WAR	81
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Family Next Door	UNIV	76
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	75
It Could Happen To You	FOX	74

Whispering EnemiesCOL... 75
Homicide BureauCOL... 74

Trapped in the SkyCOL..... 73
 She Married A CopREF..... 73

Streets of New YorkMONO..... 71
 Mysterious Mr. WongMONO..... 71
 Woman DoctorREF..... 71
 North of ShanghaiCOL..... 71

The Sunset Murder CaseGN..... 70
 Pride of the NavyREF..... 70
 Rough KidMONO..... 70
 Mysterious Miss XREF..... 70
 Inside InformationUNIV..... 70

UnmarriedPAR..... 73
 Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 73
 Boy SlavesRKO..... 73
 DisbarredPAR..... 73
 Ex-ChampUNIV..... 73
 Some Like It HotPAR..... 73
 Romance of the RedwoodsCOL..... 73
 King of ChinatownPAR..... 72
 Society LawyerMGM..... 72
 Persons in HidingUNIV..... 72
 Society SmugglersUNIV..... 72
 Mr. Moto's Last WarningFOX..... 72
 Twelve Crowded HoursRKO..... 72
 Chasing DangerFOX..... 72
 The Girl and the GamblerRKO..... 72
 Nancy Drew, ReporterRKO..... 71
 Pirates of the SkiesWAR..... 71
 Sorority HouseUNIV..... 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble ShooterRKO..... 71
 Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 71
 Missing DaughtersCOL..... 70
 Undercover DoctorPAR..... 70
 Winner Take AllFOX..... 70
 Tell No TalesMGM..... 70
 Big Town CzarUNIV..... 70
 On TrialUNIV..... 70
 Torchy Blane in ChinatownWAR..... 70
 AmbushPAR..... 70
 They Made Her A SpyRKO..... 70
 Blind AlleyCOL..... 70
 Torchy For MayorWAR..... 70
 Charlie Chan in RenoFOX..... 70

Back Door To HeavenPAR..... 72

King of The TurfUA..... 70
 One Third of a NationPAR..... 70
 Boy FriendFOX..... 69

Clouds Over EuropeCOL..... 67

Stronger Than DesireMGM..... 66
 Hotel ImperialPAR..... 66
 ZenobiaUA..... 66

Gracie Allen Murder CasePAR..... 64
 Stolen LifePAR..... 64

Spirit of CulverUNIV..... 63
 The Flying IrishmanRKO..... 63
 Smiling AlongFOX..... 63
 Climbing HighGB..... 63
 Women in the WindWAR..... 62

I Am A CriminalMONO..... 68
 Fighting ThoroughbredsREF..... 68
 Gambling ShipUNIV..... 68
 Convict's CodeMONO..... 69
 House of FearUNIV..... 69
 I Was A ConvictUNIV..... 68
 Navy SecretsMONO..... 68
 Federal Man HuntREF..... 68
 Wolf CallMONO..... 68

SOS Tidal WaveREF..... 67
 My Wife's RelativesREF..... 67
 Long ShotGN..... 67
 The Man Who DaredWAR..... 66
 Forged PassportREF..... 66
 First OffendersCOL..... 66
 Rookie CopRKO..... 66
 Wanted by Scotland YardMONO..... 66

The Zero HourREF..... 65
 Outside These WallsCOL..... 65

Mickey The KidREF..... 64
 Mystery PlaneMONO..... 64
 My Son Is A CriminalCOL..... 64
 Code of the Secret ServiceWAR..... 64
 Street of Missing MenREF..... 63
 Star ReporterMONO..... 63
 Undercover AgentMONO..... 63

Panama LadyRKO..... 62
 Panama PatrolGN..... 62
 Boy's ReformatoryMONO..... 61

The Kid From TexasMGM..... 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret PolicePAR..... 69
 Everybody's BabyFOX..... 69

Grand Jury SecretsPAR..... 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger IslandFOX..... 68
 Within The LawMGM..... 68
 Adventures of Jane ArdenV.P..... 68
 Almost A GentlemanRKO..... 68
 Fixer DuganRKO..... 68
 Mr. Moto Takes A VacationFOX..... 68
 Lone Wolf Spy HuntCOL..... 67

Code of the StreetsUNIV..... 66
 For Love or MoneyUNIV..... 66
 Beauty for the AskingRKO..... 66
 Sudden MoneyPAR..... 66
 They Asked For ItUNIV..... 66
 They All Come OutMGM..... 65
 Boy TroublePAR..... 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'ConnorMGM..... 65
 Secret Service of the AirWAR..... 65
 Sweepstakes WinnerWAR..... 65
 6,000 EnemiesMGM..... 65
 Forgotten WomanUNIV..... 65
 Exile ExpressGN..... 64
 Risky BusinessUNIV..... 64
 Tell No TalesMGM..... 64

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 Inspector HornleighFOX..... 61

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 Risky BusinessUNIV..... 64
 Tell No TalesMGM..... 64

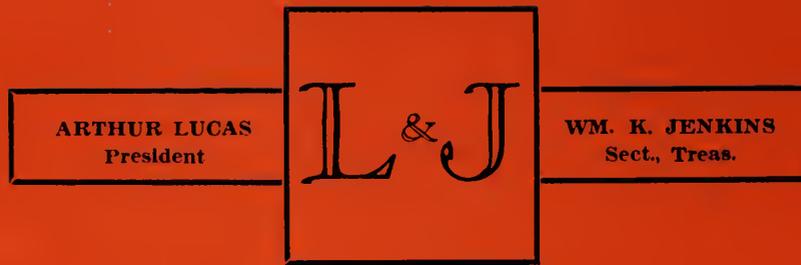
CareerRKO..... 62
 Inspector HornleighFOX..... 61

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 Inspector HornleighFOX..... 61



660 Peachtree St., N. E. Telephone Walnut 5114
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Office of
WM. K. JENKINS

June 27, 1939

The Box Office Digest,
5373 San Vicente Blvd.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Gentlemen:

We feel The Box Office Digest comes nearer to giving a correct picture of product than any other magazine that we have seen, and I wish to congratulate the publisher, Robert E. Welsh.

Our office is a veteran subscriber, receiving two copies, one in the name of A. C. Cowles, and the other in the name of Atlanta Enterprises, Inc.

Sincerely,

Wm. K. Jenkins

WKJ:sl

“A Correct Picture of Product”
That's Box Office Digest

The Box Office
DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 23

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 1, 1939

PRICE: 25 CENTS PER COPY

**"EACH DAWN I DIE"
BUSTS INTO
SUMMER DOLDRUMS**

SEE PAGE 5

**"REARMAMENT"
BRINGS A REACTION
FROM THE EDITOR**

SEE PAGE 3

**PREVIEWS TOPPED
BY "STANLEY
AND LIVINGSTONE"**

SEE PAGE 6

**The
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★ *The Box Office*

"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **WARNERS** Wins With
"EACH DAWN I DIE" -126%



Vice President in Charge of Production
JACK L. WARNER



Executive Producer
HAL B. WALLIS



Associate Producer
DAVID LEWIS



Director
WILLIAM KEIGHLEY



JAMES CAGNEY

Novel
JEROME ODLUM
Photographer
ARTHUR EDESON
Film Editor
THOMAS RICHARDS
Screen Play
NORMAN REILLY RAINE
WARREN DUFF
Featured
GEORGE BANCROFT
MAXIE ROSENBLOOM
STANLEY RIDGES
ALAN BAXTER



GEORGE RAFT



JANE BRYAN



LET'S "REARM" OURSELVES

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Moral Rearmament has been in the Hollywood air rather prominently for the past few weeks.

The objective of Moral Rearmament is to gain international peace—banish war—through exercise of the inherent sincerity that is supposed to exist in the souls of all men.

An ambitious program.

One with which no man can quarrel, and which all should applaud.

Therefore, it is with the hope that if this editorial takes us momentarily down from the clouds to the sordid pavements of commerce, it will be realized that we are not in any way seeking to dampen the enthusiasm of the past few weeks.

We have an humble thought to present.

Could we possibly try a little of that Moral Rearmament in the industry that gives us our bread and butter, that holds—or should hold—our loyalty?

What about trying Moral Rearmament on the picture industry?

* * *

The conclusion is inescapable, from the reports of our Field Men and the steady stream of correspondence that comes across the desk of The Box Office Digest, that the industry itself is in a state of Civil War.

War is war. And war on your own doorstep, in your own parlor, seems to our vision possibly a task that could be tackled with greater prospects of banishment than the grandiose project of healing international animosities.

At least it would be good practice for our industry—and probably dozens of others—to start on the simple task. We might conceivably build up the sturdy spiritual strength that would fit us to tackle the bigger job.

Wouldn't it be great if we cleaned our own back yard to such spic and span orderliness that we could all play a constant ring-around-the-rosy game there, meanwhile beaming on one another with beatific smiles?

* * *

What is the present situation?

At what should be the height of the selling season, the usual welter of recriminations, charges and innuendoes between a large body of exhibitor thought and the distributors is actually accentuated.

Round table conferences that any group of adults KNOWING THEIR BUSINESS AND ARMED WITH SINCERITY should be able to settle in a few hours as far as basic principles are concerned, are dragging on for interminable weeks. Either because neither side trusts the other, or because one side must be trying to put something over.

What a choice spot for some Moral Rearmament.

Maybe we could borrow a few mimeographed copies of those Hollywood speeches and distribute them in advantageous hands.

* * *

If the next two years find this industry's processes shackled by governmental control, the industry will have no one but itself to blame. And the lack of those qualities among its leaders that make for the resounding phrases of the Moral Rearmament crusade.

And if the industry's speechmakers haven't the time or the inclination to try their words on our own problems, why fan the air with them hoping to dent the skins of war-hungry internationalists with hides thicker than an elephant's?

It's like listening to sermons from a group of clergymen who are under indictment for wife-beating. The reverend gentlemen may be innocent, but they ought to clear the charges before resuming the preaching.

And don't forget, in an industry such as ours, so intertwined with the public interest and with public opinion as ours is, the first governmental step—even in such form as the Neely Bill applying only to booking problems will only be the step that puts a foot inside the door.

The door will never shut again, and it will open up wider.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 12 rows listing distributors and their batting averages for 1939. Includes United Artists, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO-Radio, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont British.

THE HIGHLIGHTER FORGETS TO TALK ABOUT HOLLYWOOD; WORRIES ABOUT EXHIBITORS

Of course there were plenty of meaty bits of studio news during the week, nothing as strong as a two inch steak, but many morsels of interest to his taste or that. . . . But your Highlighter got his thrill out of attendance as a guest of an exhibitor group that is trying to work out an analysis of the new Trade Practice Code—which sells your piece of genius, and my slice of hack to the exhibitors. . . . It was a group interested, probably, in forming an Allied organization on the doorsteps of the producers. . . . But they showed good sense, and good will, by having it a pretty wide open meeting. . . . And even gave an invitation and the floor to Bob Poole, who guides the destinies of the rival Independent Theater Owners Association.

They Talked Business While Others Were At The Races

That was what made it a highlight to your Highlighter. . . . Regardless of the politics involved, of the problems, these fellows who PAY HOLLYWOOD OFF were engaged from a noon luncheon call until close to five o'clock talking bread and butter. . . . And with such an important theme, they only finished their discussion in time to run off to their theaters. . . . Where your pictures are shown. . . . While a several score of Hollywood ten percenters, and bulbous headed gentlemen, were probably just watching the last race. . . . On the way home many of the pieces of genius probably occasionally let an eye stray to the marquee of a picture theater, but that must have been accidental. . . . It takes too much time to figure out the day's losses.

In All Good Will We Serve A Warning

Some will wonder why we consider a meeting of lowly exhibitors a Highlight on a page that should usually concern only the sacrosanct circles of Hollywood. . . . Let us explain: After our apprenticeship at the ends of this business where you must make a dollar spent return at least three dollars to the company, we have been in Hollywood long enough to also feel we have the Hollywood viewpoint—without having lost the lessons of the cold hard days on the selling and exhibiting firing line—we feel that in all good will we are equipped to give a warning. . . . Exhibitors live in their communities. . . . They live very close to their ticket-buyers, they live fairly close to their local policitos. . . . Forgetting, momentarily, the real purpose of this Allied meeting, which was a discussion of the new Trade Practice Code, the underlying sentiment that one cannot fail to realize, in exhibitor—and to some extent in public—thought these days, is that too outrageous a proportion of the public's dollar is going to a group of Hollywoodians who are paid out of all proportion, and who spend their money out of all sense of discretion. . . . If somebody

8 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. Man About Town	PAR	117	122
2. Daughters Courageous	WAR	102	106
3. Five Came Back	RKO	79	82
4. Boy Friend	FOX	69	72
5. Clouds Over Europe	COL	67	70
6. Forgotten Woman	UNIV	65	70
7. Stolen Life	PAR	64	68
8. Mickey the Kid	REP	64	68

could muzzle one-half of the Hollywoodians, close up a few dozen swimming pools, sell off a dozen hay-burners masquerading as race horses, ship three quarters of the writers back to the hick town cub reporting jobs from which they slipped into Hollywood, then there would be nothing left for the business men of the business but to get together as business men. . . . The business men can't do it so long as the morale is bad back in the S.O.S.—Service of Supply. . . . Selah. . . . It is about time we got back to this particular Southern California Allied meeting. . . . Though the truth is we have been there all the time.

Exhibitors Are Not All Kept In Cages

Though we are back at this Allied meeting, we wish to pause for another split-second sermon to Hollywood. . . . Too many of our big minds have the unconscious thought that the fellow who is unfortunate enough to run a theater is a guy who couldn't do any better. . . . What a surprise they would have had if they had been with us last week. . . . There were law school graduates, there were chaps with records as successful attorneys, there were just plain old fashioned showmen—and we'll take showmen in any company any day. . . . And while they are smart, they are also bewildered. . . . They can't understand an industry that pays the hens in fabulous food, and then bawls out the retail grocer because he can't sell bad eggs. . . . They can't understand an industry in which you can't talk to the wholesaler and

9 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. Juarez	WAR	127	123
2. Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	100	94
3. On Borrowed Time	MGM	91	88
4. Hell's Kitchen	WAR	81	76
5. The Family Next Door	UNIV	76	73
6. The Girl From Mexico	RKO	75	70
7. Ex-Champ	UNIV	73	70
8. Tell No Tales	MGM	70	65
9. Career	RKO	62	51

the manufacturer without being told you are dumb, and where the rewards go to the income tax jumpers. . . . They just can't understand. . . . We ourselves can't understand why a number of adults who are well enough off to be far away from seeking Social Security, can't get together and talk it over. . . . Would it help to get rid of some of the Hollywood phonies first, and then show what a fine set of garbage the fellows at this end had put out for the collector?

We Will Get To That Meeting Before We Finish

Perhaps we had better do that. . . . First of all, we report that it was to consider the new Trade Practice Code, and Jimmy Quinn had returned from Minneapolis and points East with a Code and the Allied interpretation. . . . Jimmy is a gray-thatched Irishman, who will stand on his feet and say: "Ask me questions." . . . And he never dodges. . . . Then someone's remarks brought forth the fact that in this great territory of Los Angeles, which should be buying pictures right now, no-one knows whatinell the Code is all about, and if there is an authentic copy of the Code it must be in the Vatican Museum properly dated in the fourteenth century. . . . Take a legal document clause by clause, and all you get is claws. . . . That's the way the retailers seem to feel, without any other prompting than the prompting that makes your decision as to which side of the bread you put your butter. . . . And do you know what we decided after the meeting? . . . We decided this: If the industry, with all the effort and hope towards fairness shown by these exhibitors, doesn't put its own house in order before the next session of Congress, then we will have a lot of graduates from Harvard Business Administration School telling us with the backing of LAW how to do it. . . . On that night, pity the poor sailors.

The Cub Reporter Now Gets To The Important Part

We have talked so much about our own ideas, that we have missed fulfillment of the first instruction to a cub reporter. . . . We haven't mentioned the names. . . . In the course of our wanderings you have heard about James Quinn and Bob Poole—that's putting two lion cubs together in one phrase. . . . Lion cubs can be friendly, too. . . . Then, Seth Perkins came down on a crutch to show his backing of the cause. . . . And there was our genial host, who is retiring as to speeches but active as to effort, Lou Bard. . . . And also, Dave Rector, George Bromely, Bill Sobelman, Fred Segal, Manny Kirstein, Fred Hirshon, and, oh, shucks, there was Bob, and Jim, and Joe, all allowed to get on their feet and say their piece and ask their questions. . . . They even asked your Highlighter to say a word or two. . . . That should end it.

WARNER'S "EACH DAWN I DIE" PROVING SUMMER TONIC; "ANDY HARDY" STRONG

WARNERS—3 New Releases

Warner Brothers First-National have three new releases this week, one a very outstanding box office attraction, one just an average programmer and a third picture that is very weak.

"EACH DAWN I DIE," which brings to the screen for the first time together in one picture, two of the greatest portrayers of underworld characters, James Cagney and George Raft, has opened up rather strongly at a 126% average, considering the general off conditions and extreme summer heat as reported to us in various exhibitor box office reports.

As a matter of fact Warner Brothers are so delighted over the success of "EACH DAWN I DIE" that they are now planning a second co-starring vehicle for Cagney and Raft as soon as the latter returns from his European vacation, which of course will be good news to exhibitors.

Supporting Cagney and Raft in this outstanding melodrama is a fine cast including; Jane Bryan, George Bancroft, Maxie Rosenbloom, Victor Jory, Emma Dunn, and many other names too numerous to mention.

While this attraction will probably prove to be a better draw for the men and children, still there is a strong romantic angle between Cagney and Miss Bryan that will also hold the women's interest.

With so many weak releases currently on the market exhibitors will do well to give this one added playing time.

Warner Brothers' second release "INDIANAPOLIS SPEEDWAY" while not exactly an 'A' picture is certainly much better than a programmer although the first figures received on it are not any too strong, considering the cast, as it is only averaging around 78%. Pat O'Brien, Ann Sheridan, John Payne and Gale Page head the big cast of featured players and accordingly this one may do much better on its future bookings.

One of Warners' new associate producers, Max Siegel handled this one, while Lloyd Bacon directed. Naturally in houses catering to action pictures this one should be a box office clean-up.

Warners' third and last release this week is just another fair programmer from the Bryan Foy unit, "WATERFRONT," 63%. Because of the lack of marquee names not much can be expected of this one in the general run of things and therefore exhibitors should be sure to protect themselves by booking this one with a definite box office draw.

Dennis Morgan, Marie Wilson and Gloria Dixon head the cast, which certainly doesn't mean much on the average marquee. Terry Marus directed.

MGM—1 New Release

Metro - Goldwyn - Mayer, in one sense of the word has a good box office release in "ANDY HARDY GETS SPRING FEVER" which is doing fairly well at 121% average; yet on

Of the Twelve Releases in the Past Week Three Ran Over 100%, One Came Through Okay and Eight Were Very Weak.

the other hand this is away below par, as compared to the previous Andy Hardy pictures. Consequently "ANDY HARDY GETS SPRING FEVER" is running approximately at 15% below our estimate on its first key city bookings.

MGM replaced the regular Andy Hardy director, George B. Seitz, with one of their ace, top A megaphoners, Woody Van Dyke, and furthermore put more time and effort into this new Andy Hardy, hoping it would top all the others in the series, which of course it has failed to do by a long sight so far.

Many of the critics consider this the best of the series; but it may be possible that the public is tiring a little of the Hardy formula as this is the seventh in this series in two years time, or else it may just be that general box office conditions are off in the usual hot summer weather.

Needless to say, Judge Hardy and his family constitute the usual cast; Lewis Stone, Mickey Rooney, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, etc. Probably this one may pull up to better grosses in the nabes. While first city figures are a relief after many weeks of bad business, still they are away below anticipations.

UNITED ARTISTS—1 Release

United Artists' new release this week is an Edward Small production—his biggest and most expensive effort in sometime, "THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK" which although it has only opened in a few first run situations has been held over for second weeks and is averaging quite well at 111%.

While there are no particular big marquee names, still you have Duma's great historical story backed by costly and lavish production. Louis Hayward and Joan Bennett are co-starred and others prominently featured are; Joseph Schildkraut, Warren William, Alan Hale, Miles Mander, and Montagu Love.

James Whale directed from George Bruce's screenplay. While some exhibitors are afraid to book costume pictures, they can be pretty safe with this one as it has plenty of action and furthermore is being backed by such a terrific exploitation campaign that it is bound to draw a fairly good box office.

PARAMOUNT—2 New Releases

Paramount's most important release this week is a good mythical kingdom story "THE MAGNIFICENT FRAUD," 81%, but of which not too much can be expected because of the lack of outstanding marquee names. There is a fine cast of featured players all of whom are good troupers but still not sufficient to draw a top house which means that this one will have to be doubled.

Akim Tamiroff, Lloyd Nolan, Mary Boland, and Patricia Morison head the cast which in some neighborhoods may have a certain pulling power, although the first run figures on this one are not any too healthy. Harlan Thompson produced and Bob Florey directed from Charles Booth's original story.

Paramount's second release this week "MILLION DOLLAR LEGS," 73% is another programmer from the Harold Hurley unit. There are no big cast names but since this one has a good box office title, it has had considerable publicity, it seems to be drawing fairly well considering its classification. Due to its collegiate theme it will naturally draw better in the nabes particularly where there are many high school and college students.

Betty Grable heads the cast which includes; John Hartley, Donald O'Connor, Jackie Coogan, and Joyce Mathews. Bill Thomas supervised and Nick Grinde directed.

FOX—1 New Release

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit "NEWS IS MADE AT NIGHT" which seems to be getting by fairly well at a 74% average. This newspaper yarn co-stars Preston Foster and Lynn Bari with Russell Gleason and George Barbier featured. Edward Kaufman supervised and Alfred Werker directed.

UNIVERSAL—Also 1 New Release

Universal's new release this week is "UNEXPECTED FATHER," 70% which is the first of a series co-starring the baby "Sandy" with Mischa Auer. Exhibitors and the public alike will undoubtedly remember how "Sandy" stole the picture, "Eastside of Heaven" from Bing Crosby and Mischa Auer, it was then and there that Universal decided to co-star the baby and Mischa Auer in a series of domestic comedy dramas.

In "UNEXPECTED FATHER" Universal backed Sandy and Mischa up with a good cast including: Shirley Ross, Dennis O'Keefe, Joy Hodges and Dorothy Arnold, and yet with off conditions this one is running only around 70% which means that it will have to be spotted as the lower half of double bill programs. Kenneth Goldsmith produced and Charles Lamont directed.

COLUMBIA—1 Release

Columbia studios have a new release this week in "A WOMAN IS

12 New Releases Not in the Last Issue

	3 Over 100%.....1 Okay.....8 Weak	We Est.
1. Each Dawn I Die	WAR.....126	125
2. Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever.....	MGM.....121	135
3. The Man in the Iron Mask	UA.....111	100
4. The Magnificent Fraud	PAR.....81	80
5. Indianapolis Speedway	WAR.....78	80
6. News Is Made At Night	FOX.....74	75
7. Million Dollar Legs	PAR.....73	70
8. Unexpected Father	UNIV.....70	75
9. A Woman is the Judge	COL.....70	70
10. The Spirit in London	RKO.....68	70
11. The Ware Case	GB.....66	65
12. Waterfront	WAR.....63	65

Fox "Stanley and Livingstone" Has Both Spencer Tracy and Africa For Selling

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer Darryl F. Zanuck
Associate Producer..... Kenneth Macgowan
Director Henry King
Screenplay..... Philip Dunne, Julien Josephson
Historical Research and Story Outline by Hal Long, Sam Hellman.

Star Spencer Tracy
Featured: Nancy Kelly, Richard Greene, Walter Brennan, Charles Coburn, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Henry Hull, Henry Travers, Miles Mander, David Torrance, Paul Stanton, Holmes Herbert, Montague Shaw, Brandon Hurst, Hassan Said, Paul Harvey, Russell Hicks, Frank Dae.

Photographer George Barnes
Musical Director..... Louis Silvers
Art Directors..... William Darling, George Dudley
Film Editor Barbara McLean

There has always been an affinity between Africa and box office. Sometimes it has been because of wild animals, and sometimes because of freak humans. At times the box office affinity has even proved itself in cheaply made exploitation subjects, at others it has been the result of really extensive exploitation and exploration.

It remained for Darryl Zanuck to hitch Africa to sincerity and by virtue of the deeply human story of human courage, with authentic background, deliver to showmen a merger that can collect just whatever shekles they go after.

"Stanley and Livingstone," it is unnecessary to say, has as its foundation an authentic historical event. The Zanuck treatment has not tampered with the history, and to that extent the picture gains its sincerity and values, while the same cause was responsible for the fact that it doesn't fall into easy formula classification as picture entertainment.

There are no wide-lipped African natives who might have been borrowed from a circus sideshow; there are no gorillas who chase white women up and down trees.

But there is sincerity—there is Spencer Tracy and a grand collaborating cast, there is showmanship in the delivering of incidents, so that the biographical note is always present; it has its strong elements of pictorial value, and

"Miracles For Sale" Just a Dualler

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Director Tod Browning
Original Clayton Rawson
Screenplay: Harry Ruskin, James Edward Grant.

Stars Robert Young, Florence Rice
Featured: Frank Craven, Henry Hull, Lee Bowman, Cliff Clark, Astrid Allwyn, Walter Kingsford, Frederic Worlock, Gloria Holden, William Demarest.

Photographer Charles Lawton
Film Editor..... Frederick Y. Smith
Time 70 minutes

What must have appeared on the surface as something of a novelty in idea, emerges as a meandering overplotted script as "just one of those things." Given the novelty of the basic idea, MGM production, and the personable presence of Robert Young, "Miracles For Sale" will get by on the bottom end of double bills, but that is about all. Robert Young deserves

CURRENT REVIEWS

		We Est.
1. Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	135
2. The Old Maid	WAR	115
3. Hotel For Women	FOX	90
4. Our Leading Citizen	PAR	80
5. Miracles For Sale	MGM	75
6. Fugitive At Large	COL	75

there is a build-up to the finish that ends the evening's proceedings on a high note.

It seems unnecessary to retell the story of "Stanley and Livingstone" at this late date. As we remember it the school books told of the missionary, Livingstone, who was lost in the wilds of Africa, and of the enterprising New York publisher, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., who felt that it was just another assignment and sent his representative, Stanley, out to find Livingstone, after many others had failed.

That is the essential of the story. The side part concerns a love affair which Stanley had with the daughter of an English official, and with the difficulties he has convincing the big-wigs back in London that he is not a fraud. After Stanley has been successful, he himself falls under the spell of Africa and returns to the Dark Continent for the picture's closing scenes, to the accompaniment of a chorus that is singing "Onward Christian Soldiers."

Spencer Tracy plays the part of Stanley. He plays it with the reality of a reporter just attempting an assignment in the course of a day's work, but with courage that will not be stopped. Sir Cedric Hardwicke gets the next most important role as Dr. David Livingstone and, when they are together, Hardwicke and Tracy stand toe to toe for some of the greatest trouping that you ever have seen. Nancy Kelly, coming along picture by picture, is the love interest, while Richard Greene is placidly present in a rather backgrounded role. Walter Brennan comes in for comedy relief, but something must be done about Walter, because with each picture he is becoming more and more a Brennan and less comedy relief.

a better break from the powers that be.

There is an intriguing thought in the story theme, an exposure of the hocus-pokus of fake spiritualists, mediums, etc., at the hands of a capable magician. Robert Young is the crusading magician, and there are murders to be solved.

But there are either too many moments of static exposure of legerdemain, or else there is too much stuttering in the script. The thing just doesn't jell. Tod Browning, who is at home in this type of subject, and whose screen record has many successes of the macabre type on the list, does his best with individual scenes, but he just couldn't get it moving with pace and assurance.

Florence Rice is capable in the feminine role opposite Young, Henry Hull somewhat wasted

Spot casting for the picture is exceptional. Henry Travers does a grand job as Miss Kelly's father. Henry Hull has his moments at the outset of the picture as James Gordon Bennett, and from the cast above you can see that Zanuck and Director Henry King called their shots and picked their people.

There must have been problems in the making of "Stanley and Livingstone." After all, with plenty of money to travel to Africa, and with a basically strong theme, there was still the problem of making it entertainment. That the result has come through as a real show, is a triumph for Director Henry King and a tribute to the co-operation that exists between King and Zanuck.

Quite a bit of the picture's footage, in order to cover the long travels through African wilds, is in narrative form, but not as you have seen it in recent pictures. Someone came up with the clever idea of having Spencer Tracy's marvelous voice do the narrating while in the action of the picture he was supposed to be writing in his diary. It is very effective, and saves some moments that might have stayed too long in a monotone.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: You have Tracy as marquee value, plus some other good names for a start; then there is Africa. With Tracy to sell the women, the subject and the picture itself will sell the others. Incidentally, it will be a great bet for the British market because of the sincerity of its treatment of an Empire subject. Previewed July 31st.

The Other Fellows' reviews are not available as we go to press.

as the heavy. Frank Craven receives an opportunity for a few standout moments.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Its exposure of a score of magic tricks—among them all of the best known stage and spiritualistic gags—will give it some value, especially for the kids. But strictly for the bottom of the bill. Previewed July 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This one will give a certain amount of transitory satisfaction to the fans who delight in learning just how magicians perform their tricks, but judged on its merits as a whodunit, in which classification it falls, it will arouse just ordinary interest, for its plotting hasn't been too well done."

VARIETY: "Aimed at family trade, 'Miracles For Sale' easily makes its mark. It will have grownups as well as youngsters unconsciously gripping their seats as the laughter-generating business and moves in broken flow."

"The Old Maid" Class Femme Picture

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Executive Producer.....Hal B. Wallis
 Producer.....Henry Blanke
 Director.....Edmund Goulding
 Screenplay.....Casey Robinson
 Based on the Play by.....Zoe Akins
 Novel.....Edith Wharton
 Stars.....Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins
 Featured: George Brent, Donald Crisp, Jane Bryan, Louise Fazenda, James Stephenson, Jerome Cowan, William Lundigan, Cecilia Loftus, Rand Brooks, Janet Shaw, DeWolf Hoppin.
 Photographer.....Tony Gaudio
 Music.....Max Steiner
 Film Editor.....George Amy
 Time.....95 minutes

"The Old Maid" is a class picture, with particular appeal to the feminine trade. Because of the superb performances of the principals, and the brilliantly interpretive direction of Edmund Goulding you will hear it talked about when Academy award time rolls around.

But it cannot be unreservedly recommended for mass appeal, and not at all for the run of the mill audience demanding a portion of action in its entertainment.

As a matter of fact, the heavy shadows of frustration that hang over most of its characters are very apt to injure "The Old Maid's" draw after you have skimmed the cream of the carriage trade responding to the play's reputation, and the Bette Davis fanatics.

We spend eighty-five minutes with two sis-

ters, Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins, who in the course of the picture's twenty-odd year span, never seem to do the right thing at the right moment. Or, maybe we should say, to whom the wrong things always happen.

Miss Hopkins starts the dirge at the outset of the opus by marrying security and the wrong man just as the right man, George Brent, returns to claim her love. Miss Davis gets a brief moment of happiness—not shown on the screen—in an illicit affair with Brent, and then the Civil War claims the latter's life. There is a child born of the union who grows up to be Jane Bryan in later reels.

That closes one half of the story, and when we pick it up again Bette has become the prim, cantankerous old maid aunt of the family, the daughter, in ignorance of her real parentage living as a ward of widowed Miriam, and growing to almost hate her mother.

Oh, yes, we forgot to state that the first cheerful chapter did not end until Miriam, for some muddled combination of motives, by deceitful means destroys Bette's one chance at marriage.

These are not pleasant people to live with, in truth, not even pleasant people to spend an evening with. They not only hate each other, but they seemingly hate themselves.

But if you are seeking an acting, directorial and production job, presented in the framework of a skillfully intelligent script by Casey Robinson, you need look no further. Miss Davis

is superb, Miss Hopkins not any further behind than the comparative opportunities offered by the roles. George Brent's appearance is brief, he is the soldier who dies off in the early reels. Jane Bryan turns in a corking performance, giving further evidence that this youngster is developing as fast as the importance of her assignments increases. Louise Fazenda, as a faithful family servant, delivers a clear cut performance, a gem of repression. Support is of high standard.

And no one need be told what Edmund Goulding can do with tearful moments, mother love and repressed tragedy. He is in a class by himself for tear-jerkers, and proves it again.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Strictly for women and class trade. Neither the title nor the picture itself will sell for mass trade. Previewed July 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This screen adaptation of the popular Zoe Akins play is strictly a woman's picture and as such will garner healthy box office returns in big town and hamlet from the feminine trade."

VARIETY: "The screen version of 'The Old Maid,' Zoe Akins' Pulitzer Prize play, is a highly involved emotional drama. It is a depressing play, filled with futility, frustration, sustained misery for most of the characters, and as such is not likely to enlist widest reception, despite its fine performances and directorial and production care and excellence."

"Hotel For Women" Good Showmanship

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer.....Raymond Griffith
 Director.....Gregory Ratoff
 Story.....Elsa Maxwell, Kathryn Scola
 Screenplay.....Darrel Ware, Kathryn Scola
 Featured: Linda Darnell, Lynn Bari, Ann Sothern, James Ellison, June Gale, Elsa Maxwell, Jean Rogers, Joyce Compton, John Halliday, Katharine Aldridge, Alan Dinehart, Sidney Blackmer, Amanda Duff, Ruth Terry, Chick Chandler, Gregory Gaye, Charles Wilson, Herbert Ashley, Ivan Lebedeff, Helen Wrixon, Dorothy Deering, Barnett Parker.
 Photographer.....Peverell Marley
 Film Editor.....Louis Loeffler
 Time.....122 minutes

Darryl Zanuck comes up with a refreshingly novel showmanship idea in presenting Elsa Maxwell's "Hotel For Women," a picture that will be one of those "pauses for refreshment" to box offices thirsty for some gayety and frivolity.

And not only has Zanuck come through with entertainment in a new field, but his expedition has also bagged several new faces that are more than promising. The picture will pay future dividends on that score alone.

The idea behind "Hotel For Women" is told in its title. We live for the evening in a hotel exclusively for women, our pleasant and principal concern being with the beautiful young-

sters whose modeled features and forms greet us from the billboards and the mags. We are so intimate, if secret, guests of the hotel ourselves that we see them in various states of dress and undress, we hear their petty bickerings and their larger loyalties to one another. And all around us there is a continual fireworks crackling of smart dialogue.

The dialogue job is one of the best of the year's sophisticated efforts; the plot is a bit on the naively formula side, but who cares, if you can spend a couple of hours in such enjoyable company? Oh, for a night in a "Hotel For Women!"

Linda Darnell is the newcomer on whom the spotlight is centered as the girl from the country who comes to the city to marry her childhood flame, James Ellison, and finds his affections have turned towards a more socially beneficial marriage. Fate, and the wise tutelage of Ann Sothern create of her the nation's most famous model. The conversations bubble, the girls bubble too, until the plot has to be rounded up in a bit of meller, saved by the insouciant acting of John Halliday.

The Darnell girl will do. She is good to look at, and a bit of stiffness in spots is overshadowed by the general excellence of the whole job. Ann Sothern is in a meaty wisecracking role, and keeps the picture at its highly speeded pace. The famed Elsa Maxwell

has been carefully spotted for brief bits, with the result that she comes through satisfactorily without any danger of creating a furore for further screen appearances. Lynn Bari, June Gale, Jean Rogers, Joyce Compton are among the personable models.

In such a picture the men are overshadowed, but a glance at the credit sheet will convince that the male roles are in capable hands.

Director Gregory Ratoff was in his element, and the picture sparkles with delightful touches.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Without particular marquee strength you will have to sell the showmanship idea behind the title, but you can do so knowing that word of mouth will build it up. Great for the younger girl set, and the men will go for acquaintance with the lovelies. Previewed July 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A glamour picture if there ever was one. Glamour title, glamour story, a glamorous cast and with settings that mount it all in as glamorous a piece of sock entertainment as has been delivered in quite a while."

VARIETY: "A picture of exceptional charm and vivid entertainment qualities is 'Elsa Maxwell's Hotel for Women,' capable of a cleanup in the metropolitan first runs and a show which will fascinate women audiences down to the remotest hamlet."

"Our Leading Citizen" Weak Burns

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer George Arthur
 Director Alfred Santell
 Screenplay John C. Moffitt
 Original Irvin S. Cobb
 Star Bob Burns
 Featured: Susan Hayward, Joseph Allen, Chas. Bickford, Elizabeth Patterson, Clarence Kolb, Paul Guilfoyle, Fay Helm, Kathleen Lockhart, Otto Hoffman, Kathryn Sheldon, Hattie Noel, Gene Lockhart.
 Photographer Victor Milner
 Film Editor Hugh Bennett
 Time 90 minutes

It just appears that Paramount couldn't make up its mind about "Our Leading Citizen." Originally, they must have started to make a Bob Burns picture; somewhere along the line they decided to make the kind of propaganda picture that Warners do so well; about that time they must have decided that Bob Burns can no longer hold up a picture except in rural sections, so they got all balled up. Because by that time they had their propa-

ganda entangled with their star, in an inextricable mess, with the result that neither star nor propaganda get anywhere. And the story didn't even start.

There is a good idea somewhere in "Our Leading Citizen." That must be stated as fact—because a half a dozen ideas struggle for utterance on the screen, so the law of averages must mean that somewhere, sometime, there must have been a good idea. It is just impossible that the entire thing was aimed at hash.

Bob Burns is the Will Rogers—only he isn't Will Rogers—of a mythical city, torn with capital-labor strife, the ogre capital represented by Gene Lockhart. Capital is painted in black colors, and labor temporarily succumbs to a touch of Communistic influence. Somewhere along the line the capital-labor theme is forgotten, and the piece switches to an election yarn, with the nomination for Senator at stake. If this all seems confused, don't blame us, blame the picture.

Best acting jobs are contributed by the support, all of whom turn in crisp characteriza-

tions. Susan Hayward, in the feminine lead, is a youngster improving with each performance. Paul Guilfoyle and Clarence Kolb have fine opportunities, while Fay Helm is outstanding as a wide-eyed radical femme.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: The picture was probably aimed at industrial centers, but the logic is so messed up we would advise exhibitors in such spots to view it before setting in the dates. In other sections just run of the mill celluloid for the bottom of the bill, if you must play it. Previewed July 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Our Leading Citizen,' Paramount has an offering which will pull in the Bob Burns fans, but it is not destined to chalk up extraordinary grosses."

VARIETY: "Sprawling story and loosely organized material, coupled with laggard direction, cuts the entertainment possibilities of 'Our Leading Citizen' to the minimum and does nothing to further the peculiar talent and character distinction of Bob Burns."

Darmour Hits Top With New Jack Holt

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer Larry Darmour
 Producer Rudolph Flothow
 Director Lewis D. Collins
 Original Story Eric Taylor
 Adaptation and Screenplay: Eric Taylor, Harvey Gates.
 Star Jack Holt
 Featured: Patricia Ellis, Stanley Fields, Guinn (Big Boy) Williams, Arthur Hohl, Cy Kendall, Jonathan Hale, Leon Ames, Don Ames, Don Douglas, Weldon Heyburn, Ben Welden, Leon Beaumont.
 Photographer James S. Brown, Jr.
 Song Hall Johnson
 Film Editor Dwight Caldwell

We have frequently promised ourselves to take the space some week to write the real words that should be expressed about this strictly-on-his-own producer, Larry Darmour.

Of course, Darmour has never been strictly on his own, since his pictures are always released through the best of commercial channels.

But he is on his own as a producer, because he thinks the pictures up, he makes 'em, and he keeps them hitting on high. He will be around this business long after they have discarded that headache called 'Academy Awards.' Years from now he will be getting votes from exhibitors who would rather make a dollar on a picture than go on their due Social Security.

All of which is a rather long-winded introduction to our belief that one of the most consistent jobs in this picture business is being done by Larry Darmour in his current Jack Holt series, and our secret belief that Columbia knows it.

Exhibitors are pretty frank when they write to THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST—they speak right out, because ten dollars of their money on the line entitles them to speak. And they often bother us about some of those overnight

discoveries of the Hollywood columnists—of whom they nor their box offices have ever heard—and they ask us pertinent questions.

Well, that is enough of that. The picture we are reviewing is "Fugitive At Large." Frankly, we do not like the title. We think the title is dropping below the level of the Darmour-Jack Holt series, while the picture itself tops the whole group.

But that is our opinion. If you want to know what it is all about, we can do that very quickly. It has Jack Holt in a dual role, it has racketeers, it has South America, North America, and what have you, but it is all directed by Lew Collins, handled by producer Larry Darmour and played by one of those casts a producer loves. The result is a treat for action fans, an extra orchid for this fellow Darmour, who lets the others get the publicity while he keeps a few exhibits happy.

There is really no need to mention any members of the cast if you have read the credit list above. They are all the solid troupers over whom the highbrow critics go "GA-GA" every time they appear in a million dollar epic decorated by the name of a wizard.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Put it down as about the best of the Jack Holts. And while you are doing it, check it against some of the more highly publicized "B's" from some of the more splendid majors. Previewed July 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Packed with more action than has been injected into the more recent Jack Holt starring vehicles, 'Fugitive At Large' emerges as a suspenseful melodrama that will serve as suitable fare on the lower end of a dual bill."

VARIETY: "Parading its star in dual role, and surrounding him with better than usual supporting cast, 'Fugitive At Large' takes precedence over earlier Jack Holt mellers in this Larry Darmour series."

Releases of the Week

(Continued from Page 5)

THE JUDGE" which is just doing so-so at a 70% average. Frieda Inescort is the woman and she is supported by Rochelle Hudson and Otto Kruger. Naturally this one is strictly for he duals.

RKO—Also 1 New Release

RKO-Radio's new release this week is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit "THE SAINT IN LONDON" which is the third in this fairly popular Saint series. But this episode is only averaging 68%. According to exhibitor reports RKO would have been much better off if they had left the original Saint, Louis Hayward, instead of supplanting him with George Sanders, who may or may not be the type but who does not have as strong a following. As this chapter was filmed in London the balance of the cast are all English players and consequently unknown to American fans.

GAUMONT BRITISH—1 Release

A second English made production, "THE WARE CASE" 66% has been released this week to American exhibitors but it is not doing any too well as the only marquee name known to American fans is Clive Brook and his following at present is quite limited due to his long absence from Hollywood. "THE WARE CASE" was originally made for English distribution but the Gaumont British exchanges are delivering the picture to American exhibitors in some instances, while of course Twentieth Century-Fox is actually handling the distribution for Gaumont-British. Exhibitors as a whole will probably do well to shelve this one unless they have an open spot booking on a bank night or with a big percentage picture.

PREVIEW REPORT

FROM:

~ the United Artists Theatre - in Inglewood

To: Charles Skouras' office, Fox West Coast Theatres.

Picture: STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE

This can be classed as a living monument to the lives of Stanley and Livingstone. Zanuck reaches the supreme screen achievement in the presentation of this great production, for this is just what it is -- GREAT! Right from the very first minute until the very last, it holds the audience spellbound with its enchanting story.

It is needless to say that Spencer Tracy is terrific, and his closing dramatic speech before the Geographical Society of London is of Academy Award caliber. Sir Cedric Hardwicke as Livingstone is marvelous and is an instantaneous hit with the audience. Walter Brennan as Tracy's aide was his usual dependable self. The rest of the cast was all well chosen and did well.

There is no question but that this will be a top-grosser in all situations. The audience reaction was the best of any picture previewed to date in this theatre, and we have previewed quite a few big ones.

Rating: A-plus
Audience reaction: Outstanding
Previewed with: FIVE CAME BACK


Manager

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**THE BOX OFFICE
DIGEST**



J. Maurice Ridge

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD ARE INTERESTING

TRAVELLING AROUND OHIO THIS WEEK

The Field Man Takes the Round-About-Way

When in the course of business administration, tyranny democratic practices supplant autocratic regimes, co-ordination of action is inaugurated instead of dogmatic rule, the affairs of that organization always go forward to victory. This is just what is taking place with one of the major film companies right now. The beginning of DECENTRALIZATION of power, prophesied by Ed Kuykendall, at the Minneapolis Allied Convention last month, had its inception contemporaneously, at a convention in Los Angeles.

Long before the delegates assembled in the film capitol last month, the executives in the home office sent out the S. O. S. call. Whether they had suddenly gotten religion, or the Government was asking the industry in general too many pertinent questions, or the signs of approaching shadows bade fair to engulf them, matters not. The fact remains that at least one major company's sales executives suddenly plead with their FORGOTTEN MEN, to make a survey of the kind of product the exhibitor wanted, what kind of stories he would buy, what type of star if any meant a dime at the box office: To analyze the office records for pertinent facts about types of product, which garnered the golden shekels, and to speak frankly and without the tiniest fear of being even mildly scolded, for sending in these recommendations, with any kind of criticism they cared to make about the reasons

for the company's failure to make good pictures during the past few years. Think of it, a HOME OFFICE executive climbing down so far off his high perch, as to ask for a bit of wisdom from these FORGOTTEN MEN, who have so long suffered silently, while they galled under the collar, at having to cram inferior product, down the throats of their customers, without even permission to whimper.

This policy of co-ordination was carried right on to the convention, where the writers of alleged fiction were present, the producer, the director and all their entourage. Here these FORGOTTEN MEN were given a chance to express themselves freely, without fear of being decimated when they returned to their exchanges. And they did, and how. One producer who had a story partly filmed was told to forget it and make another. He became irate, even though he was getting paid for the services performed. He quit in a huff, he wanted his pet story produced in spite of a universal turndown by these field men, who know more in five minutes about what kind of product will get money, than all the Chase Bank money lenders and their Sancho Panzas ever will learn. So the little producer, with a pet idea, was voted down. He left. Thus another victory for the FORGOTTEN MEN.

Capable Frank Freeman Was On the Job to Talk Facts

Collaborating with these field men and the home office leaders was a sly old fox of the box office

figures, none other than Frank Y. Freeman. He, too, for thirty-five years has been studying what kind of product gets the money. He did it for S. A. Lynch and Saenger, and he did it for others with whom he has associated in the exhibition end of this industry. Together they toiled, and discarded a lot of film garbage before it had to be swallowed by the exhibitor, with its attending bellyache, both at the box office, and weeks later when he appealed for a reduction in film rental. When these sessions were over, a dozen announced stories were discarded, and the type of sure fire box office titles and class of product was substituted. Thus the first time in our knowledge, any attention has been paid to those men who have to sell the product, and get the millions for the lucky ones in high places.

It matters little what impelled the higher ups to appeal to their FORGOTTEN FIELD MEN for succor, the salutary results must follow. These men, though not all-wise, together with the exhibitor who has worked and suffered with them, will help to get better product. Better product means the salvation of hundreds of small theatres, and this means a great industry is going to be revived, regenerated, reconstructed, and in time come to its senses.

Ohio Exhibitors Think the Shines Own a Trojan Horse

Strange situations arise over the country. One of these exists in Ohio. Here in the land of Presidents, the independent exhibitors

are fearful of another independent outfit, and look upon it as the big bad wolf, that is everready to play a Little Red Riding Hood with them.

Several years ago, the Shine Brothers from Gloversville, New York, extended their operations over the line into the Buckeye State. First only a few scattering houses, but as the business has prospered, they have spread out all over Ohio. Independent exhibitors hereabouts now look upon them with more suspicion, than they do the chain operated cities. Cleveland and Northern Ohio Independents talk about the situation, in hushed voices. They say that the Shine circuit is still on the expansion program, and that they usually buy in where they can at their terms. If this cannot be done, then other means are found to get a foot hold in these smaller Ohio places.

One outstanding exhibitor who asked that his name be deleted stated that it was the general opinion that the chains and their affiliates dare not extend their operation into other cities. At present their conditions are satisfactory so far as the distributor operated places are concerned, as they have already worked out livable conditions. But not so with the alleged encroachment of the Gloversville Brothers, who are believed to have cast greedy eyes toward a number of otherwise happy independents.

That the Shine constellation has not reached its zenith, is believed by the distributors, who like to do business with them, notwithstanding
(Continued on Page 12)



The Dun and Bradstreet
of the Motion Picture Industry

- - - THE DIGEST

Meet the Men Who Buy the Pictures

(Continued from Page 11)

ing the fact they drive good bargains when settlement day comes around.

Cleveland Another Zone Where Selling is Slow

Selling is slow in the city of Cleveland so far as the independent exhibitors are concerned. So far little product has been bought. Many things are holding it up. In some instances it is price, in others it is a waiting game these foxy Clevelanders sometimes play. There are around a hundred independent houses in Cuyahoga County. They practically all belong to George Erdmann's independent organization, and they work as a unit. There are a lot of fights inside the organization, but when they leave their conference rooms, they march out arm in arm, and fight shoulder to shoulder.

That Code of the New York lawyers, is operating so far as the distributors are concerned, in this section of Ohio, however the independents are far from satisfied with it. The Code is too long, too verbose, too complicated and infinitely too lawyer-worded, for them to know just what the dern thing really means. One thing they do know, that there are so many things in it that can come up for arbitration, that it will take them longer to try an average case, than it did Vitaphone and Erpi, over that dispute some years ago. So the independents have not given it their blessing, and the way it looks, it will be some time in the dim and distant future before they do. "The lawyers have seen to it," quoth one fighting Cleveland independent, "That it is so technical and complicated, that issues will arise aplenty. All the lawyers who drew

it up want, is to get a lot of court action, so they can get their hands deeper into the pot of gold." Thus the Code is a merry go round, that keeps going round and round, and nothing is being done to give it nourishment here.

The Digest Proved Out At Paramount's Convention

Right here we cannot refrain from calling attention to The Box Office Digest's weekly analysis of box office results, and how truly these digits reveal just what the Paramount boys brought to the attention of their home office leaders. The Digest has been revealing for years, even predicting with almost uncanny accuracy at the time of the sneak previews, what the answer would be at the box office. Maybe some home office executives have been following these weekly reports pretty closely, and maybe the producer and director, as well as the story writer in our studios could rely more closely on the tale they reveal, to the end that there will be made in the future fewer duds, that sooner or later engulf them and their careers. Maybe some of them are just temporary glamour boys and it won't make any difference in the cause of history, if they never learn. The only difference will be to their board bills—but, then, a lot of them, according to exhibitor reactions, are just waiting for the Revolution . . . When the Revolution comes, quite a chunk of Gemions will be sharing concentration shares with exhibitors whom they sold down the river. SELAH!!

You Cut My Throat—I'll Cut Yours—

In Chicago are many and diverse methods of film distribution, ap-

parently, as evidenced by a hard-hitting, determined, theatre executive, who at one time was "Simon," the bookmaker. Today he is Simon Simansky, the theatre operator of a good sized independent chain.

"I never played a picture percentage and I never will," he thundered in his best Chicago style. "If they want to be a partner of mine in the exhibition field, let them buy an interest in my houses, then I will play them percentage. I buy for class A, B, and C houses, and I lay the money on the line. I never played that Disney feature cartoon, (meaning Snow White) either. I am making money, but no one is going to find out how much or how little. These so and sos," (and he had many so and sos, expletives, epitaphs, descriptive adjectives and dynamic appellations, which he used in reference to the distributor's representatives), are not going to know my business."

Mr. Simansky is a partner of E. W. Miller, better known as Jack, who was formerly head of the exhibitors' organization.

In discussing the proposed Code he stated that he thought the industry was infinitely better off when we had the old Film Board of Trade, with the Arbitration Board. He said he was on that Board and dominated it. That there were just as many exhibitors who were fined and assessed as distribution companies; that a few simple rules to follow would iron out all the grievances between distributor and exhibitor, and all this fuss could be settled over night.

Exhibitors Angle On "What's Wrong With B.O.?"

What is wrong with the business and the box office, has been asked of scores of exhibitors during the

past week. The universal reply is "pictures," plus a more liberal policy of distribution, permitting more selective booking. Good pictures are doing a good business; off perhaps right now because of seasonal conditions, but generally clicking. "Too many clucks" is universally the first retort of the exhibitors. "Get more new blood in the studios from top to bottom" was frequently heard. Many exhibitors think many of the men in control of production, have become economically secure, and that they spend so much more time in chasing pleasurable pursuits, than they did when they were climbing to fame and success, that the industry has and is being injured by it. The exhibitor generally has this notion. That if new and poor folks who have talent were given an opportunity; if the politics of families and controlled manipulation, for the benefit of the chosen few, could be circumvented, that birth would be given to new ideas, ideals, and situations, that would bring to an ever changing and modern world, that kind of entertainment for which they are so hungry. One grisly old timer growled back to the question, "Some of these days, the bankers who have backed this industry, with their depositors money, are going to swoop down on this studio group, kick out these fossils, and let people run the shebang who will give us something new, that the public likes not just something in pictures that pleases these producers. Then we will get money like we used to." We suggested to him that the producer really wanted to make profitable product. But he growled again and closed the argument by saying that Lou Gehrig wants to play baseball—but he isn't."

Good News for Good Dressers - - -

- John D. Parral and Associates, tailors for thirty years, from London to Los Angeles, after five years at Bullock's Wilshire, are now offering Hollywood its real clothing surprises.
- The latest of imported

fabrics—novelties that even New York has not yet seen—and the skillful tailoring of craftsmen—

- And all at a reasonable price for the quality delivered! A surprising price!

- Among the latest innovations, specially imported, a new weave called 'Pheasant,' the latest in London. And for a bargain, a special importation of tweeds for sport coats that can be the most effective and least

costly item in your wardrobe.

- Let us talk over your clothes problems. You'll be surprised at what good tailors, cooperating with your budget problems, will deliver.

John D. Parral

237 South La Brea . . . YOrk 3608

"America's Ambassador at Large"

● *Editor's Note: Your Digest editor encountered the following article in an issue of the National Theaters house organ devoted to progress of the Spyros Skouras Showmanship campaign, and hastens to reprint it. For two reasons: Because of its inspiration for all of us in this industry; and because of its value to the many exhibitors who frequently write us for aid on Rotary, Kiwanis, and such organization speeches. Dr. Giannini needs no introduction, but he preceded his article with a sincere tribute to the industry contributions made by Spyros and Charles Skouras. From now on—the floor is given to the industry's best friend in financial circles, a tried and proven faithful friend:*

The people of every civilized country have at long last recognized the value of moving pictures as an instrument of national influence. It may be said that the continuity of the Motion Picture is an important part of the continuity of the nation. In the United States it has become a symbol of our national enthusiasm and whilst it has been employed largely for the creation and development of entertainment, faithfully mirroring our masses at wholesome amusement, it also has made substantial and complementary contributions in the fields of science and education and the dissemination of good will. Its language is universal and in a true sense is an official messenger—an Ambassador.

No other agency at the present time suggests itself as better qualified to explain America to the rest of the world, or for that matter, to interpret America to its own people. It exercises a ponderous influence. Its position in the civilized world is established and unassailable.

The leading nations of the world feel the desirability of developing the Motion Picture business. To them it is much more than a matter of revenue or wages. They are inclined to believe that if film production should be made the permanent monopoly of one country, that country would ultimately dominate the world. Whilst other nations were wondering about the significance of the Motion Picture, America quickly assumed leadership. American sentiment and culture, American moral, social, and artistic values were unconsciously establishing themselves as standards. Here, indeed, was an "encirclement"

that could not be tolerated. American species of civilization was being imposed upon other peoples of the world.

Because of this gradual Americanization, other countries, justly jealous of their history and culture, art and tradition, bestirred themselves, and the making of films became for them a matter of great national concern. So much so, that an old saying has been adapted to read: "Give me the Making of the Films of My Country—I Will Give You the Making of Its Laws."

It is good in these days of universal heart-searchings, to think out what the American Motion Picture stands for, or strives to stand for. Can it be of assistance in establishing international confidence, and in creating hope for enduring international understanding?

I delight in the conviction that it could be a contributory factor of extraordinary importance for it can be made to teach the value and the justice of liberty; the hatefulness of wrong; the necessity for law and order. It can be made to fire the hearts of youth with patriotic fervor; to move multitudes to noble action.

It can be made to teach blind eyes to see the glories and deaf ears to hear the music of God's wondrous universe. Truly no ambassador could have a nobler mission.

THE MOTION PICTURE HAS MADE THE WORLD A NEIGHBORHOOD. IS IT TOO MUCH TO HOPE THAT IT CAN MAKE THE WORLD A BROTHERHOOD?

An Inspiration From Dr. A. H. Giannini

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	151
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	137
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131

Each Dawn I Die	WAR	126
Starcocoach	UA	126
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Second Fiddle	FOX	119
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Love Affair	RKO	118
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Bachelor Mother	RKO	114
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	112
Midnight	PAR	111
Man in the Iron Mask	UA	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Honolulu	MGM	107
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Captain Fury	UA	100

Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Tailsipin	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	90
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87

Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
The Mikado	UNIV	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	121

The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Daughters Courageous	WAR	106
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	105
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Maizie	MGM	95

Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	93
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
On Borrowed Time	MGM	88
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	85
Off the Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
N naughty But Nice	WAR	83
Five Came Back	RKO	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Magnificent Fraud	WAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Charlie Chan In Honolulu	COL	76
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
The Gorilla	FOX	75
Bridal Suite	MGM	75

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blonde Meets the BossCOL..... 81

Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Hell's Kitchen	WAR	76
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75

Homicide BureauCOL..... 74
 Trapped in the SkyCOL..... 73
 She Married A CopREF..... 73

Streets of New York.....MONO..... 71
 Mysterious Mr. Wong.....MONO..... 71
 Woman DoctorREF..... 71
 North of Shanghai.....COL..... 71

The Sunset Murder CaseGN..... 70
 Bride of the NavyREF..... 70
 Tough KidMONO..... 70
 Mysterious Miss XREF..... 70
 Inside InformationUNIV..... 70

I Am A CriminalMONO..... 69
 Fighting ThoroughbredsREF..... 69
 Crumbling ShipUNIV..... 69
 Convict's CodeMONO..... 69
 House of FearUNIV..... 68
 I Was A ConvictREF..... 68
 Navy SecretsMONO..... 68
 Federal Man HuntREF..... 68
 Wolf CallMONO..... 68
 Mickey the KidREF..... 68

My Wife's RelativesREF..... 67
 Long ShotGN..... 67
 Forged PassportREF..... 66
 First OffendersCOL..... 66
 Rookie CopRKO..... 66
 Wanted by Scotland YardMONO..... 66

The Zero HourREF..... 65
 Outside These WallsCOL..... 65
 S. O. S. Tidal WaveREF..... 65

Mystery PlaneMONO..... 64
 My Son Is A Criminal.....COL..... 64
 Code of the Secret Service.....WAR..... 64
 Street of Missing MenREF..... 63
 Star ReporterMONO..... 63
 Undercover AgentMONO..... 63
 The Man Who DaredWAR..... 63
 WaterfrontRKO..... 62
 Panama LadyRKO..... 62
 Panama PatrolGN..... 62
 Boy's ReformatoryMONO..... 61

It Could Happen To YouFOX..... 74
 News is Made At NightFOX..... 74

Family Next DoorUNIV..... 73
 Million Dollar LegsPAR..... 73
 UnmarriedUNIV..... 73
 Mystery of the White RoomRKO..... 73
 Boy SlavesRKO..... 73
 DisbarredPAR..... 73
 Some Like It HotPAR..... 73
 Romance of the Redwoods.....COL..... 73
 King of ChinatownPAR..... 72
 Society LawyerMGM..... 72
 Persons in HidingPAR..... 72
 Society SmugglersUNIV..... 72
 Mr. Moto's Last WarningFOX..... 72
 Twelve Crowded HoursRKO..... 72
 Chasing DangerFOX..... 72
 The Saint Strikes BackRKO..... 71
 Nancy Drew, ReporterWAR..... 71
 Pirates of the SkiesUNIV..... 71
 Sorority HouseRKO..... 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble ShooterWAR..... 71
 Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 71
 Ex-ChampUNIV..... 70
 Missing DaughtersCOL..... 70
 Winner Take AllFOX..... 70
 Big Town CzarUNIV..... 70
 On TrialWAR..... 70
 Torchy Blane in ChinatownWAR..... 70
 AmbushPAR..... 70
 They Made Her A SpyRKO..... 70
 Blind AlleyCOL..... 70
 Torchy For MayorWAR..... 70
 Charlie Chan in RenoFOX..... 70
 The Girl From MexicoRKO..... 70
 Unexpected FatherUNIV..... 70
 A Woman Is The JudgeCOL..... 70
 Within the LawMGM..... 70
 Forgotten WomanUNIV..... 70

The Girl and the GamblerRKO..... 69
 The Kid From TexasMGM..... 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police.....PAR..... 69
 Everybody's BabyFOX..... 69

Undercover DoctorPAR..... 68
 Grand Jury SecretsPAR..... 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger IslandFOX..... 68
 Adventures of Jane ArdenV..... 68
 Almost A GentlemanRKO..... 68
 Fixer DuganRKO..... 68
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation.....FOX..... 68
 The Saint in LondonRKO..... 68
 Lone Wolf Spy HuntCOL..... 67

Code of the StreetsUNIV..... 66
 For Love or MoneyUNIV..... 66
 Beauty for the AskingRKO..... 66
 Sudden MoneyPAR..... 66
 They Asked For ItUNIV..... 66
 The Ware CaseGB..... 66
 Boy TroublePAR..... 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'ConnorMGM..... 65
 Secret Service of the AirWAR..... 65
 Sweepstakes WinnerWAR..... 65
 6,000 EnemiesMGM..... 65
 Tell No TalesMGM..... 65
 Tell No TalesMGM..... 65

They All Come OutMGM..... 62
 Exile ExpressGN..... 62
 Inspector HornleighFOX..... 61
 CareerRKO..... 51

The Sun Never SetsUNIV..... 75
 The Lady and the MobCOL..... 74
 Fisherman's WharfRKO..... 74
 The Jones Family in Hollywood.....FOX..... 74

Boy FriendFOX..... 72

Back Door To HeavenPAR..... 70
 King of The TurfUA..... 70
 One Third of a NationPAR..... 70
 Clouds Over EuropeCOL..... 70

Stolen LifePAR..... 68

Stronger Than DesireMGM..... 66
 Hotel ImperialPAR..... 66
 ZenobiaUA..... 66

Grace Allen Murder Case.....PAR..... 64
 Spirit of CulverUNIV..... 63
 The Flying IrishmanRKO..... 63
 Smiling AlongFOX..... 63
 Climbing HighGB..... 63
 Women in the WindWAR..... 62



Cesar Romero

plays

"DOC" HALLIDAY

in



TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX PRODUCTION

"FRONTIER MARSHAL"

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 24.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 8, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

INDIE EXHIBS NOW WORRYING ABOUT NEELY BILL

SEE PAGE 6

THE EDITOR SEES BRIGHT SKIES IN COMING PICTURES

SEE PAGE 3

SENSATION: NO HONOR BOX PICTURE THIS WEEK

SEE PAGE 5

•
**The
Only
Authentic
Box
Office
Figures
Published**
•

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

What?

NO HONOR BOX?

For the first time in its three years of faithful recording of the box office temperature, The Box Office Digest this week names no Honor Box Picture.

Conditions are so far off—or current releases are so far off—that there were just no new releases worthy of the honor.

Hold-overs saved the day for most key-city houses; the same previous Honor Box winners saved the day for the lucky subsequent runs getting them now.

For further details about the current box office situation read the article on Page 5.

Robert E. Welsh

Buying Power Is The REAL POWER!

Circulation figures can be used as carelessly as a fellow might call a roulette number—and the carelessness might cost as much.

THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST is proud of its paid subscription list among the exhibitors, because that list represents BUYING POWER. We will stand toe to toe with any publication in the business and prove that it represents the greatest BUYING POWER in the industry.

This result has only been achieved by delivering DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR value to the man who pays ten dollars a year for a publication. It will be retained only so long as THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST continues to be factual, on the level, and ready to stick its chin out if it believes it is doing so in the cause of the picture business as a whole.

DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

LET'S GO PLACES

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

The doleful note set on the opposite page by the news that there was no release of the week worthy of an Honor Box on the strength of its earnings at the box offices, should be counteracted on this page.

There is reason. Because even an astigmatic bird's eye view cannot fail to sense the real attractions that are going to pile on us in the next sixty days.

We suppose nothing can be done about the complaint we made a month or so ago that about the end of August all the producers would be putting out all their big attractions at the same time, and thus gently cutting each other's throats.

But something can be done about getting the industry warmed up—and all of us deciding that since we will soon have the product, LET'S GO PLACES.

Just temporarily, for a month or so, let's forget Code practice arguments, tongue-in-cheek buying arguments, and decide to GO! The "STOP" signal never advanced a man, a business, or an industry a foot.

* * *

Let's look at some of the coming product as a fellow sleeping close to Hollywood sees it.

There will be "Hollywood Cavalcade" pretty soon. We will miss a case-hole bet if this picture, both because of its own entertainment qualities and the exploitation backing that will be given it by Fox, doesn't soar towards those "Alexander's Ragtime Band" figures.

There will be, on the market in search of Honor Boxes in the next few weeks, such as "Beau Geste," and "Stanley and Livingstone." They will be breaking for general release at profit to subsequent run exhibitors at the time that the key city titans are gleefully checking the figures on the newer ones.

There is "The Rains Came," coming from Fox, which every dictate of our own showmanship experience marks as an automatic.

From MGM, there will be "The Wizard of Oz." There are folks who tell us that this two-million-and-more picture has some of the sales

force worried because they cannot decide whether it is a kid picture, and so on.

Shoot this old gray head if you must—after the box office tells its story—but we will say right now that "The Wizard" should be aimed at "Snow White" figures. Courage in the selling—on the part of producer, distributor, and exhibitor—is all that is necessary.

There are other attractions that will get money in coming weeks: The freak Hedy Lamarr, the Lombard-Grant-Francis draw for Radio's "In Name Only"—what a title to drown—"When Tomorrow Comes"—ditto on that title—and some others that Universal has up its sleeve.

* * *

So we have a suggestion:

With exhibitors on a sit-down strike because there are Codes in their pants, with Hollywood's top-notch executives really worried about producing respectable financial statements, and the underlings worried about their horses, why not—

Take a few months off, with all this box office product coming up, and decide to GO PLACES.

* * *

We may need the money before the next twelve months have passed. And we are dumping a healthy load of double-yoked eggs into the August and September basket.

Since that is the case, our advice is:

To the exhibitor: Forget the political angles, make the deals your business judgment dictates, and then go SELL the attractions you have bought.

To the producer: Call some of the fellows in and let them

read THE FIELD MEN in these columns each week, and learn that there is a storm cloud building, and if it bursts, it won't leave the price of hay for a hay-burner race-horse.

To the distributors:

Postpone some of the arguments. Postpone most of them. Get the pictures moving for your own sake, and for the sake of all of us.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	10 Releases	95
2. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	30 Releases	91
3. Twentieth Century-Fox	32 Releases	87
4. Warner Brothers	32 Releases	85
5. Paramount	33 Releases	82
6. RKO-Radio	23 Releases	80
7. Universal	23 Releases	78
8. Columbia	20 Releases	75
9. Republic	14 Releases	70
10. Monogram	12 Releases	67
11. Grand National	4 Releases	65
12. Gaumont-British	2 Releases	64

235

THE HIGHLIGHTER STEPS IN WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD AND TALKS OF ACTOR STRIKES

When Show Folk Fight They Really Fight

Of course, there is no other Highlight this week than the possible danger of internal labor strike in an industry that is approaching its selling season with quite a bit of trepidation. . . . It is very unfortunate. . . . Your Highlighter has been around the show business for a few years. He has never known any time when the interests or sympathies of actors and technicians ran in the same groove. He has known of the problems of each group, to such an extent that he could not take sides without becoming a one-man debating society. . . . But he will venture these thoughts: The actors made their mistake when they decided to become union laborers, despite some kind-hearted advice, and now they are paying the penalty. . . . The I.A.T.S.E. is making a mistake deciding to make laborers of actors. And they will pay a penalty. . . . So many factors are concerned that we think they really need an arbitrator who has spent his life on the side lines trying to be fair to everybody. . . . We can state right now that the industry is in for quite a bit of trouble if these two factors are left making faces at each other. . . . They make horrible faces.

There's Money Ahead For Showmen

Your Highlighter encountered a copy of the Fox Company's "Dynamo" in Harry Brand's office last week and the studio's special section started him doing quite a bit of thinking. . . . In the first place we have seldom seen a picture producer put himself on the spot the way Darryl Zanuck does with a four-page—and they are big pages—announcement of his coming year's product with such definite confidence. . . . And then, and just now we are quoting from memory and we will probably be more authentic when we do it for the record within a few weeks, just consider a line-up that definitely offers: "The Rains Came," "Hollywood Cavalcade," "Drums Along the Mohawk," "Grapes of Wrath," "The Bluebird," "Little Old New York," etc. . . . But the thing we really started to talk about was some information we found over on the sales department section of the paper where we went through last year's releases and had to check off Zanuck pictures ANNOUNCED and PROMISED and DELIVERED. . . . And those twelve months included: "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "My Lucky Star," "Hold That Co-ed," "Suez," "Submarine Patrol," "Thanks For Everything," "Kentucky," "Jessie James," "Wife, Husband and Friend," "The Little Princess," "Hound of the Baskervilles," "Alexander Graham Bell," "Rose of Washington Square," "Young Mr. Lincoln," and etc., etc. . . . We have probably skipped quite a few pictures that made money for exhibitors. . . . We are just cynical enough that we are not over impressed by the success of the product as we are about the DELIVERY of promises.

5 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. The Man in the Iron Mask UA.....	111	130
2. Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM 121	128
3. Daughters Courageous WAR.....	106	114
4. On Borrowed Time MGM.....	88	95
5. Naughty But Nice WAR.....	83	87

Jumping Here and There Around The Studios

Pardon our interruption, before we get to the news, but it is sad news when a grand old trouper like Sophie Tucker gets expelled from any organization bearing a name associated with acting. . . . Now for the news. . . . What there is of it. . . . We would like to give top mention to those shrewd boys, Towne and Baker. . . . For their first RKO production—in the exalted seats of producers—they have "Swiss Family Robinson." . . . Did you ever see a semi-classic that wasn't a big moneymaker, and did you ever see a Towne and Baker script that wasn't streamlined. . . . What a combination! . . . To top it off, one of the real creating minds in directing, Ed Ludwig—take the proof just off his Deanna Durbin picture—will handle the megaphone. . . . Incidentally, has anyone seen a megaphone on a set in the past ten years? . . . We are still traveling around the studios. . . . We hear that Joe Pasternak has a sleeper in "The Underpup," for Universal, made without marquee names, and that the studio is red and hot about John Stahl's "When Tomorrow Comes," which will be previewed for our next issue. . . . Also read somewhere that Warner Brothers' profits had dropped for the last quarter, as compared with the previous quarter, or some one of those phrases that the financial reporters use to disguise facts. . . . If Warners didn't lose too much we feel they deserve no complaints, under current conditions, but we are wondering how deeply some of the local house organs can blush. . . . Moe Siegel is back from New York after conferences with H. J. Yates, and with permission to stretch the rubber band still further on the budgets.

Still Travelling Around The Studio Corners

We think that Irene Dunne is one of the real people of the industry—both in the ability for which she is paid, and the personality that she gives away freely. . . . So we hope there is no truth in the story printed last week that the script of "Front Page" is being rewritten at her insistence that the feminine role should be made more prominent. . . . "Front Page" was a pretty near classic job of stage

5 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. Magnificent Fraud PAR.....	81	78
2. Million Dollar Legs PAR.....	73	70
3. Romance of the Redwoods COL.....	73	70
4. Trapped in the Sky COL.....	73	70
5. Blind Alley COL.....	70	67

production, it stood up exceptionally well in transference to the screen. . . . It would be a shame to start diluting the soup at this late date. . . . We still don't believe it about Miss Dunne. . . . George Schaefer is present on the RKO lot, and while there are lots of rumors about what might happen, nothing has disturbed the day's temperature as yet. . . . If George is still of the same temperament that he was ya'rs and ya'rs ago as Boston manager for Paramount, our bet is that whatever happens will happen so smoothly that few of us will know that anything happened. . . . And, by the way, Prexy Schaefer is accompanied on his current trip—which may become a semi-permanent stay—by two other good sales minds: Ned Depinet and S. Barrett McCormack. . . . If you could catch us with our gray hairs down we could tell you about some of the sales stunts that Depinet pulled for Universal before moving over to First National, and then we would go on to talk about Barrett McCormack and the Circle Theater, Indianapolis, after which we would have to cover Chicago, New York and points East and West. . . . But we had better not get started.

The Highlighter Gets Some Ideas About Stories

The heading above has given you full and complete notice that the Highlighter is going to go editorial. . . . Because he gets excited every now and then about the story problem. . . . We are told in a very emphatic form that a few remarks of the Highlighter last week made the colony of writers at present existing in Hollywood very much irritated. . . . Most of the good story work being done in Hollywood these days is on the records to the credit of the men who really know what it is all about. . . . not the cub reporters. . . . We could take up as an example the story of "Five Came Back," which recently received raves from the critics. . . . Why should there be any wonder about this picture receiving critics' approval, and being designated as a surprise picture? The author and the director are the type that can get together to create the thing which we are always supposed to be searching for, something new. . . . When it happens we are—Oh, so surprised! . . . Why should we be surprised when brains earn a salary?

Incidentally, if anyone would like to have our recommendation, based on several years of solid newspaper work, we would probably get nowhere. . . . Because we would probably recommend to some producers that they take some solid newspaper men like Richard Carroll and Sidney Sutherland, after which we would be in the dog house, because neither of these two boys are "yes" men. . . . Just in the event that you think we are in the agency business because of the remarks above, we would like to give you a last minute flash report of a letter from a very successful screen writer asking if we would send him a free copy of the issue which contained his review.

SUMMER DOLDRUMS AND WEAK PICTURES GIVE DIGEST STATISTICIAN A HEADACHE

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Three years ago this month The National Box Office Digest was started as the first and only "Figure Paper" in the industry, and since then our reputation as box office figure experts has been well established not only nationally but internationally, as thousands of letters from exhibitors bear proof.

In our past three years of operation, each week we have run our Honor Box page giving credit to the studio, producer, director, star, etc., all those responsible for the top grossing picture of that particular week. But now we have suddenly hit a rut.

In the past week there have been nine new releases. But since none of these are of sufficient box office calibre to win the Honor Box page, we are running this issue for the first time without the said Honor Box. In the past the Honor Box winners from week to week have run from 100% upwards to as high as 160%. This week there are no signs of a 100% picture. The top release is Wanger's "Winter Carnival," only averaging 83%, which could hardly be considered a good box office figure.

U. A.—1 New Release

United Artists has one new release this week, Walter Wanger's production of "WINTER CARNIVAL," starring Ann Sheridan, which on its first runs throughout the country is averaging 83%. In New York City at the Music Hall this picture ran considerably higher, which, of course, is not of vital importance, as due to the New York Fair and the great number of tourists all of the cinema houses are doing outstanding business, particularly the big show houses like the Music Hall, the Paramount, the Roxy, etc., where the stage show alone is almost worth the price of admission.

In the past Walter Wanger had set out to produce higher types of productions, and his "Algiers" and "Stage Coach" both did very well. But "WINTER CARNIVAL" is not up to Wanger's standard—or that set by United Artists, as it was made on a smaller budget and with the exception of Ann Sheridan there are no marquee names in the cast of this rather weak college story. In neighborhoods where there are big colleges and universities this Dartmouth story will probably be well received but on its general release it can't be rated much better than a poor "B" and United Artists exchanges should not ask exhibitors to pay the usual high United Artists film rentals, as this one will certainly have to play the lower half of double bills.

Players supporting Miss Sheridan are: Richard Carlson, Helen Parrish, Robert Armstrong, and Alan Baldwin. Charles F. Reisner directed from

Of Nine New Releases In The Past Week, Only One Rated Fair and the Other Eight Were Exceptionally Weak.



Budd Schulberg and Maurice Rapf's original screenplay.

COLUMBIA—2 New Releases

Columbia Pictures have two new series pictures this week. One a "Blondie" and one a "Jack Holt."

"BLONDIE TAKES A VACATION" is the third in this fairly popular series produced by the Irving Briskin unit and co-starring Arthur Lake with Penny Singleton. This one is only hitting around 78%, which is a little below the predecessors of this series, but will probably do better when it hits the nabes as this comic strip is very popular with the family trade audiences. Robert Sparks supervised and Frank R. Strayer again directed.

Columbia's second release this week is another of the Larry Darmour series starring Jack Holt, entitled "HIDDEN POWER," which is doing fairly well at a 72% average. The Jack Holt series has become standard fare for the subsequent runs, especially in theatres where action pictures are popular. Gertrude Michael is Holt's new leading lady, direction was by Lew Collins.

UNIVERSAL—1 Release

The New Universal has one release this week, "I STOLE A MILLION," starring George Raft, which is supposed to be a special but isn't doing any special business, as it is only averaging 74%. Ten per cent could probably be added to this under more normal conditions.

For several years Paramount had George Raft under contract and tried to star him in pictures best suited to his particular talents. However, Raft insisted on overruling the studio and finally walked out on his contract. It was at this time that Universal signed him for the lead in "I STOLE A MILLION" but as the box office figures show Raft has not got a strong enough following for solo star billing. When he played the second lead to Gary Cooper in "Souls At Sea" and the second lead to Henry Fonda in "Spawn of the North" as well as the second lead to James Cagney in his new Warner picture, "Each Dawn I Die" Raft has been heartily accepted by American theatre audi-

ences and these pictures went over very well. But as far as carrying a picture alone even with Claire Trevor as his leading lady, Raft just hasn't sufficient box office strength. Therefore exhibitors can't expect too much from "I STOLE A MILLION." It will set in well on the average double bill as the production has been well made and expertly directed by Frank Tuttle; but it should definitely be booked with a picture that has more marquee value.

Supporting Raft and Trevor are: Dick Foran, Henry Armetta and Victor Jory.

PARAMOUNT—3 New Ones

Paramount has three new releases this week, none of which are of special importance, two being programmers from the Harold Hurley unit and the third a very weak English importation.

Hurley's best programmer is the "ISLAND OF LOST MEN," 72%, which is the latest in the series starring Anna May Wong. While it is not a big production still it has been well produced with plenty of action and a good box office title and it will pick up considerably in the spots for which it was aimed. Supporting Miss Wong are: J. Carrol Naish, Anthony Quinn, Eric Blore and Broderick Crawford.

Action houses should do very well with this one. Eugene J. Zukor supervised and Kurt Neumann directed.

Paramount's second programmer, "BULL-DOG DRUMMOND'S BRIDE," is another in this fairly popular series which get by in the American subsequent houses and which also pull very good houses in England and the Dominions.

As usual John Howard and Heather Angel are co-starred.

Paramount's third release this week is an English made picture, "THIS MAN IS NEWS," which is flopping to the tune of 64%.

RKO—1 Release

RKO-Radio pictures have another weak release from Sol Lesser's unit this week, entitled "WAY DOWN SOUTH," 68%, which is the latest in the series starring the youthful Bob Breen.

While "WAY DOWN SOUTH" has been well produced and, is a fairly good entertaining picture, still as the public will not accept Breen as a star or else are tired of him, his pictures just naturally won't draw. "WAY DOWN SOUTH" is equally as good as the former Bob Breen's if not better than some of them, but the public just doesn't seem to buy tickets for his pictures on a very big scale.

WARNERS—1 Release

Warner Brothers-First National's only new release this week is still another programmer from the Bryan Foy unit, "COWBOY QUARTERBACK," 66%.

9 New Releases Not in the Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. Winter Carnival	UA	83	85
2. Blondie Takes A Vacation	COL	78	80
3. I Stole A Million	UNIV	74	85
4. Island of Lost Men	PAR	72	
5. Hidden Power	COL	72	75
6. Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR	70	75
7. Way Down South	RKO	68	80
8. Cowboy Quarterback	WAR	66	70
9. This Man Is News	PAR	64	65

DIGEST'S MID-WEST FIELD MAN DISCOVERS EXHIBITORS NOW WORRIED ABOUT NEELY BILL

Columbus, Ohio.—As this column is being written, a good old Ohio rain is pattering a requiem on our window pane; the rumbling of the approaching storm gives warning of untold possibilities, in a land where destructive winds and electrical disturbances, all too frequently, destroy man made things; his growing crops, homes and appurtenances.

The uncontrollable power of a storm, may be no less destructive, than the approaching one that is brewing in connection with the Neely Bill, which was conceived to work large benefits to the exhibitor.

It will be remembered that in this State of Presidents, that Senator Sherman back in 1890 put through the Congress of the United States the Sherman Anti-Trust Bill, which today is being brought into play, to protect, defend and preserve the interest of the independent exhibitor.

Just across the beautiful Ohio, comes Senator Neely from West Virginia, and proposes another bill, specifically designed to protect the operation of the independent exhibitor. But will it do it? Will it not be a Frankenstein, which later may turn on and destroy those whom it was meant to defend, is a question that is now being asked by the independents who have toiled so long and faithfully for its passage.

Government Snoopers Worry An Indie Exhibitor

Today in Cleveland, before coming down to the Ohio capitol, one of the leading independent chain operators told us how he changed his ticket rolls several times a day, to keep the distributors from blind checking him when he has a flat rental picture that is clicking. He told us several other schemes he employs to keep the distributor's representatives from knowing what he is doing, lest he have figures presented to him next year justifying increases in stars and directors. Will not the Neely Bill if it becomes law, throw open the entire industry, to governmental agencies, to snoop as they please? Will it not only bring down unbearable government control on the producer and distributor, but on the customer, the exhibitor as well? Will government interference in this industry be less snoopier than it was with the farmers a few years ago, when a farmer lad could not kill his own hogs for food, unless he first got the government's local

snooper to put the stamp of approval on it? If the farmer lad was of the other political faith, maybe he would go a little hungry until he agreed to support the party in power.

Some of these things are now perking through the brains of the independent exhibitor, and here in the old Buckeye State, there is a wholesome doubt, as to whether they have a bear by the tail.

If the independent exhibitor thought for one minute that the Neely Bill would throw open his operation to government snoopers, they would rise up en masse and fight as strongly against Senator Neely as they have since he sponsored the cause they believed was a panacea for all their ills. It is like the old days away back there before Sound, Strip Tease and Bank Nights, when everything was flat rental. The independents, then the whole show, wanted everything percentage. They got it, and how! Now they don't want it, and some are beginning to think that with the possible coming of the Neely Bill into law will also come like the migratory ants an unstoppable train of government snoopers, against whom a change of ticket rolls will not avail them that privacy, to which all business is entitled.

Button, Button, Who's Got The Button?

Somebody is handling the truth rather recklessly with respect to buying here in Ohio. Independents claim they are not buying. The distributors' "Forgotten Men" tell me they are ahead of last year in their selling, and not withstanding the fact business is off, they are doing as good or better in their prices, than in 1938. In Columbus J. Real Neth who owns several suburban houses, running second runs, has bought but the others, who are in a co-operative group, representing fifteen or twenty houses, are holding out. The salesmen traveling the stick towns are all selling, and the results, Code or no Code, are about the same old story. Facts are, the Code issue has not been discussed except when we brought it up, for the past two weeks. Conventions over, exhibitors confabs

finished for another six months, scores of salesmen waiting at the theatre every morning to sell that

"Sure Fire Box Office Epic" have all conspired to kill thoughts of industry rehabilitation via Code Cures or Neely Law, in the minds of Ohio exhibitors. Maybe when the horse has been stolen again; when the distributors get their deals all in the bag for another year, the exhibitors will wake up again and holler, and propose methods of keeping the rest of the horses from being led out of the corals.

Over in Detroit there is brewing a lot of fireworks. It seems that the crowd that wanted to keep Mr. Richey in the co-operative, is now planning some kind of back fire on the group of independents, who are said to be responsible for his resigning and joining the RKO gang as a back slapper, and glad hander. The distributors are furnishing the fuel oil and wind to blow the fire into a conflagration. It will be remembered that under the Richey regime, the several hundred exhibitors were so strong as to keep one of the largest producers out of practically all of Michigan for two years. Broken into fragments, this distributor is looking on in ghoulish glee, waiting to get back some of the dimes he thinks he lost, because of their former buying power.

Important New Co-operative Looms Up In Ohio

Plans are afoot here in Ohio, to get into operation a co-operative booking circuit of independent exhibitors, under the leadership of Milton Mooney of Cleveland and Harry Bugie of Cincinnati. Both these men have been a long time in the industry as theatre operators, exchangemen and in fact almost every branch of distribution and exhibition. The plan is similar to that one in Michigan, which was organized under Mr. Richey, who is at present the Ambassador of Good Will for RKO.

The distributors generally have fought the proposed plan of the co-operative boys. Some of the companies until just recently have definitely refused to sell except to the individual members of the organi-

zation. Grad Sears of Warner Brothers is said to have broken the ice, when he made a deal with Milt Mooney in New York, after several trips to the Big Town had been made by this independent crowd.

It appears that after the fight started on the Code, and the distributors were coddling everybody, even trying to slip into bed with men they long have claimed had fleas, the distributors started negotiations with Mooney, for product. He is said now to be booking for nearly one hundred Ohio independents.

In discussing the situation with one of the heads of the co-operative movement, we inquired just what was to be gained by this kind of buying, and would it not be claimed by the distributors that the independents were doing just the very thing they want corrected under the Neely Bill, that is block booking. In reply he explained they did not seek unfair rentals, but that they had found many instances where theatres served about the same number of patrons and had similar overhead, that one was paying double the film rental of the other. It was just a question of being a poor buyer on the part of many men, and their doom was soon sealed. By this combination they hoped to cure a lot of their headaches.

What The Other Fellows Said About "Stanley and Livingstone"

Editor's Note: Last week's Digest was on the presses before the local trade dailies had appeared, so our review of "Stanley and Livingstone" did not contain our usual "What the Other Fellows Said." . . . For the purposes of the record we give the opinions this week:

REPORTER: "20th-Fox's 'Stanley and Livingstone' courageously chronicles the exploration saga against a broad spectacle panorama while its leading characters are depicted with rare craft. Thus it has bigness, both in eye-appeal and in idealistic feeling, and it will impress additionally because of its strongly suggested documentary texture. Honestly sold on these angles, 'Stanley and Livingstone' should give wide satisfaction."

VARIETY: "A great adventure tale, filmed with unusual fidelity to its essential, documented facts, rich in emotional appeal, spectacular, fundamentally dramatic and engrossingly pictorial, it has many sure-fire elements for smash success."



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

"Lady of Tropics" Must Rely on Lamarr

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Producer Sam Zimbalist
 Director Jack Conway
 Screenplay Ben Hecht
 Stars..... Robert Taylor, Hedy Lamarr

Featured: Joseph Schildkraut, Gloria Franklin, Ernest Cossart, Mary Taylor, Charles Trowbridge, Frederick Worlock, Paul Porcasi, Margaret Padula, Cecil Cunningham, Natalie Moorhead.

Photographer George Folsey
 Recording Director..... Douglas Shearer
 Musical Score..... Franz Waxman
 Song..... Phil Ohman, Foster Carling
 Film Editor..... Elmo Veron
 Time 91 minutes

"Lady of the Tropics" will undoubtedly make money, due to the current freak attraction in the magic name of Hedy Lamarr. If, and when, the picture does make its money, it will just be another proof that successful screen jobs can be done without a story and without acting.

Let's consider the story—so-called—first. Your reviewer has been harboring a suspicion for some time that Ben Hecht slyly takes the picture business for a ride once a year or so. We imagine him leaving the haunts of New York's Broadway, wearing a puck-like expression, and muttering, "It's about time I go out to Hollywood for a month and take those saps for \$50,000 or so. But I had better be careful and not give them anything original in the way of story, or brilliant in the way of dialogue. Anything like that I may need for a book or a play."

Ben needn't have worried about "Lady of the Tropics." The story wouldn't pass a professor's okay in MGM's new school for collegiate writers; the dialogue must have been written by a substitute secretary on a day that Ben himself was absent. And then, he had the acting to consider.

"Night Work" Will Just Get By

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer..... William H. Wright
 Director George Archainbaud
 Original Screenplay: Monte Brice, Lloyd Corrigan, Lewis R. Foster.

Stars..... Mary Boland, Charlie Ruggles

Featured: Billy Lee, Donald O'Connor, Clem Bevans, William Frawley, Joyce Mathews, John Hartley, William Haade, Edward Gargan.

Photographer Harry Hallenberger
 Film Editor..... Stuart Gilmore
 Time 61 minutes

"Night Work" represents Paramount's attempt to deliver in the cycle of family pictures. Where others have their Joneses, their Hardys, their Higginsons, Paramount has its

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Lady of the Tropics	MGM..... 125
2. In Name Only	RKO..... 115
3. Island of Lost Men	PAR..... 75
4. Night Work	PAR..... 70

No one has ever very positively accused Robert Taylor of being an actor. But Taylor is personable, and with enough troupers surrounding him, and with lines to speak, has achieved a very prominent share of box office value. And no one will ever forget "Beauty in Static" long enough to even suspect that Hedy Lamarr is an actress. Put the two together, stir with the "story," and you have the proposition that was handed Director Jack Conway.

Not that we excuse Conway. When a "creator" reaches the point that his salary outshadows that of the President of the United States, we don't believe he is entitled to the alibi "the story was lousy and I did the best I could without troupers." It is our conviction that he should have said that before loaning his name to the job.

High honors for the picture go to Adrian, who designed the clothes and hats that decorate the Hedy, and George Folsey, on the camera, who makes a series of still-life portraits give the impression that Hedy is acting.

And don't get us wrong on those points. There were women around us saying, "Isn't she cute?"—"Isn't that hat wonderful?"—"Oh, I think she's just marvelous, *definitely!*"

The gal has something.

Perhaps we should tell the story. Well, it seems that Robert Taylor, on a round-the-world cruise with fiancée, etc., lands in Indo-China. Meets and falls in love with the town's top hospitality gal, Hedy. Forgets boat, marries her "before a priest," and then can't get out of the country because there is a nasty

old villain, Joseph Schildkraut, who is the local ward heeler, and can block passports. It goes on this way for enough reels until Hecht realized he didn't know just what to do, so he has Hedy kill poor Schildkraut, the picture's only actor, and for a curtain she kills herself, dying in Taylor's arms. Taylor was left alive, and unfortunately, the author also survived.

Top lines of the year are in the picture.

Hedy Lamarr: "I just can't talk." . . . A few reels later, Robert Taylor: "I am talking like an ape."

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: If the Lamarr craze is strong with your people there is money in the picture. But be careful. It is pretty weak. Previewed August 2nd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has a terrific attraction in 'Lady of the Tropics' because MGM has Hedy Lamarr — and has her in the picture. After seeing 'Lady of the Tropics' this reviewer left the showing last night convinced that she should be one of the greatest money attractions this business has ever had. . . . So what does it matter if we think the story of 'Lady of the Tropics' is a bit weak; that it started off sensationally, bogged down terribly in the middle, but picked up considerably towards the end."

VARIETY: "'Lady of the Tropics' has one thing of decided value to its Metro producers and to exhibitors: It demonstrates in a colorful and exacting role that Hedy Lamarr is a very skillful actress, a personality capable of sustaining stellar position as well as an exponent of glamour."

Mary Boland and Charlie Ruggles.

Our word from the exhibitors is that this cycle is already wearing off, and "Night Work" will not help to keep it alive. The story is one of those formula things that studios believe they can get away with when they are in a cycle. The acting and directing are far above the material.

It would be pretty difficult to give George Archainbaud the opportunity to work with Mary Boland, Charles Ruggles, and young Donald O'Connor and not be certain that he would get plenty of laughs, and thrills when they were needed. Archainbaud and the cast come through okay. But it all adds up to just another "family picture."

The plot this time concerns an effort by Miss Boland and Ruggles to adopt an orphan and their frantic anxiety in the course of the ac-

tion to convince everyone that they are worthy of being foster parents. It builds to a sort of Harold Lloyd "Safety Last" thrill which has been very well handled.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Safe for the family trade unless your audiences have become tired of seeing so many families and their troubles. Previewed August 4th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Handicapped by a very trite story, Mary Boland and Charlie Ruggles manage to evoke spasmodic bursts of laughter in 'Night Work.' Depending almost solely on its dialog—of which there is too much—it misses as top notch entertainment. It's dualer fare."

VARIETY: "'Night Work' will satisfy trade in the family houses. A neat combination of hoke comedy, tears and thrills, toppers are perfectly at home in this repeat of earlier developed characters."

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...gives his great-
est performance!





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Darryl F. Zanuck's production of

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starring

SPENCER TRACY

Nancy KELLY---Richard GREENE

with the finest acting cast ever assembled

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SIR CEDRIC HARDWICKE • HENRY HULL

HENRY TRAVERS

Directed by Henry King

who did "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Jesse James," "In Old Chicago"

Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan • Screen Play by Philip

Dunne and Julien Josephson • Historical Research and Story

Outline by Hal Long and Sam Hellman

Kenneth Macgowan

PRODUCED



"STANLEY AND

Henry King

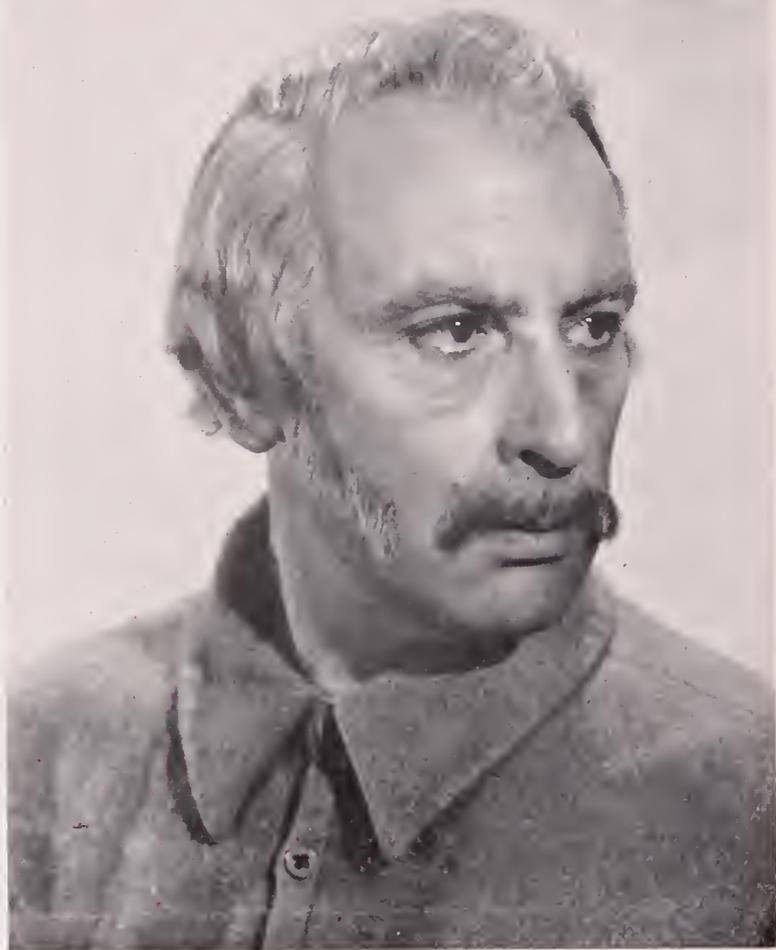
DIRECTED

In Preparation
LITTLE OLD NEW YORK

Management
HARRY WURTZEL



LIVINGSTON”



Cedric Hardwicke

plays

DOCTOR LIVINGSTONE

in

**“STANLEY AND
LIVINGSTONE”**

For 20th Century-Fox

Cedric Hardwicke

plays

MR. BRINK

in

“ON BORROWED TIME”

For Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer



Henry Travers

PLAYS

The British Consul

IN

**"STANLEY
AND
LIVINGSTONE"**



ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182	%
Gunga Din	RKO	180	
Dodge City	WAR	158	
Goodbye Mr. Chips	MGM	151	
Union Pacific	PAR	145	
Kentucky	FOX	137	
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133	
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131	

Each Dawn I Die	WAR	126	
Stagecoach	UA	126	
Juarez	WAR	123	
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123	
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123	
Man About Town	PAR	122	
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121	
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119	
Love Affair	RKO	118	
Second Fiddle	FOX	117	
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116	
Little Princess	FOX	116	
Bachelor Mother	RKO	114	
Man in the Iron Mask	UA	114	
Made For Each Other	UA	112	
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	111	
Midnight	PAR	111	
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110	
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110	
Honolulu	MGM	107	
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	107	
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106	

Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102	
Wuthering Heights	UA	102	
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102	
Captain Fury	UA	98	
Zaza	PAR	98	
Man of Conquest	REP	96	
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94	
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94	
Tailspin	FOX	94	
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93	

Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91	
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St. Louis Blues	PAR	87	
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84	
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83	
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83	
The Mikado	UNIV	83	
Three Musketeers	FOX	81	

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Evemation	MGM	131	%
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130	
Dark Victory	WAR	128	
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	128	

Daughters Courageous	WAR	114	
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The Beachcomber	PAR	110	
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106	
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	105	

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99	
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98	
Lucky Night	MGM	98	
Maisie	MGM	97	
On Borrowed Time	MGM	95	

Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	93	
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92	
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92	
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90	
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90	

Naughty But Nice	WAR	87	
Past and Loose	MGM	86	
Oh! The Record	WAR	85	
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85	
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84	
Four Girls in White	MGM	84	
Winter Carnival	UA	83	

Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82	
Five Came Back	RKO	81	
Cafe Society	PAR	81	
King of the Underworld	WAR	81	
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80	
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79	
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79	
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR	78	
Never Say Die	PAR	78	
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	78	
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77	
Prison Without Bars	UA	77	
Let Us Live	COL	77	
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76	
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75	
The Gorilla	FOX	75	

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81	%
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Blondie Takes A Vacation	COL	78	
Devil's Island	WAR	78	
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77	
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77	
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76	
Inside Story	FOX	75	
Pacific Liner	RKO	75	

Bridal Suite MGM 75
The Sun Never Sets UNIV 75
I Stole A Million UNIV 74
The Lady and the Mob COL 74
Fisherman's Wharf RKO 74
The Jones Family in Hollywood FOX 74

Boy Friend FOX 72

Back Door To Heaven PAR 70
King of The Turf UA 70
One Third of a Nation PAR 70
Clouds Over Europe COL 70

Stronger Than Desire MGM 66
Hotel Imperial PAR 66
Zenobia UA 66

Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64

Spirit of Culver UNIV 63
The Flying Irishman RKO 63
Smiling Along FOX 63
Climbing High GB 63
Women in the Wind WAR 62

It Could Happen To You FOX 74
News Is Made At Night FOX 74
Hell's Kitchen WAR 74

Family Next Door UNIV 73
Unmarried PAR 73
Mystery of the White Room UNIV 73
Boy Slaves RKO 73
Disbarred PAR 73
Some Like It Hot PAR 73
King of Chinatown PAR 72
Society Lawyer MGM 72
Persons in Hiding PAR 72
Society Smugglers UNIV 72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning FOX 72
Twelve Crowded Hours RKO 72
Chasing Dancer FOX 72
Island of Lost Men PAR 72
The Saint Strikes Back RKO 71
Nancy Drew, Reporter WAR 71
Pirates of the Skies UNIV 71
Sorority House RKO 71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter WAR 71
Mystery of the White Room UNIV 71
Million Dollar Legs PAR 70
Romance of the Redwoods COL 70
Ex-Champ UNIV 70
Missing Daughters COL 70
Winner Take All FOX 70
Big Town Czar UNIV 70
On Trial WAR 70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown WAR 70
Ambush PAR 70
They Made Her A Spy RKO 70
Torchy For Mayor WAR 70
Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 70
The Girl From Mexico RKO 70
Unexpected Father UNIV 70
Within the Law MGM 70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride PAR 70

The Girl and the Gambler RKO 69
The Kid From Texas MGM 69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Policc PAR 69
Everybody's Baby FOX 68
A Woman is the Judge COL 68
Undercover Doctor PAR 68
Grand Jury Secrets PAR 68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island FOX 68
Adventures of Jane Arden WAP 68
Almost A Gentleman RKO 68
Felix Dugan RKO 68
Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation FOX 68
The Saint in London RKO 68
Forgotten Woman UNIV 68
Blind Alley COL 67
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt COL 67

Code of the Streets UNIV 66
For Love or Money UNIV 66
Beauty for the Asking RKO 66
Sudden Money PAR 66
They Asked For It UNIV 66
The Ware Case GB 66
Cowboy Quarterback WAR 66
Boy Trouble PAR 65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor MGM 65
Secret Service of the Air WAR 65
6,000 Enemies MGM 65
Tell No Tales MGM 65
This Man Is News PAR 64

Sweepstakes Winner WAR 63

They All Come Out MGM 62
Exile Express GN 62

Inspector Hornleigh FOX 58
Career RKO 48

Homicide Bureau COL 74

She Married A Cop REP 73
Hidden Power COL 72

Streets of New York MONO 71
Mysterious Mr. Wong MONO 71
Woman Doctor REP 71
North of Shanghai COL 71

The Sunset Murder Case GN 70
Pride of the Navy REP 70
Tough Kid MONO 70
Mysterious Miss X REP 70
Inside Information UNIV 70
Trapped in the Sky COL 70

I Am A Criminal MONO 68
Fighting Thoroughbreds REP 68
Gambling Ship UNIV 68
Convict's Code MONO 68
I Was A Convict REP 68
Navy Secrets MONO 68
Federal Man Hunt REP 68
Wolf Call MONO 68
Mickey the Kid REP 68

House of Fear UNIV 67
My Wife's Relatives REP 67
Long Shot GN 67
Forged Passport REP 66
First Offenders COL 66
Rookie Cop RKO 66
Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO 66

The Zero Hour REP 65
Outside These Walls COL 65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave REP 65

Mystery Plane MONO 64
My Son Is A Criminal COL 64
Code of the Secret Service WAR 64
Street of Missing Men REP 63
Star Reporter MONO 63
Undercover Agent MONO 63
The Man Who Dared WAR 63
Waterfront WAR 63
Panama Lady RKO 62
Panama Patrol GN 62
Boy's Reformatory MONO 61

"In Name Only" Better Than Its Title

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Producer George Haight
 Director John Cromwell
 From the novel by Bessie Breuer
 Screenplay Richard Sherman
 Stars Carole Lombard, Cary Grant
 Featured: Kay Francis, Charles Coburn, Helen
 Vinson, Katharine Alexander, Jonathan
 Hale, Nella Walker, Alan Baxter, Maurice
 Moscovich, Penny Ann Gardner, Spencer
 Charters.
 Photographer J. Roy Hunt
 Film Editor William Hamilton
 Time 92 minutes

"In Name Only" has a lot to recommend it as entertainment, but we must convey a warning to exhibitors. It is a dramatic story, on the triangle formula, with many dolorous moments, and the accent on one of those "unsurmountable problems" that triangle plots inevitably involve.

And that is the why of the warning. Be careful that your patrons know they are not seeing Carole and Cary, the team, in another screwball comedy. If they come to laugh, they will be disappointed.

If you can make that clear, they will not be disappointed. The picture is a grand piece of adult entertainment, well conceived and written, cleverly directed, and played with skill by its cast, with emphasis on the two stars.

It is essentially a woman's picture, or rather, a picture for the age just on the eve of marriage, or the age to which marriage is an old story. It seems that Cary Grant is married to Kay Francis, who never loved anything but his money, and one day he meets young widow Carole Lombard. The "meanie" Kay Francis, won't give him up, so we go on for an hour or more of "homey" situations and dialogue, frustration and moments of bliss, until all ends happily. The "meanie" gets paid off.

It is all good entertainment—as we said, adult. John Cromwell has used all his skill, both in his shooting of the picture and in his cast selections, the writers backed him up with a job that meets the intelligence test, and the stars—without being screwbally—turn in really human performances.

The lumbering mechanics of a triangle plot are responsible for a slow opening, and just a

few dull moments, but we do not think these pauses are important, when the solid entertainment values of the whole are considered.

Kay Francis is seen in the difficult part, the wife who won't give up. She looks her best, and plays this type of part with skill that saves a rather heavily written role to satisfaction.

Support is excellent. There is Charles Coburn, fast taking screen scene stealing honors after his illustrious years on the speaking stage.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A woman's picture that they will like and talk about. Previewed August 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "RKO cracks through with another whale of a picture. 'In Name Only' is top entertainment for any type and every type of audience, and, with the various top attractions of the picture it should play to as big an audience as any theatre can hold."

VARIETY: "Lombard and Grant names are strong assets, and these coupled with the nature of the drama provide potentially potent appeal to women which may be capitalized by shrewd selling to carry well beyond the initial impetus. In entertainment it is well on the plus side."

"Island of Lost Men" Okay Actioneer

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Associate Producer Eugene J. Zukor
 Director Kurt Neumann
 Based on a play by Norman Reilly Raine and
 Frank Butler.
 Featured: Anna May Wong, J. Carrol Naish,
 Anthony Quinn, Eric Blore, Broderick
 Crawford, Ernest Truex, Rudolf Forster,
 William Haade, Richard Loo.
 Photographer Karl Struss
 Song Frederick Hollander, Frank Loesser
 Film Editor Ellsworth Hoagland
 Time 63 minutes

Paramount makes a healthy contribution to the action market with "Island of Lost Men." The picture was not aimed at art, nor at the top of the bill in deluxe houses, but it was aimed at the great big market which desires action in its entertainment—and it hits its target.

There are dirty doings and villains galore in this picture, but careful production guidance by Eugene Zukor, workmanlike scripting, and skillful direction by Kurt Neumann needed only the cast that has been supplied to turn out one of those frequently desired subjects—a picture for the masses.

Norman Reilly Raine, a Saturday Evening Post favorite, and Frank Butler, a picture vet-

eran who knows his stuff, start the picture off with the original story, and capable craftsmen William Lipman and Horace McCoy worked it into top-hole action formula.

Director Kurt Neuman, probably yearning for a chance to show his skill on an "A" picture, gives plenty of "A" touches to his direction of the yarn.

And then there is the cast. J. Carrol Naish has an opportunity to be just as villainous as any lover of melodrama would desire, and plays the part with a skill that takes off the rough edges. Anna May Wong is his sinister companion. There is Eric Blore for a running gag of laugh relief, and, for a change, Anthony Quinn gets an opportunity to play a sympathetic part, coming through to fine advantage. We should not forget that there is music intertwined with the meller.

Everything happens at that vague section somewhere in the vicinity of Singapore, which pulp writers love so much. J. Carrol Naish is a heavy-heavy of the jungle, bossing both natives and renegade whites with all the ferociousness of Simon Legree in possession of two whips. Involved in the action is the disappearance of a Chinese general simultaneously with the vanishing of \$300,000, and the necessity of Anna May Wong, his daughter, to save his

honor. Anthony Quinn is the member of the law sent into the danger point, with obstacles in the form of Broderick Crawford and Ernest Truex.

It all moves so fast and covers so much ground that no one should really attempt to re-tell the story. But it covers the ground at a good pace with capable acting and okay direction. Eugene Zukor can be happy in the fact that his first chore as a producer shows that he will give them a job equal to the material given him.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A woman's the action trade and a honey for the Saturday matinees. Previewed August 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Chockful of action and violence and laced with pulp fiction atmosphere, Paramount's 'Island of Lost Men' is a natural as a buildup for a double bill and for the action houses. It's that kind of two-fisted stuff which will have the kids in spasms and the grownups taking it big-heartedly for the fantastic adventure stuff that it is."

VARIETY: "Framed against Oriental background and carrying melodramatic plot, 'Island of Lost Men' comes through as strong programmer. It builds and maintains audience interest sufficiently to boost it into top position when it hits nabes."

The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

The Box Office **DIGEST**

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 25.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 16, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

**MOST UNUSUAL IDEA
YOU'VE EVER READ
SINCE SOUND PICTURES**

SEE PAGE 6

**"WIZARD OF OZ"
WILL HIT HEIGHTS
AT BOX OFFICES**

SEE PAGE 7

**THE EDITOR'S
WEEKLY WORRY
CONCERNS STORIES**

SEE PAGE 3

**The
Only
Authentic
Box
Office
Figures
Published**

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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

THE HIGHLIGHTER FEELS THAT "HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN" - - - AND THEN TELLS WHY

Happy Days Are Here Again!

Hollywood has had a week of premieres. . . . Gala premieres. . . . "Stanley and Livingstone," "When Tomorrow Comes," "Golden Boy," and "Wizard of Oz." . . . And while, at first glance, it may seem like using a small omen in search of a big prophecy, we think the news that these were real old-fashioned 1929 premieres means something to the exhibitor most distant from Hollywood. . . . Many factors enter the picture. . . . First, Hollywood, due to the magnet of the San Francisco Fair, is today a cross-section of every city and state in the nation. . . . Secondly, the attractions themselves had that "something" that "pulls 'em out." . . . And, most important, the good showmen who handle things publicity-wise for the studios, were allowed to go places. . . . The dividends will be paid off in Nome, Alaska, and Paris, Kentucky—along with the hamlets of Chicago, New York, and points East. . . . Not only because of the returning tourists, and their advance letters, but principally because of the syndicate columnists who in a half dozen languages, are spreading the word: "Happy Days Are Here Again!"

"Stanley and Livingstone" Started The Parade

Harry Brand, of Twentieth Century-Fox, lit the match that exploded the fire-cracker, with "Stanley and Livingstone." . . . Native Californians, who can date back to the dim days of 1928, twitched their grey beards at the shock of the Stanley opening. . . . Cops, cops, and more cops; tourists, tourists, and many home-grown; a half dozen streets of a town's main artery roped off. . . . Such a splash and a wave and a crash, that it put a tough burden on John Joseph of Universal, who had to follow within a few days with "When Tomorrow Comes." . . . But the story was repeated. . . . Another night cheering to a fellow who lives with the picture business. . . . On top of that George Brown had to keep step in a fast-stepping parade with "Golden Boy." . . . Then Howard Strickling, Andy Hervey, Frank Whitbeck and the rest of the corps, went to town on Tuesday night for "Wizard of Oz."

The Highlighter Stops To Explain Why He Talks

Despite a few of our off-hand explanatory remarks above, there may still be some exhibitor readers wondering why we think the item of Hollywood premieres is important enough for this space. . . . We'll put it this way: From little acorns great trees grow; from little breezes great winds blow; from little matches great fires go. . . . Anybody who is a showman, sensing the public reaction on these showmanship stunts, sensing the producers' own decision to be SHOWMEN again, will tuck away a valuable thought in his mind. . . . In other words, we think that a business with its back to the wall for quite a while, is giving

6 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. Hardys Ride High	MGM	130	133
2. Bachelor Mother	RKO	114	122
3. Captain Fury	UA	98	100
4. Five Came Back	RKO	81	85
5. Unexpected Father	UNIV	70	72
6. Career	RKO	48	53

signs of returning to first principles, we think the evidence says the customers are ready, we think: HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN!

Still On The Subject Of Showmanship

Prepare yourself for some hot competition between the producers on those annual announcement trailers. . . . We caught a glimpse one day last week of "From the Ends of the Earth," which is Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's entrant in the field. . . . It is really a picture in itself, worthy of showing on any bill you present. . . . Better than most of the shorts for which you pay. . . . And more than that, a great message for the industry, showing the magnitude of the effort that goes into the production of 70 minutes of celluloid. . . . Frank Whitbeck produced it, and does the commentator stunt. . . . That veteran of screen trailer salesmanship, Oliver Garver, was his associate. . . . It uses as a springboard the magnitude of the work that is involved in making big pictures, the world-wide effort and expense involved, then cleverly weaves in MGM's attractions for the coming season, without ever laying on too heavily on the company name to the point of destroying its entertainment value. . . . A grand job. . . . But while we are on the subject, we should tip both MGM and exhibitors off to the fact that we accidentally caught a Technicolor trailer on "The Wizard of Oz" that is really a topper. . . . Whitbeck's organization made this one, too. Our advice to showmen is to check with the exchange and start running it early—and late. . . . It has the possibilities to build up that "Snow White" sort of money.

Roaming Around The Studio Corners

We suppose the real Highlight of the week should concern the strikes and near-strikes, the Federal investigations, and so on and so forth. . . . But we have never been one to get too excited about things that simmer and simmer

10 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. Winter Carnival	UA	83	77
2. Magnificent Fraud	PAR	78	74
3. Sun Never Sets	UNIV	75	72
4. Indianapolis Speedway WAR	WAR	78	72
5. Unmarried	PAR	73	70
6. News Is Made at Night	FOX	74	70
7. The Family Next Door	UNIV	73	70
8. Some Like It Hot	PAR	73	69
9. Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX	70	66
10. Stolen Life	PAR	68	61

and finally simmer out into nothing. . . . We are glad the Actors Guild won its jurisdictional dispute, we don't think that, in the end, the IATSE will be very sorry. . . . Oil and water do not mix. . . . And the mistake was in trying to blend them. . . . And if you think the Highlighter deals in platitudes, just check up all the stand-bys and see how often they fit the situation—in any year or any century. . . . But let's check into the news: First of all, as a fair-to-middling reporter we should record that the town is hot about "Nurse Edith Cavell," the Anglo-American picture which Herbert Wilcox has just made at the Radio studios, with Ann Neagle starred. . . . We have not seen it ourselves, but the pipe-line from the folks who caught sneak previews and projection room shots, is that here is a picture. . . . We're just passing it on to you, if your Radio salesman is talking allocations. . . . Mark Sandrich must be having a lot of silent smiles these days. . . . His "Man About Town" is pretty close to setting a record for three week hold-overs throughout the country, and even went into a FOURTH week at the local Paramount. . . . As we expected, Universal finally signed that producer-director ticket with Frank Tuttle. . . . Don't get us talking about that producer-director idea, we may go on too long. . . . Besides, we are sore today. . . . The first time the Directors took an ad, about a year ago, they did not give it to us, because their treasury was empty. . . . Last week they needed an ad, and they didn't know our address. . . . You ask why a dignified Highlighter should mention the sordid subject of advertising? Well, merely to answer that subscriber in Oshkosh, and a few others in scattered spots, who frequently write us and say: "There must be something screwy. You can't tell me you can publish a paper for exhibitors and still be on the level. You play to those big shot Hollywood guys."

Still Rambling Around In Search of Trouble

With all due deference to the judgment of the always successful Warner Brothers, may we humbly suggest that we do not think that the title "606" is quite the right thing for a motion picture. . . . Just try it on your own fence-writing days, your dormitory days, then try it on our own family. . . . Then try it on the forces that are going to bust the Legion of Decency high, wide and handsome if Joe Breen is not given some support. . . . Imagine the different reaction from all the trade press if some lowly independent, to whom we will even grant sincerity, had announced a picture called "606." . . . The poor guy would be in jail by now, with the holy howls of the Hays office, the majors, and the Legion, flooding his harassed ears. . . . There is probably an element of showmanship in making a dignified picture on a subject that is at present getting the support of Governmental and other agencies, but why pick out a back-fence title?

"BEAU GESTE" TOPS THE WEEK AS BIG FALL PICTURES BEGIN TO HIT KEY CITY HOUSES

PARAMOUNT—1 New Release

Paramount walks away with the box office honors this week with their big grossing production "BEAU GESTE" 136%, which is now entering its third week at the Paramount in New York with strong indications of holding a fourth. The majority of exhibitors will well remember Paramount's big production of "Beau Geste" made in the silent version starring Ronald Colman some fourteen years ago, and what a terrific box office picture it was, even being road-showed in many situations.

This new production of "BEAU GESTE" starring Gary Cooper has the additional advantage of sound and dialogue and it is bound to be a box office sensation, judging by the first box office figures we have thus far received.

Billy Wellman produced and directed this epic.

This time the brothers Geste are Gary Cooper, Robert Preston of "Union Pacific" fame, and Ray Milland. Brian Donlevy, as the tough Foreign Legion Sergeant, gets the fattest part, and establishes himself as the screen's arch-villain. Susan Hayward portrays the feminine lead and other important supporting players are: J. Carrol Naish, Broderick Crawford, Charles Barton, James Stephenson, and Heather Thatcher. Robert Carson wrote this new screen play from Percival Christopher Wren's very popular novel of the same name.

Exhibitors who are lucky enough to be able to book this picture in the next sixty days spell of hot weather should certainly give this one extended playing time and go very strong on extra exploitation stunts.

U. A.—2 New Releases

The United Artists Corporation has two new releases this week; one on English importation that is really doing remarkable business, while the second is supposed to be a Goldwyn special that isn't doing any special business at the box office.

Alexander Korda's biggest production to date "FOUR FEATHERS," filmed entirely in Technicolor, on the actual Egyptian locations, at a cost in excess of \$1,500,000 has just been released in the United States and has opened strongly at a 116% average.

While C. Aubrey Smith is the only player known to American fans, still the picture has been produced on such an elaborate scale and backed with a terrific exploitation campaign that it is bound to do outstanding business wherever exhibited.

Prominent featured players include Ralph Richardson, John Clements and Jack Allen with Korda's latest find, the beautiful June Duprez as the leading lady, with the critics comparing her work very favorably with Korda's

Of Nine New Releases in the Past Week
Two Rated Over 100%, Two Came
Through Okay and Five
Were Very Weak



great find of two or three years ago, Merle Oberon.

Exhibitors who ran Korda's "Elephant Boy" and "Drums" did excellent business and they can expect even better on "FOUR FEATHERS"; but due to the English cast this one should be given a heavy advertising budget.

United Artists' second release this week is Samuel Goldwyn's "THEY SHALL HAVE MUSIC," which has just opened up fair in New York at a 91% average. This one is not at all up to the standard that Samuel Goldwyn has set in his past productions for it is weak in both story and star value. It is more or less of a class picture and will appeal to music lovers of the artistic nature but will probably not appeal to the masses. Exhibitors in the nabes and small towns should play safe and book it with a good action melodrama.

Jascha Heifetz, the world renowned violinist, is starred with romantic leads portrayed by Andrea Leeds and Joel McCrea. Others prominently featured are: Walter Brennan, Porter Hall, Gene Reynolds and Terry Kilburn. Robert Riskin, who for years was associated with Frank Capra at Columbia, went over to the Goldwyn studio to supervise this production, but evidently he didn't get on very well with Sam Goldwyn for after this picture he left for an extended European vacation. Direction was by Archie Mayo, who gave the picture many entertainment values, despite his material.

In the past exhibitors have been accustomed to paying high film rentals for the Goldwyn product and it was generally worthy of the Goldwyn name, but unless you are in a high tone music neighborhood, go easy when you buy this one.

FOX—1 New Release

Twentieth Century-Fox have released a new western production this week that is neither an A or a B. While "FRONTIER MARSHAL" was produced by Sol Wurtzel's B unit still it was made on a big budget with a good cast and therefore, it is much better than a B, but hardly as strong as the top A pictures that are

produced under Darryl Zanuck's supervision. "FRONTIER MARSHAL" has opened in a number of first run A situations and is holding quite well at an 86% average considering the summer season.

This super-western of the early Tombstone days, co-stars Randolph Scott with Nancy Kelly, but it is really Cesar Romero, as Doctor Halliday, who walks away with the picture. Other prominently featured are: Binnie Barnes, John Carradine, Edward Norris, Eddie Foy, Jr.

Alan Dwan directed and Sam Hellman wrote the screenplay from Stuart N. Lake's original novel, "Wyatt Earp." When this one gets out in the nabes, particularly where westerns are indispensable, it should be a box office clean-up and run considerably above 100%.

COLUMBIA—Also 1 Release

Columbia's only new release this week is a better than average programmer from the Irving Briskin unit, "PARENTS ON TRIAL," which is getting by on a 72% average. Jean Parker, who is starred, has some marquee value, while Johnny Downs and Noah Beery Jr. are on the featured cast.

REPUBLIC—2 New Ones

Republic has two new programmers this week and while neither are of any special importance they will both give satisfaction on the lower half of a big double bill program and naturally should be booked with a much stronger attraction. The first is "ORPHANS OF THE STREET," 70%, with Robert Livingston, June Story and Tom Ryan.

The second release is another of the Higgins Family series, "SHOULD HUSBANDS WORK?" 68%, starring the Gleasons, Jimmy, Lucile, and Russell. Harry Davenport, Marie Wilson, Tommy Ryan add to the featured cast. Sol C. Siegel produced and Gus Meins directed.

MONOGRAM—2 Programmers

Monogram Pictures also has two new programmers this week which will probably be satisfactory entertainment for the nabes and suburban runs.

The first is another Mr. Wong, this time "MR. WONG IN CHINATOWN," 65%, starring Boris Karloff. The romantic leads are portrayed by Grant Withers and Marjorie Reynolds. Bill Nigh directed.

Monogram's second release, "SHOULD A GIRL MARRY?" 64%, features Ann Nagel and Warren Hull and was directed by Lambert

Hillyer. While this one has practically no marquee names, still it has a good box office title and a little extra exploitation should pull in the inquisitive. Maybe exhibitors should double up Monogram's "SHOULD A GIRL MARRY?" with Republic's "SHOULD HUSBANDS WORK?"

But, aside from that crack, we should record the fact that both pictures have good titles for their spots.

9 New Releases Not in the Last Issue

		%	We	Est.
1.	Beau Geste	PAR	136	135
2.	Four Feathers	UA	116	120
3.	They Shall Have Music	UA	91	90
4.	Frontier Marshal	FOX	86	90
5.	Parents on Trial	COL	72	70
6.	Orphans of the Street	REP	70	70
7.	Should Husbands Work?	REP	68	70
8.	Mr. Wong in Chinatown	MONO	65	75
9.	Should A Girl Marry?	MONO	64	65

FIELD MAN DISCOVERS COLUMBUS EXHIB WITH REVOLUTIONARY IDEA FOR BUSINESS

Columbus, O.—When this itinerant from Hollywood left early in the summer to cover the country, the Editor and many of the leading producers asked us to find out what was the matter with pictures and what was the matter with business, as well as to try to find out from "Main Street" what they wanted. Some of these answers we have found; others remain to be discovered.

Here in Bexley, a suburb of the Buckeye Capitol, is a man who is as versatile minded as an Edison or a Ford. First he is a scholarly gentleman. He is an artist, with a great musical mind and touch. He is a successful business man, recently retired executive from the Lilly Luggage concern, an institution with a good, world-wide reputation. His name is Theodore Lindenberg. And he recently entered the show business, with the purpose in mind of not only making a monetary success, but of bringing something new to the industry. Theodore Lindenberg is playing pictures after they have become grey-haired, brings people from far and wide, who wait for them to be shown in his houses.

An Exhibitor With His Own Ideas On Sound

In the first place Mr. Lindenberg has developed a new sound equipment, which dims all others in quality, as "daylight doth a lamp." Its fullness of tone, its fidelity of quality, its sureness of reproducing the actual original, is so uncanny, that we were surprised that Douglas Shearer or Major Levison have not flown to Bexley with test film to find out if he has anything their departments have missed. Then again we were surprised to learn that Sid Grauman had not been here to see two theatres being operated from one booth, with only one projection and sound equipment. This is a phenomenon never seen in Hollywood. And the business is phenomenal. Mr. Lindenberg has found the answer. He has something new, better and more entertaining.

Briefly, the Bexley Theatres, seat about three hundred each. One enters from a common foyer. When one is filled the other is opened. Four such theatres can be operated in the same manner from the one projection booth. There is no middle aisle. Every seat is in perfect range of the screen. The new opti-

cal system, making possible four pictures simultaneously, eliminates all ultra violet rays on the screen.

It's the best projection we have ever seen. Whites are white and black is black, not grey and cloudy. For color it is great.

The sound system, which Mr. Lindenberg states he has fully covered with patents, is an improvement over other well known sound equipments. The design of his theatres is patented. His dual projection is likewise patented. He monitors his shows, especially musicals, much like a mixer on a sound stage operates. He previews and cues his shows, and at the controls, he makes many an ordinary picture really outstanding. We never really heard the closing scene from "San Francisco" rendered with the impressiveness Mr. Lindenberg gave it. Jeanette MacDonald and Clark Gable really loosen one's tear glands, in *The Bexley*.

In the first place, here is a new operation in a city much overseated, with good last run product making money at a good admission.

Secondly, he has brought out an inexpensive innovation, which should go like wild fire on Broadway and Wilshire Boulevard.

In the third place the wise boys in Hollywood who are crying for something new, who fly to the mountains for inspiration and color, should take a peep at Theodore Lindenberg's new way of cashing in on old shows. What he could do with first run product, (which the distributors refuse to sell to him because they run their own chain houses in Columbus) would make some of the present ones look mighty weak.

The Field Man Sees A Chance For Showmen

Some 20th century edition of Sid Grauman or Major Bowes is going to make a tie-in with Theodore Lindenberg, open up a chain of these super streamlined emporiums throughout the country, and give the boys in Hollywood and New York the surprise of their lives. This operation antedates anything we have ever witnessed, as much as some of the foot prints in the Chi-

nese Theatre lobby have been dimmed by later luminaries.

If the banks that provide money with which to make pictures can retrieve their investments before the producers and distributors get their part from the exhibition of product, a group of wise independent theatre owners here in Ohio are asking why they cannot get their overhead back before the same group of producers, distributors, et al, get their fingers into the box office receipts.

Some very smart members of "Pete"

Woods' organization in Ohio are working on a plan to suggest to Code Makers and Government investigators. One idea being considered is for pictures to be played on a percentage basis, giving up to the distributor not more than ten percent of the gross receipts, until such figure is reached as to give them a break even on the run. And this without guarantees of any kind. Then an upward climb in percentages to the distributor, that would permit them to have a top intake of not to exceed forty percent—preferably thirty-five.

Think of the Laws They Are Thinking About

Another program that has found a lot of support is to compel the distributors by legislation to disclose their secret agreements with their chain owned operations, annual Settlement Days and Master Agreements, and then require them to give the Independent such preferential arrangements. This latter plan may find its way in such form as may appear to be within the state constitution, before the next session of the Ohio Legislature. These Independents in Ohio are determined to get a fair break with the ever increasing accumulation of theatres by the chains. From present indications, encouraged by the fire that is starting through Government investigations and suits, these Ohio Independents are adopting the famous retort of a former Buckeye fighter, U. S. Grant, "Unconditional and immediate surrender, or we march on your fortifications."

"As ye sow, so shall ye reap"

again finds fulfillment in a theatre operation in Columbus, Ohio, from whence was chosen the "Typical Exhibitor," and out of his own business conduct. This man as the exhibitor of America was J. Real Neth. The boys out in the studios can attest as to the fine personality they found when they honored him among them this last spring.

Nomination For The Legion of Honor

This little story cropped up here this week, when we were discussing some of the unsavory conduct of certain chain operators. It is very personal, but knowing Real for twenty-five years, feel he will not blush too much if it is related here.

In the first place, J. Real Neth is a sincere man. He thinks constructively. He acts honestly. He tramps on no man's toes. He covets no man's property nor seeks to cramp any one's operation.

Recently a fellow exhibitor in this city, through unfortunate uncontrollable conditions, had several theatres thrown into the courts and were up for sheriff's sale. Real was the only natural bidder for the property. He could have financed it. The old operator could bid it in for the debts and could finance them. But not at a figure, Neth could have afforded to pay. Some of the distributor's representatives wanted Neth to buy them in. Instead Real took the long distance phone, called the distressed operator, offered his financial backing, and assurances of hands off, that this unfortunate independent might again get on his feet. That is just what happened.

This situation is quite opposite to a situation in another Northern Ohio city, where an independent was trying to keep his theatres, and an "independent circuit" was permitted by the distributors to buy up all the major product for the town, although they had no theatre there and never intend to build one.

There is still good seed here in Ohio, from which honest theatre operators will sprout. "Can any good come out of turmoil? Come and see," might aptly be quoted with respect to this battleground, where distributor-operator is making such a fight, to exterminate Independents.

Regardless of man's improvidence, posterity seems to have a

(Continued on Page 12)



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Metro's "Wizard of Oz" Top Hit For Box Office Money If Properly Sold

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 165%)

Producer Mervyn LeRoy
Director Victor Fleming
Original L. Frank Baum
Screenplay: Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson,
 Edgar Allan Woolf.
Star Judy Garland
Featured: Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, Bert
 Lahr, Jack Haley, Billie Burke, Margaret
 Hamilton, Charley Grapewin, Pat Walsh,
 Clara Blandick, Toto, the Singer Midgets.
Photographer Harold Rosson
Musical Adaptation Herbert Stothart
Lyrics E. Y. Harburg
Music Harold Arlen
Musical numbers staged by Bobby Connolly
Film Editor Blanche Sewell

Dust off the superlatives, and prepare for extended runs. Unless we are a million miles from being a showman, the adjectives and the extra days will be needed on "The Wizard of Oz."

We make the statement above after cautious consideration. We realize that there are showmen of experience whose first reaction to the subject, and possibly to the picture itself, will be a fear that it is too emphatically a children's subject for the big revenue its two million dollar production cost should return. It is our humbly expressed opinion that they are the same showmen who probably wondered whether "Snow White" could stand up on a bill without a good gun-man thriller accompanying it.

More millions of copies of the "Oz" books have been bought, borrowed, stolen and treasured than we would attempt to estimate. Try the title on your wife, and see if the light in her eyes doesn't take ten, or, er, maybe, twenty years off her life.

So then we come to the picture. Let it be recorded that MGM spent the money with a Croesus hand, that all concerned in the production spent lavishly of their imagination and skill. Direction, scripting, musical ingredients, playing, are on a scale of the highest. Add those two plus two elements, and then multiply for the Technicolor job—so entrancing and engrossing as to make it tough on the next black and white picture you view after "Oz."

"Girl From Rio" Gets By In Its Class

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 65%)

Producer E. B. Derr
Associate Producer Jerrold Brandt
Director Lambert Hillyer
Original Screenplay: Milton Raison, John T.
 Neville
Star Movita
Featured: Warren Hull, Alan Baldwin, Kay
 Linaker, Adele Pearce, Soledad Jimenez, Lee
 Phelps, Richard Tucker, Dennis Moore,
 Carleton Young, Byron Foulger, Clay
 Clement.
Photographer Paul Ivano
Musical Director Edward Kay
Songs: Emile de Recat, Johnny Lange, Lew
 Porter, Harry Tobias.
Film Editor Robert Golden
Time 63 minutes

"Girl From Rio" rates as average entertainment in its budget classification. There is a fair-to-middling dramatic story, heightened by some excellent song numbers from Movita, and not too much cheating in production values.

Movita is seen as a Latin American, abandoning her singing career on the eve of her debut, to rush to New York where her brother is jailed on charges involving arson and murder. This premise supplies opportunity for Movita to prove her brother's innocence in a melodramatic yarn, while supplying entertainment as a singer, since she accomplishes her task by securing a job in the night club concerned with her brother's plight.

Movita is pleasantly satisfying, while War-

CURRENT REVIEWS

		We Est.
1. Wizard of Oz	MGM	165
2. When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV.	115
3. Golden Boy	COL.	105
4. Dust Be My Destiny	WAR.	90
5. These Glamour Girls	MGM	80
6. Chicken Wagon Family	FOX.	75
7. Quick Millions	FOX.	70
8. The Girl From Rio	MONO.	65

All this is so memorable because of the simple fact that Mervyn LeRoy and Victor Fleming, and their aides, captured the "spirit" of the Frank Baum fairy tale classic. Except for a few jarring notes in Bert Lahr's dialogue, a viewing of the picture means being transported to a land of dreams—and don't we all like to dream away the day's troubles every once in a while?

The picture marks a great break in the screen career of Judy Garland. Technicolor and Judy mate perfectly, and the youngster's real talent takes sympathetically to the role, more so than in any of the forced roles in which she has previously been seen.

Surrounding Judy, the pivot of the action, is a trouper-studded cast. Ray Bolger as the Strawman, Jack Haley, as the Tin Man, Bert Lahr as the Cowardly Lion, Frank Morgan as the Wizard, Billie Burke as the good fairy, Glinda, Margaret Hamilton as the Wicked Witch, give grand performances, with none overshadowing the other, and all contributing to the general atmosphere of an adventure into the nowhere.

It seems needless to say that all this could not have been accomplished without the finely sympathetic screenplay by Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf.

The talents of Nat Finston's musical department at Metro were never given better opportunity for delightful expression. Herbert Stothart's musical adaptation is a gem, musical numbers by E. Y. Harburg and Harold Arlen sparkle, Judy's talents in the principal numbers, and spot numbers by the other principals,

come along in a smooth blend of entrancement.

Skilful Bobby Connolly, top notch of the stage, handled the dance numbers on the same same clear-cut, while highly imaginative, plane that distinguishes the entire production.

No review would be complete without a listing of a few of the technical credits responsible for so expansive an achievement: Harold Rosson's photography, Adrian's costumes, Cedric Gibbons' art direction, Arnold Gillespie's special effects, and the inspired effects in make-up achieved by Jack Dawn.

The humble suggestion is made that the picture would have been better if the return to sepia for the last reel had not been so prolonged. It takes the edge off what should have been a high note ending. "Always leave them gasping," is just as safe a motto as the familiar, "always leave them laughing."

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will get you as much money as your own enthusiasm earns. Spot your dates and plan extended time. Previewed August 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Wizard of Oz' will, beyond question, be accorded recognition as a milestone in motion picture history. It scintillates with artistry, yet it possesses such an abundance of qualities which predict broad audience success that there can be no question of its being headed for spectacular playing time and grosses."

VARIETY: "Outshines any fantasy heretofore attempted, the only comparable picture in its class being 'Snow White,' with which it will compete for world grosses, in critical and popular applause."

ren Hull turns in an above average job as her romantic interest. A safe troupe of Hollywood standbys is seen in the support.

Direction by Lambert Hillyer is adequate to the material and the schedule. He is handicapped at times by some over-talky sequences, designed to use up footage.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Will satisfy in its price class. Previewed August 10th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Fortified with an able cast, the picture should give passing satisfaction on the lower rung of a dual bill."

VARIETY: "'Girl From Rio' will prove adequate fare for lesser situations but hasn't much chance above smaller houses."



Gary Cooper

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

“BEAU GESTE”





Robert Preston

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

“BEAU GESTE”



"When Tomorrow Comes" For the Women

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Producer-Director John M. Stahl
 Screenplay Dwight Taylor
 Original James M. Cain
 Stars Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer
 Featured: Barbara O'Neil, Onslow Stevens,
 Nydia Westman, Nella Walker, Fritz Feld,
 Greta Meyer, Harry C. Bradley, Milton
 Parsons.
 Photographer John J. Mescall
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Milton Carruth
 Time 90 minutes

Give John Stahl a triangle to play with, give him Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer for the sympathetic points of that triangle, and the result should spell money. It does in "When Tomorrow Comes," even though the material falls far short of the solid material with which John Stahl usually provides himself.

But there is undoubted box office in the stars, and in John Stahl when he can play with the "man, wife, and other woman" situation. That is a very safe statement to make.

It is just too bad that the writer, or writers, couldn't make up their minds what story they were telling. There is more than a dash of "Back Street," a free sprinkling of labor and capital argument which is finally blown away on thin air, and a premise so tense in possibilities that the writers couldn't unravel it themselves, so they wind up the evening with an unhappy ending. Maybe that's "Life."

Despite the best efforts of the master at this sort of stuff, John Stahl, some of the confusion

in the writers' minds enters into the framework of the picture, so that it becomes a bit difficult to shed a tear, or choke a sob. And when John Stahl can't make you do both, with frequency, something was wrong with the springboard.

However, we come back to the money angles. There is Charles Boyer, at the height of his draw, and at his best. There is Irene Dunne. And even in the confusion, there is that intangible thing called "a woman's picture."

Plot Number One starts with Miss Dunne the valiant champion of the waitresses in a hashery chain who are about to go on strike. This capital-labor argument carries on for a reel or so, during which she meets Charles Boyer, at which point the strike plot is forgotten for some several reels, during which Boyer and Miss Dunne fall in love delightfully, and with the poise and charm to tickle any audience. (Incidentally, Boyer has nothing to do with the strike, the restaurant chain, or anything except the writers had to bring him in.)

Plot Number Two. A series of very enjoyable reels follow, with the budding and flowering, romance between the two. Then comes the news. There is a wife in existence. She is a mental case. Boyer does not want to hurt her, treats her as a pitiable infant. Miss Dunne does not want to hurt her. Nobody wants to hurt her. Not even the writers, who fade the story out with Boyer departing for Europe, farewelling Irene, and only the possible hope that "When Tomorrow Comes —."

At one point of the plot the structure builds strongly to the idea that the mentally weak

wife is going to commit suicide. That would have been an easy way out, but even the writers must have decided that it wasn't entertainment.

And, oh yes, we come back for a few feet in the last reel to settle the strike with victory for Irene and her gals. By that time everybody seemed to have forgotten that there was a strike, so it didn't matter much.

As Boyer's wife, Barbara O'Neil makes the outstanding contribution to the picture. Here is an actress. She brought the house down with applause for one especially effective scene, and held the stage against all competition at any moment she was on it.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Sell Boyer, Dunne and Stahl—with the accent on a "Back Street" type of yarn, and you'll get the women and the money. But don't go overboard. Previewed August 10th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The dualing of Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne for the marquee under the producer-directorship of John M. Stahl suggests a promise which neither exhibitor nor audience would willingly ignore. In "When Tomorrow Comes" both will find their expectations fulfilled, for the production is amply invested with those qualities which make for rewarded audiences and substantial grosses."

VARIETY: "'When Tomorrow Comes' is the kind of love story, deep, rich and passionate, which John M. Stahl does better than any other producer-director in the business when he gets the material and the players. The result is superb artistry and an offering of unquestionable hefty box office calibre."

"Chicken Wagon Family" Fair Withers

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer Sol M. Wurtzel
 Director Herbert I. Leeds
 Screenplay Viola Brothers Shore
 Based on novel by Barry Benefield
 Star Jane Withers
 Featured: Leo Carrillo, Marjorie Weaver,
 Spring Byington, Kane Richmond, Hobart
 Cavanaugh, Hamilton MacFadden, Inez
 Palange.
 Photographer Edward Cronjager
 Musical Director Samuel Kaylin
 Film Editor Fred Allen
 Time 63 minutes

"The Chicken Wagon Family," inherently a good story, was not exactly a happy selection for Jane Withers, but after getting away slowly from the barrier, and having trouble on the back stretch, it manages to pull up at the wire for show money. It is not exactly weak, it just isn't a top note in the Withers series.

The story concerns an itinerant family in

Southern rural surroundings, which lives by trading with the farmers from headquarters in a travelling home. The family is continually beset by poverty because Papa Leo Carrillo cannot resist the lures of poker. Comes the crisis—and Mother Spring Byington, elder daughter Marjorie Weaver, and youngster Jane, maneuver the family into a wagon trip to New York where they have a cousin, Hobart Cavanaugh, and where people have permanent homes.

The necessity of establishing the background of Barry Benefield's well known story, and its people, slows the action until gag stuff can get to work in the city sequence. These later reels pick the picture up, and as a result will leave audiences with a fair amount of satisfaction.

Director Herbert Leeds shows many of the touches that he has evidenced in recent pictures, only being handicapped by the unfortunate choice of material. Hobart Cavanaugh and

Hamilton MacFadden are of most value in the support, with Jane trouping her head off at all moments, and coming through with some fine individual scenes.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A safe Jane Withers picture for filler purposes, but not one of her best. Previewed August 11th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The picture is slow in starting, but after director Herbert Leeds gets the Fippany family out of the country and into the city, it takes on new life. And from there on to the final fadeout, Leeds sets the pace at a merry clip."

VARIETY: "When 20th-Fox several years ago acquired the rights to Barry Benefield's novel, 'Chicken Wagon Family,' it did so with idea of using it as a vehicle for the late Will Rogers. As such it might have stood as a memorable picture. Rewritten to fit Jane Withers, however, it loses much of the philosophical humor, much of the pathos contained in its printed version."



The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

. . . The Box Office **DIGEST**

"Golden Boy" a Columbia Smash Hit

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 105%)

Producer William Perlberg
 Director Rouben Mamoulian
 Screenplay: Lewis Meltzer, Daniel Taradash,
 Sarah Y. Mason, Victor Heerman.
 Based upon the play by Clifford Odets
 Stars: Barbara Stanwyck, Adolphe Menjou,
 William Holden.
 Featured: Lee J. Cobb, Joseph Calleia, Sam
 Levene, Edward S. Brophy, Beatrice Blinn,
 William H. Strauss, Don Beddoe.
 Photographers: Nick Musuraca, Karl Freund
 Musical Score Vietor Young
 Film Editor Otto Meyer
 Time 98 minutes

"Golden Boy" is a top hole show. Exhibitors will not need to worry about it. While the background is the prize-fighting subject, it is very much the background. The foreground is a human story, of human beings, of a human family, of a love interest that is real and catching.

We will be perfectly frank, and state that for a reel or so we thought that we were going to see a picture that Warner Brothers had already stolen in "Kid Fom Kokomo." The parallel was obvious, but the divergence was equally so. Suddenly "Golden Boy" picks up its feet and the inherent human values go so far beyond the synthetic imitation that you forget those thoughts.

Producer William Perlberg and Director Rouben Mamoulian have adhered closely to the play, embellished it only when the screen could enlarge the "heart." The result is what could be called "a woman's picture," "a man's picture," or "a kid's picture," if you want to take it any particular way.

Of course, chief topical interest in the pic-

ture, is the debut in major company of William Holden, youngster fortunate enough to get his first break in a big time role. The kid is good. They will like him. He is somewhere between John Garfield and Wayne Morris, but he is still himself.

The plot allows Barbara Stanwyck to wander around for a reel or two in an unsympathetic role, but when she gets a chance to put her teeth into the part as the story goes to town, she travels with it. Her work in the important sections of the picture is some of the best she has done on the screen—and that statement takes in a lot of territory.

In metropolitan territories the first run exhibitor will have the benefit of a year of discussion about the stage play's success, about the problem of casting the juvenile lead role; the subsequents should get the benefit of word of mouth.

The story is essentially that of a conflict in a boy's soul between his love for music, reinforced by a doting and lovable father, and the fact that he can get money and near-fame more speedily by using his fists in the prize ring. The producer has wisely found a means to subordinate the prize ring stuff visually, while still holding the suspense through the picture so that you are waiting for the topper fight. Thus, the women who shy away from the fight stuff, will go along with the picture, to the point where they will be ready for the topper.

Aside from Miss Stanwyck, great trouper, and Bill Holden, a kid who came through, top performance of the picture is given by Lee Cobb, as Holden's Italian parent, bewildered by the fact that a boy can love a girl or money

more than he should love music. Here is an actor who will never get out of Hollywood. He does a loving Italian parent without resource to a single stagey trick.

Support is excellent, and excellently handled by Mamoulian. The players work in submerged roles, in the sense that Mamoulian keeps them human, just like folks in your family and mine. Joseph Calleia has the tough spot, a straight racketeer with his hand always in the gun pocket, and his playing skill overcomes what could have been a hokey gangster part. Sam Levene gets one of those near-off-stage parts, and hits every bell at which his lines are aimed.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A good show. In most spots you will have the build-up of the play's reputation, in others it will mean you have to sell just a good picture. . . . Stanwyck is the only name for the marquee, because Menjou has been proven to be poison. . . . But the picture is so good as entertainment that we suggest you make a good buy for lack of automatic draws, and then go to town and make a lot of money.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Golden Boy" comes through as meaty drama laced heavily with emotional stuff and shot through with judicious cuts of gag comedy. The formula is sound for both sexes, and all things considered, promises to match up comfortably as a money-maker."

VARIETY: "Golden Boy" is essentially good theatre. In Columbia's screen treatment all the best elements of general audience entertainment have been emphasized with keen showmanship and some of the objectionable elements of the stage play eliminated. It looks like a cinch for heavy coin and deserves the critical superlatives sure to be heaped upon it."

"These Glamour Girls" Good Programmer

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Sam Zimbalist
 Director S. Sylvan Simon
 Screenplay Jane Hall, Marion Parsonnet
 Original Jane Hall
 Stars Lew Ayres, Lana Turner
 Featured: Tom Brown, Richard Carlson, Jane
 Bryan, Anita Louise, Marsha Hunt, Ann
 Rutherford, Mary Beth Hughes, Owen
 Davis Jr., Ernest Truex, Sumner Getchell,
 Peter Hayes, Don Castle and Tom Collins.
 Photographer Alfred Gilks
 Song: Edward Ward, Bob Wright, Chet Forrest
 Musical Score Edward Ward, David Snell
 Film Editor Harold F. Kress
 Time 78 minutes

"These Glamour Girls" is good entertainment. It will not give you the marquee strength that will stand for listing on the top of the bill, but it does give you a good title, and a picture that will give satisfaction.

This Sylvan Simon, who showed a few tricks at Universal, has something on the ball. So far he has been limited to these short-budget pictures, so it is always rather difficult to decide where he is one of our comers, or just a short budget flash in the pan. But to date, he has managed to squeeze in the touches that give indications of being able to go to town with a few days extra time.

Plus its good title, "These Glamour Girls" has one of those Cinderella stories that always gets by. A taxi-dancer, with obstructions from high hat society. Need we say more?

For players, we have Lew Ayres, who has never missed since he started his recent comeback, and Lana Turner and Jane Bryan. Anita Louise is present, and the balance of the cast gives you all the resources of that great MGM organization. Gosh, that Leo can cast a super-B and still come up with A players.

Since you have heard the premise of the story above, we do not need to proceed to plot.

The point is that it is entertaining, in a B-plus manner, dressed with MGM production. The people are likeable. You won't miss much if you don't play it, you won't lose anything if you do.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A well-dressed B, both in MGM values, and in Simon's direction. Just figure it that way. Previewed August 14th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Fortified with a good screenplay, a capable cast, able direction and careful production, "These Glamour Girls" emerges as good entertainment."

VARIETY: "Screenplay, direction, characterizations, musical score, and, last but by no means least, producing mounting, combine to make 'These Glamour Girls' an excellent programmer. It is the type of thing that will un-animously win the femme vote, while claiming far more than passing interest from the males."

THE DIGEST

Publishes the Only
Authentic Box Office Ratings

"Dust Be My Destiny" Will Make Money

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer Hal Wallis
 Associate Producer Lou Edelman
 Director Lewis Seiler
 From novel by Jerome Odlum
 Screenplay Robert Rossen
 Stars John Garfield, Priscilla Lane
 Featured: Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, Billy Halop, Bobby Jordan, Charles Grapewin, Henry Armetta, Stanley Ridges, John Litel, Moroni Olsen, Victor Kilian, Frank Jacquet, Ferike Boros, Marc Lawrence, Arthur Aylesworth, William Davidson, George Irving.
 Photographer James Wong Howe
 Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein
 Film Editor Warren Low

It would seem rather difficult, if not impossible for Warner Brothers to fail of reaching heights when playing one of their patented formula yarns of prison, fugitives, downtrodden youths, all decorated plentifully with prison bars, freight trains, and highlighted with propaganda epigrams.

Neither do they fail completely in "Dust Be My Destiny." But neither do they come through with flying colors. So we will split the difference: In most spots the picture will

make plenty of money, because the theme in Warner hands always has, and because John Garfield and Priscilla Lane turn in grand jobs. There are spots where its tenuous, never-ending, repetitious story will get wide yawns.

We open in prison. Garfield is being released because it has been discovered that he was sentenced for a crime he did not commit. He is bitter against the world—anybody, everybody. He rides a freight train with a portion of the Dead End Kids, and again gets in a jam with the law, with sympathy pointed his way. Therefore, Garfield becomes more bitter. He meets the daughter of the prison farm overseer, and when the latter drops dead from heart failure, the two kids have to take it on the lam—we're fully educated in the language by Warner Freres—and they stupidly become transcontinental fugitives.

A lot of things happen. The trouble is that they are mostly the same things, the yarn repeating situations and cliches to the point of boredom. The good part is, that you are travelling with John Garfield and Priscilla Lane.

The Garfield is above his material, and he

definitely has that thing called personality. Miss Lane comes through with a surprising dramatic performance. After viewing this one we believe there are no limits to which this girl may not aspire.

For his handling of the principals, and for deft veteran skill in highlighting his real moments, Lew Seiler deserves an orchid.

Support is excellent, with top spots contributed by such safeties as Henry Armetta, Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, Billy Halop, Bobby Jordan, etc.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Not one of the best of the Warner prison-action mellers, but good for money where they go for this type, and okay for Garfield-Lane fans. Previewed August 11th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Dust Be My Destiny" is a long story, a long picture; one that reaches great entertainment heights and the depths of boredom, improbable in almost all its entirety, but with it all a fair show."

VARIETY: "Chunk-of-life drama, with accent on the tear-jerking side, 'Dust Be My Destiny' provides sufficient entertainment to fulfill the support spot requirements in majority of situations."

"Quick Millions" Okay For Jones Family

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer John Stone
 Director Malcolm St. Clair
 Screenplay Joseph Hoffman, Stanley Rauh
 Original story Joseph Hoffman, Buster Keaton
 Featured: Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, Ken Howell, George Ernest, June Carlson, Florence Roberts, Billy Mahan, Eddie Collins, Robert Shaw, Helen Ericson, Marvin Stephens, Paul Hurst, John T. Murray, Peter Lynn, Horace MacMahon.
 Photographer Lucien Andriot
 Musical Director Samuel Kaylin
 Film Editor Harry Reynolds
 Time 62 minutes

High power gagging by the writers and Director Mal St. Clair result in this edition of the Jones Family series totalling up as good mass laugh fare for the family trade.

The story takes up the adventures of the Jones clan on the occasion of their return from "Jones Family in Hollywood," startles them

with the news that an eccentric uncle has bequeathed them a gold mine, "somewhere in the Grand Canyon," and immediately sets them off in the trailer again in search of the supposed millions.

The premise is pregnant with possibilities for catch-as-catch-can entertainment, and you can look at the credits above for the names of original story creators, scripters, and director to realize that the possibilities are realized in the good old "keep it moving, keep 'em laughing" school of picture making.

The Jones family's tribulations can always provide laughs, there is a crew of bank robbers infesting the action to provide menace and a climaxing thrill. There is a touch of production value in the background of the Grand Canyon.

Mal St. Clair has turned in a fast paced picture, while not neglecting such opportunities as come to him for the human family touches

that make this series. The familiar members of the Jones entourage deliver with easy familiarity, while Eddie Collins and Paul Hurst get opportunities for well handled comedy spots. Collins' part is the more important, as a guide, and he makes the most of it.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Ranks high in slap-dash laugh appeal in this series, so you know how to figure its spots. Previewed August 7th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Quick Millions" leans strongly on hokum items and gags with consequent sloughing of plausible situations. Its laughs will clock merrily, however, and there is little doubt but that the newcomer will continue to advance the prospects of the Jones series."

VARIETY: "Hokish story connecting a rapid succession of gags makes this new edition of Jones Family series surefire for laughter. Jed Prouty, Spring Byington and balance of Joneses are there, but it is Eddie Collins who takes over soon after unfoldment starts, and then the mirth melee is on."

Meet the Men Who Buy the Pictures

(Continued from Page 6)

way of keeping enough seed of every kind, to insure worthwhile institutions, ideals and ideas out of each era, to insure their perpetuation. And this fact is nowhere more in evidence than here in Springfield, Ohio; a big little city, that gave the country its Asa Bushnell, Woman's Home Companion and Kelly tires. Now it is giving the motion picture industry a keen-minded young man, Philip Chakeres, who most dignifiedly operates ten houses of his own and six in which he and the Brothers Warner are partners. No fuss, no flurry, no great ado about the management, he just goes ahead, buys his own product, books them, banks his money, and has just regular everyday boys and girls working with him, and satisfying the public.

Several years ago, when Paramount was on

its building spree, executives of that organization headed for this city. In those days "Phil" only had a couple of houses, and his late brother Louis, one. He did not holler, but slipped over to New York, sought a partner, the Brothers Warner, and went right along as if it was all in a day's work. He gave up half he had then, to get ten times as much today. Paramount is still out of Springfield.

Philip Chakeres is one who believes in independent action and individual operation. He believes that a theatre is an institution and not only a place to make money, but something to use for the benefit of the community in which he has lived all his life. He so operates his personal houses and the six partnership ones. It is a pleasure to walk down the streets of this city of 75,000 people, and hear men,

women and children all saying, "Hello, Howdy Do, Hi There, Phil." They all know Phil Chakeres. His theatres are as much a part of the institutional life of this city, as the Masonic and K. of P. or I. O. O. F. homes. His citizenship is as important to this city, as any other of its first one hundred leaders. He seeks no fields of conquest, and if he had his way, we are wagering a thousand to one, that there would be a thousand others like himself operating the five thousand chain theatres, as individuals, serving their communities, and building good will, for this industry. Needless to say Phil Chakeres is successful. His theatres are good places to go, with a friendly spirit existing in every one of them, where everybody feels its his or her amusement center. There's no trouble in Chakeres Town.

RICHARD ARLEN

Starring in a series of

UNIVERSAL FEATURES

THREE COMPLETED



"Mutiny on the Blackhawk"

"Tropic Fury"

"Legion of Lost Flyers"



IN PREPARATION

"Man From Montreal"



CURRENT RELEASE

Columbia's

"Missing Daughters"



Management

LEO MORRISON



ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James.....FOX.....182
Gunga Din.....RKO.....180
Dodre City.....WAR.....158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips.....MGM.....149
Union Pacific.....PAR.....145

Kentucky.....FOX.....137
Beau Geste.....PAR.....136
Idiot's Delight.....MGM.....133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up.....UNIV.....131
The Man in the Iron Mask.....UA.....130
Stagecoach.....UA.....126
Each Down I Die.....WAR.....123
Juarez.....WAR.....123
Rose of Washington Square.....FOX.....123
Stand Up and Fight.....MGM.....123
Man About Town.....PAR.....122
Bachelor Mother.....RKO.....122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man.....UNIV.....121

Only Angels Have Wings.....COL.....119
Love Affair.....RKO.....118
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle.....RKO.....116
Little Princess.....FOX.....116
Four Feathers.....UA.....116
Second Fiddle.....FOX.....115

Made For Each Other.....UA.....112
Alexander Graham Bell.....FOX.....112
Midnight.....PAR.....111
Oklahoma Kid.....WAR.....110
East Side of Heaven.....UNIV.....110
Honolulu.....MGM.....107
Confessions of a Nazi Spy.....WAR.....107
Topper Takes A Trip.....UA.....106

Invitation To Happiness.....PAR.....102
Wuthering Heights.....UA.....102
Paris Honey-moon.....PAR.....102
Captain Fury.....UA.....100

Zaza.....PAR.....98

Man of Conquest.....REP.....96

Young Mr. Lincoln.....FOX.....94
Wings of the Navy.....WAR.....94
Tallish.....FOX.....94
Ice Follies of 1939.....MGM.....93

Tarzan Finds A Son.....MGM.....91
They Shall Have Music.....UA.....91

St. Louis Blues.....PAR.....87

Broadway Serenade.....MGM.....84

Let Freedom Ring.....MGM.....83
Susannah of the Mounties.....FOX.....83

The Mikado.....UNIV.....81
Three Musketeers.....FOX.....81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever.....MGM.....133
Pygmalion.....MGM.....131
The Hardys Ride High.....MGM.....130
Dark Victory.....WAR.....128

Daughters Courageous.....WAR.....112
The Beachcomber.....PAR.....110
Yes, My Darling Daughter.....WAR.....106
Huckleberry Finn.....MGM.....105

It's A Wonderful World.....MGM.....99
Son of Frankenstein.....UNIV.....98
Lucky Night.....MGM.....98
Maisie.....MGM.....97
Good Girls Go To Paris.....COL.....95
On Borrowed Time.....MGM.....94

Hound of the Baskervilles.....FOX.....92
They Made Me A Criminal.....WAR.....92
Wife, Husband and Friend.....FOX.....90
Calling Dr. Kildare.....MGM.....90

Naughty But Nice.....WAR.....86
Fast and Loose.....MGM.....86
Frontier Marshal.....FOX.....86
Off The Record.....WAR.....85
The Kid From Kokomo.....WAR.....85
Five Came Back.....RKO.....85
Sergeant Madden.....MGM.....84
Four Girls in White.....MGM.....84

Return of the Cisco Kid.....FOX.....82
Cafe Society.....PAR.....81
King of the Underworld.....WAR.....81
Arizona Wildcat.....FOX.....80

I'm From Missouri.....PAR.....79
The Girl Downstairs.....MGM.....79
Never Say Die.....PAR.....78
Winter Carnival.....UA.....77
The Lady's From Kentucky.....PAR.....77
Prison Without Bars.....UA.....77
Let Us Live.....COL.....77
Charlie Chan in Honolulu.....FOX.....76

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the Boss.....COL.....81

Blondie Takes A Vacation.....COL.....78
Devil's Island.....WAR.....78
Blackwell's Island.....WAR.....77
Pardon Our Nerve.....FOX.....77
You Can't Get Away With Murder.....WAR.....76

She Married A CopREP..... 73
Parents On TrialCOL..... 72

Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 73
Boy SlavesRKO..... 73
DisbarredPAR..... 73
Hell's KitchenWAR..... 72
King of ChinatownPAR..... 72
Society LawyerMGM..... 72
Persons in HidingUNIV..... 72
Society SmugglersFOX..... 72
Mr. Moto's Last WarningRKO..... 72
Twelve Crowded HoursFOX..... 72
Chasing DangerPAR..... 72
Island of Lost MenUNIV..... 72
Unexpected FatherWAR..... 71
Nancy Drew ReporterUNIV..... 71
Pirates of the SkatesRKO..... 71
Sorority HouseWAR..... 71
Nancy Drew Trouble ShooterUNIV..... 71
Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 71
Family Next DoorPAR..... 70
UnmarriedFOX..... 70
News Is Made at NightFOX..... 70
Million Dollar LegsPAR..... 70
Romance of the RedwoodsCOL..... 70
EX-ChampUNIV..... 70
Missing DaughtersCOL..... 70
Winner Take AllFOX..... 70
Big Town CzarUNIV..... 70
On TrialWAR..... 70
Torchy Blane in ChinatownWAR..... 70
AmbushPAR..... 70
They Made Her A SpyRKO..... 70
Torchy For MayorWAR..... 70
The Girl From MexicoRKO..... 70
Within the LawMGM..... 70

The Jones Family in HollywoodFOX..... 72
I Stole a MillionUNIV..... 72
The Sun Never SetsUNIV..... 72
Indianapolis SpeedwayWAR..... 72
Boy FriendFOX..... 72

Homicide BureauCOL..... 71
Streets of New YorkMONO..... 71
Mysterious Mr. WongMONO..... 71
Woman DoctorREP..... 71
North of ShanghaiCOL..... 71
Hidden PowerCOL..... 70
The Sunset Murder CaseGN..... 70
Fride of the NavyREP..... 70
Tough KidMONO..... 70
Mysterious Miss XREP..... 70
Trapped in the SkyCOL..... 70
Orphan in the StreetREP..... 70

Some Like It HotPAR..... 69
The Girl and the GamblerRKO..... 69
The Kid From TexasMGM..... 69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret PolicePAR..... 69
Everybody's BabyFOX..... 69
Bulldog Drummond's BridePAR..... 68
The Saint Strikes BackRKO..... 68
A Woman Is the JudgeCOL..... 68
Undercover DoctorPAR..... 68
Grand Jury SecretsPAR..... 68
Mr. Moto in Danger IslandFOX..... 68
Adventures of Jane ArdenV. ?..... 68
Almost A GentlemanRKO..... 68
Fixer DuganRKO..... 68
The Saint in LondonRKO..... 68
Blind AlleyCOL..... 67
Lone Wolf Spy HuntCOL..... 67

Back Door To HeavenPAR..... 70
King of the TurfUA..... 70
One Third of a NationPAR..... 70
Clouds Over EuropeCOL..... 70

I Am A CriminalMONO..... 68
Fighting ThoroughbredsREP..... 69
Gambling ShipUNIV..... 69
Convict's CodeMONO..... 69
Inside InformationUNIV..... 68
I Was A ConvictREP..... 68
Navy SecretsMONO..... 68
Federal Man HuntREP..... 68
Wolf CallMONO..... 68
Mickey the KidREP..... 68
Should Husbands WorkREP..... 68

Forgotten WomanUNIV..... 66
Mr. Moto Takes a VacationFOX..... 66
Charlie Chan in RenoFOX..... 66
Code of the StreetsUNIV..... 66
For Love or MoneyUNIV..... 66
Beauty for the AskingRKO..... 66
Sudden MoneyPAR..... 66
They Asked For ItUNIV..... 66
The Ware CaseGB..... 66
Cowboy QuarterbackWAR..... 66
Boy TroublePAR..... 65
Burn 'Em Up O'ConnorMGM..... 65
Secret Service of the AirWAR..... 65
6,000 EnemiesMGM..... 65
Tell No TalesMGM..... 65
This Man Is NewsPAR..... 64

Stronger Than DesireMGM..... 66
Hotel ImperialPAR..... 66
ZenobiaUA..... 66

House of FearUNIV..... 67
My Wife's RelativesREP..... 67
Long ShotGN..... 67
Forged PassportREP..... 66
First OffendersCOL..... 66
Rookie CopRKO..... 66
Wanted by Scotland YardMONO..... 66

Mr. Moto Takes a VacationUNIV..... 66
Charlie Chan in RenoFOX..... 66
Code of the StreetsUNIV..... 66
For Love or MoneyUNIV..... 66
Beauty for the AskingRKO..... 66
Sudden MoneyPAR..... 66
They Asked For ItUNIV..... 66
The Ware CaseGB..... 66
Cowboy QuarterbackWAR..... 66
Boy TroublePAR..... 65
Burn 'Em Up O'ConnorMGM..... 65
Secret Service of the AirWAR..... 65
6,000 EnemiesMGM..... 65
Tell No TalesMGM..... 65
This Man Is NewsPAR..... 64

Gracie Allen Murder CasePAR..... 64

The Zero HourREP..... 65
Outside These WallsCOL..... 65
S. O. S. Tidal WaveREP..... 65
Mr. Wong in ChinatownMONO..... 65
Mystery PlaneMONO..... 64
My Son Is A CriminalCOL..... 64
Code of the Secret ServiceWAR..... 64
Should A Girl MarryMONO..... 64
Street of Missing MenREP..... 63
Star ReporterMONO..... 63
Undercover AgentMONO..... 63
The Man Who DaredWAR..... 63
WaterfrontWAR..... 63
Panama LadyRKO..... 62
Panama PatrolGN..... 62
Boy's ReformatoryMONO..... 61

They All Come OutMGM..... 62
Exile ExpressGN..... 62
Inspector HornleighFOX..... 58
CareerRKO..... 53

Spirit of CulverUNIV..... 63
The Flying IrishmanRKO..... 63
Smiling AlongFOX..... 63
Climbing HighGB..... 63
Women in the WindWAR..... 62
Stolen LifePAR..... 61

Show Business the World Over
Is Raving About Those Great
Box Office Records Being
Marked Up By

EDWARD SMALL'S

THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

A James Whale Production

starring

LOUIS HAYWARD

JOAN BENNETT

With WARREN WILLIAM, JOSEPH SCHILDKRAUT and ALAN HALE

Directed by JAMES WHALE

Screenplay by GEORGE BRUCE

Released Thru UNITED ARTISTS

Millions of Customers Can't Be Wrong!
"The Man in the Iron Mask," after playing
to sensational opening weeks, has been
HELD OVER in EVERY important playing
situation including New York City, Atlantic
City, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia,
Asbury Park, Los Angeles, Providence and
New Haven. And that's only a pre-release
beginning.

THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

The Record Shattering Picture of 1939

Edward Small Productions, Inc.

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 9, No. 26.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 24, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE" TOPS BOX OFFICES

SEE PAGE 5

HOT NEWS FROM FIELD MEN IN OHIO AND MICHIGAN

SEE PAGES 6 AND 12

THE EDITOR TELLS THE SECRET BEHIND POLITICAL ACTIONS

SEE PAGE 3

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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

★ *The Box Office*

"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY-FOX** Wins With

"STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE"—161%



Director
HENRY KING



Vice Pres. in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Producer
KENNETH MACGOWAN



SPENCER TRACY



NANCY KELLY



RICHARD GREENE



SIR CEDRIC HARDWICKE



WALTER BRENNAN



HENRY TRAVERS

WHAT CAUSES THE SUITS?

Editorial Thoughts Reported by ROBERT E. WELSH

We have frequently wondered, in recent weeks how many of our Hollywood creators were sufficiently interested in their customers to be following the frank and illuminating articles being contributed to BOX OFFICE DIGEST by our Field Men.

Then, in the course of a conversation with Darryl Zanuck, we were surprised to find that he was not only reading the articles, but could almost repeat them, word for word.

Being at the same studio, we were therefore not so much surprised when Harry Joe Brown, associate producer, popped a half dozen machine-gun-like questions at us which evidenced that he also was interested in what the exhibitor is thinking and doing.

All of which is rather encouraging.

So much of Hollywood thought is concerned with self, and even has a superior frame of mind towards the retailers who sell the pictures to the eventual customers, that it is easy to decide that the creators have no interest that extends east of Pasadena.

* * *

Which brings up a very important point:

Staid and serious picture writers frequently wonder why an equally staid and serious Government, and quite a few politicians not so staid and serious, seem to enjoy the pleasure of picking on the picture industry and its individuals.

Did any of them ever stop to think that there is probably no other industry in the world in which there is so wide a gap between the manufacturer and the retailer?

Did any of them ever stop to think that there is probably no other industry in the world which by its own high pressure publicity accentuates so strongly the gap between the manufacturer and the retailer?

We have no quarrel with the successful creator or star whose income allows him to spend money in various colorful forms; if he wants to gamble or wants swimming pools, that is his privilege. And, in most cases, a just reward for his work.

But you do not read stories about a General Motors

magnate's recreational activities, neither his daytime life nor his night life.

Nor do you read very often about his marital life.

* * *

All of which may be considered aside from the point. The retailer—in our case, known as the exhibitor—should be happy to get a good product to sell to the customers.

But let's look at the other side of the picture.

The retailer—again, we mean the exhibitor—leads a cat and dog, fight and run life. He must operate with the canniest salesmen in the world—there are no better in executive or in lowly posts than in the picture industry.

He must take rain, wind, and storm, as they come—and fulfill his contract.

He must very often take POOR PRODUCT.

And, unless his strength is that of a Skouras, he must hope that the end of the year will show his profile just a little ahead of the eight ball's shadow.

So then:

He sits down in the evening to his paper—an exhibitor's evening is really the dawn—and reads a story about a Labor Board hearing in Los Angeles at which the statement is made that the average ordinary writer earns sums he cannot visualize. Or, maybe he turns to one of the columnists, and cushions his memories of the previous night's show, with the delicious item about a new divorce.

Or, maybe, he turns to the sports page—and that's just horses, horses, horses.

As we have said: The recreational and private life of an individual capable of earning big money is really his own business. But you can't blame the retailers—and their friends

the legislators and officials—for being a bit dazed at the wide gap between their "stores" and the hit and miss aggregation that makes the product for their shelves.

Which is why we say:

It was a treat to find two creators who are so close to their jobs that they are reading—and can quote—every line of a trade paper's reports direct from the field.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Distributor Name, and Releases. Lists 12 distributors including United Artists, Twentieth Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, RKO-Radio, Paramount, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont-British.

HIGHLIGHTER PREFERS TO TALK ABOUT GOOD PICTURES COMING BUT DOES GIVE SOME NEWS

Things are getting pretty tough for The Highlighter. . . . As a reporter he feels that he should talk about Hollywood's strikes and near-strikes. . . . But as a boss of his own page he also feels that he must repeat what he has said for three or four weeks: No weekly publication can ever keep up with strike thought in the show business. . . . Gosh, though, what a lot of temptation: The actors and the stagehands are fighting over jurisdictional problems, the writers and the producers are making faces at each other. . . . There must be something wrong: There are so many writers, technicians and producers working who do not deserve to draw salaries, and so many unemployed that should be in good spots, that, oh, well, there must be something wrong.

Most Important News Is In The Improved Box Offices

Of course, The Highlighter is not surprised that box offices are picking up as we close August out and open up September. . . . It always happens that way. . . . But he is heartily encouraged by the signs of public reaction. . . . "Stanley and Livingstone" is soaring far above anything we had estimated, and that is doing it in the tough hot months of the year. . . . Our early figures on "Wizard of Oz" indicate that this one will go sky-high. . . . We haven't rated the picture this week, because we feel everybody would be happier if we leveled off on the personal appearance in New York of Mickey Rooney, along with Judy Garland. . . . But, even after taking all subtractions, and waiting for countrywide figures, it appears as though we will have to talk to "Snow White" next week. . . . That isn't doing the picture business any harm. . . . But while "Oz" is in the sensational class, some other pictures are making the Fall break very cheerfully. . . . First reports on "When Tomorrow Comes" are heartening. . . . There are early reports on "In Name Only." . . . And our own reviewer—The Highlighter in disguise—told you what he thought might be done with "Golden Boy." . . . Yessir, happy days are here again—if the distributor will only give the exhibitor a break, and not ask his eye teeth for the August and September specials, while he looks out on the Pacific Ocean front the following January. . . . Do you get what The Highlighter means? . . . Or aren't you in the picture business?

Still Plenty of News In Roaming About The Studios

Your Highlighter thinks it is news to chronicle just the facts about Gene Towne and Graham Baker as they put together their first effort labeled with the title of producers. . . . There have never been any writers with a better theater selling sense than these two. . . . They cinched their first worry on "Swiss Family Robinson" by engaging Edward Ludwig as director. . . . Every day's daily columns tell us that they are not only casting well, but also using all the powers that lie in the tin god

6 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. <i>Goodbye, Mr. Chips</i>.....MGM	149	156
2. <i>Huckleberry Finn</i>.....MGM	105	111
3. <i>I Stole a Million</i>.....UNIV	72	76
4. <i>Missing Daughters</i>.....COL	70	73
5. <i>Girl and the Gambler</i>.....RKO	69	71
6. <i>Stronger Than Desire</i>.....MGM	66	70

known as Build-Up. . . . Shrewd George Schaefer, prexy of Radio-RKO, probably didn't even read the "shake-up" reports that were in the local papers when he, and valuable aide, S. Barrett McCormick, arrived for a brief coast visit. . . . Because every move he made was an organization promotion, and there was nothing of "shake-up" about all of his decisions. . . . Perry Lieber is now advertising and publicity director. . . . They couldn't have done better. . . . Howard Benedict gets a chance to show what he can do as an associate producer. . . . Joe Nolan is an assistant to the president, and Nolan can keep his hands on the ball, and his feet on the ground. . . . It is news of promotion for achievement to hear that Bert Gilroy has a top feature berth after his work in short subjects, and that Lou Brock—remember "Flying Down To Rio"—will step into the shorts spot. . . . Notice something? . . . Schaefer came to Hollywood but did not go Hollywood. . . . Every move so far announced was made within the organization. . . . Maybe this guy Schaefer has something.

Round and Round The Studio Corners

But The Highlighter has more fun if he just talks about the production news around the industry. . . . It is interesting, for example, to read about Sam Goldwyn's arguments with the Philippine Government over certain scenes in "The Real Glory." . . . We have heard Sam argue with Charlie Skouras about run-of-the-mill pictures, so you can imagine what literature has missed by not being present at the moment that Sam Goldwyn was talking Filipino. . . . A number of British actors are getting a little bit of jitters about the possibility of being called back to England if a war starts before this issue gets off the press. . . . And a number of very important companies are also worried because of what it will do to their schedules and pictures about to start or already started. . . . We hate to say it, but we have a suspicion that the newspapers will be telling about a number of actors who have taken out their first naturalization papers as American citizens. . . . And, the pictures will go on. . . . The stock market jumped up, and

4 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. <i>Blondie Takes A Vacation</i> COL	78	73
2. <i>Magnificent Fraud</i>.....PAR	74	71
3. <i>Island of Lost Men</i>.....PAR	72	68
4. <i>Streets of New York</i>.....MONO	71	68

then it jumped down during the week. . . . For a couple of days it made some of our big executives forget their horses, at the end of the week it made them decide that horses were just as good as bonds.

Just A Highlighter Rambling On, and On and On—

In our dumb way, we think that there will be worse than blood shed before the local union arguments are settled. . . . Some of the big shots are missing out someplace, or else the problem is too big for any human to handle. . . . And it is all such a shame. . . . There is no wage, hour, or other discussion involved, because picture salaries in Hollywood rate higher than any national scale for the same job. . . . And so—well, we had better stop talking about that subject. . . . Union printers do the work on this paper. . . . Before the Highlighter's space runs out, he would like to slip in a tip to exhibitor readers: This has been a slow buying season. . . . It gives an advantage. . . . RKO, Universal, and Republic are among companies that will step themselves up considerably this next year. . . . The top majors will hold their own, of course, but look for bargains—and be willing to pay more than in the past—on some of the companies we have mentioned.

And Still The Highlighter Travels Round and Round

Ted Lewis is setting box office records at the local Orpheum, and it makes your Highlighter wonder why some producer doesn't cash in on one of the most consistent draws in the show business. . . . Of course, Ted Lewis had one of those funny experiences in pictures when wise guys were trying to find out what to do about sound. . . . But he is still breaking records, so it proves that even a poor picture can't hurt an attraction. . . . Speaking of the same subject: Why doesn't some company get a cheap follow-up on the fantasy in "Wizard of Oz" by a version of "The Mikado in Swing." . . . If you feel that an all-colored cast won't sell, is there any law that says the joys of "The Mikado in Swing" must be presented with colored players? . . . Herb Yates is doing things with that Gene Autry boy over in England, from all we hear. . . . And on top of what we hear from the correspondents, we also heard that nation-wide broadcast last week. . . . Quite a stunt. . . . Just a period in punctuation to what we have told you about this Yates chap going places this year with Republic. . . . With Frank Murphy, Attorney General, polishing up every axe in his political cupboard to shear the picture business, there must be something funny in his being invited a la gala Hollywood fashion to come out here soon and bestow a medal for something or other. . . . We know there is a laugh there somewhere, but maybe you can find it for yourself. . . . There is also more than one laugh in the LABOR board hearings about writers' troubles. . . . But we don't have to tell you that.

ZANUCK'S "STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE" HITS HIGH WITH FIGURES AND MANY HOLD-OVERS

FOX—4 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has four new releases this week, one a big Zanuck special that is smashing records, another fairly good attraction and two others that are just average programmers.

Darryl Zanuck's first big Fall release, "STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE," has opened in over fifty-five key city first run situations from coast to coast and is presently averaging 161% besides being held over for strong second and third weeks in an unusual number of instances. As a matter of fact "STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE" has been so well received by the public and press alike that Production Chief Zanuck is already planning a sequel to this great African epic.

Spencer Tracy was borrowed from MGM for the lead while others prominently featured include: Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Walter Brennan, Charles Coburn and Henry Hull, with Nancy Kelly and Richard Greene portraying the light romantic leads.

Henry King directed with Otto Brower, and Mrs. Martin Johnson getting full credit for the African background shots. Exhibitors will do well by arranging ahead of time with their exchanges for extra playing time on this one. Spencer Tracy has always been strong at the box office and with this forceful production and the big campaign in back of it, exhibitors can't go wrong.

Twentieth Century-Fox's second release this week is a new Cosmopolitan production, "HOTEL FOR WOMEN," that is doing even better than we had anticipated. In some key cities where there are Hearst papers this one is going over especially strong. It is even as high as 115% and 120%, while in other cities where the picture has not been exploited sufficiently "HOTEL FOR WOMEN" is doing less, although on all its first few bookings it is averaging 95%, which is 5% higher than we had estimated.

Darryl Zanuck's latest "star discovery," Linda Darnell, heads the cast. Ann Sothern is also prominently featured and after her big success in "Maisie" her name will probably mean something on the average marquee. However, the real thing to sell is the showmanship idea behind the title.

As this one is primarily a women's picture it should be booked with some sort of action feature when it runs in the nabes and more particularly in the smaller towns.

Fox's other two releases this week are an addition from the Jones series and another for Jane Withers. Jane Withers, "CHICKEN WAGON FAMILY," 77% seems to be the stronger on the first figures we have received.

The latest in the Jones Family series, "QUICK MILLIONS," 71%, fea-

Of 14 New Releases In The Past Week 3 Were Over 100%, 3 Came Through Okay and 8 Were Very Weak

tures the regular Jones Family. This time with a little western atmosphere.

MGM—2 New Releases

MGM has two new releases this week, one a definite box office hit and the other a very weak programmer.

"LADY OF THE TROPICS," which serves as Hedy Lamarr's first picture for MGM (although she has been under contract with that studio for over a year and a half) has opened up all over the country and although the story has been panned by the press, still it is doing excellent box office business averaging 129% so far. This definitely establishes Miss Lamarr as one of the screens' present top ranking stars, as her last and only picture made in America, "Algiers," was likewise a big box office sensation. Bob Taylor is co-starred with Miss Lamarr.

Sam Zimbalist produced and Jack Conway directed from Ben Hecht's rather shaky screenplay. Exhibitors will clean up on this one and probably immediately request MGM exchanges for more pictures with the glamorous Hedy.

As a matter of fact MGM has another Hedy Lamarr picture "I Take This Woman," that was completed before "LADY OF THE TROPICS," but as the MGM executives do not believe that the quality of the production is up to the MGM standard they have put it on the shelf for the time being. But maybe now that "LADY OF THE TROPICS" is doing so much business MGM may release "I Take This Woman" in which Miss Lamarr was co-starred with Spencer Tracy.

MGM's second release, "MIRACLES FOR SALE," 68%, is just a fair programmer from the Joe Cohn unit. Robert Young and Florence Rice are co-starred in this magician's

mystery; but as they are not strong enough to hold a program up alone this one should be booked with a much stronger attraction.

UNIVERSAL—1 Release

Universal has one release this week, a programmer. It is much better than the general run of programmers.

"MUTINY ON THE BLACKHAWK" is doing 80%, and, although a programmer, is a fine action picture and will therefore naturally draw more men and children than women. Accordingly this one could be spotted in very nicely with one of the many current woman's pictures such as "Lady of the Tropics," "When Tomorrow Comes," or the "Old Maid."

"MUTINY ON THE BLACKHAWK" is the first of the new Universal series starring the popular Richard Arlen. Its good figures are proof that Arlen still retains his following.

The next two features in the Arlen-Devine series are; "Tropic Fury" and "Legion of Lost Flyers" which are already completed and will soon be in the Universal exchanges for a booking and exhibitors, particularly those catering to action pictures, will do well to set their dates early.

WARNERS—2 New Releases

Warners-First National also have two new releases this week, one a new Bette Davis triumph, "The Old Maid," on which we are awaiting more figures before rating, while the second is a weak programmer.

The programmer is "PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE, 65%, another in the Torchy Blane series. A year or so ago the Torchy Blane series, with Glenda Farrell and Barton MacLane co-starred, seemed to be doing fairly well, at least much better than the more recent in this series, possibly indicating that the public got use to certain players in the series and doesn't like to see them changed around.

This time Jane Wyman and Allen Jenkins are co-starred.

RKO—1 Release

RKO's only new release this week, "IN NAME ONLY, 122%, seems to be another box office triumph for the RKO-Radio studios. On its first opening in New York City, "IN NAME ONLY" did so well on its second week that at a last minute's notice it was held over for a third week, which is the first picture to play at the Radio City Music Hall a third week in many months.

Carole Lombard and Cary Grant are co-starred in this thrilling love

(Continued on Page 6)

14 New Releases Not In The Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	161	140
2. Lady of the Tropics	MGM	129	125
3. In Name Only	RKO	122	115
4. Hotel For Women	FOX	95	90
5. Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	80	80
6. Coast Guard	COL	80	80
7. Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	77	75
8. Our Leading Citizen	PAR	72	80
9. Quick Millions	FOX	71	70
10. Miracles For Sale	MGM	68	70
11. Behind Prison Gates	COL	67	70
12. Night Work	PAR	66	70
13. Playing With Dynamite	WAR	65	70
14. Smuggled Cargo	REP	65	70

IN OHIO MAURICE RIDGE GETS SOME REAL INFORMATION ON CURRENT EXHIBITOR IDEAS

Cincinnati, Ohio.—This famous old beer guzzling Ohio River City is in the throes of the most disastrous box office headache, it has ever experienced, and it looks like the trouble will not abate before the middle of October. The people have not gone permanently nuts, but they are temporarily deranged to the extent they have forgotten the way to their favorite motion picture house, and are bivouacked down in the west end near Mill Creek too many days a week.

The trouble is base-ballitis.

Brooklyn in its periods of pandemonium over the national afternoon and evening pastime, never was half as near bug house, as these 44-inch waist-lined fans. The park holds only 28,000, but the beer parlors are all equipped with radios, and all games are broadcast. Thousands of these places are running, and they are filled to overflowing during the hour before and for hours after every game. It's not only the games at home but abroad as well.

Fred Strief, who has been a distributor, but of recent years a theatre operator here, Milwaukee, and elsewhere, states that never in his forty years in this city, has he known this old German city to go so nutty over anything, and he says further that it has lowered the theatre intake by half.

This of course is temporary.

Mr. Strief, who is an independent, and formerly manager of the Allied office here, sees a far greater storm cloud arising, than baseball, which of course is but a transitory stoppage of box office dimes.

But There Are More Important Worries

Trade practices, he states, have been imposed on them by the distributor, that in many instances make it almost impossible to keep their houses open. If anybody is paying the least attention to the proposed Code in these parts, one would have to find it with the aid of the 200-inch telescope at Palomar Mountain. The same old selling bludgeons are employed. Sunday dates and guarantees are the order of the day.

Maurice White, who operates about twenty houses in Southern Ohio, tells me that he has to buy

practically all the major product as there is much double billing. As the contracts now stand, and he has not completed his buy, he is obliged to pay or play preferred playing time on 62 pictures for 39-40 product with but 52 Sundays to do it. Each company has increased the number of top pictures by double and more. In some instances it presents a problem which Mr. White says he does not know how to solve, unless the President moves the calendar ahead three more months.

Ohio Exchanges Have Met Simon Legree

The lash is being applied by the distributors in this area with respect to contract enforcement, more than any section we have visited between here and the Pacific. One branch manager told me that his home office had instructed him to make them play or pay, and if they did not live up to the terms of their contracts: To sue them. "We know the contract is good. Our lawyers tell us to go right ahead, government suit threats or not. The government isn't scaring us. We know our rights and we are going to make them (the exhibitor) play them as he has them bought."

Thus the merry-go-round goes round and round. The Code here is a forgotten thing, and the independent is taking it on the nose but hoping that the leaders will wake up in time to save Government intervention.

And There Is Even "Bingo" To Worry About

Ohio has legalized Bingo games, where they are operated for charity. The reports recently received in Cincinnati show that more than a million and a half dollars went "Bingo" there last year, all of which the theatre operators claim came out of their pockets. Even churches put on Bingo to raise funds for relief and other charities. Thus this city is hollering louder than most places, due to baseball and bingo. But with it all, Ike Libson, the head of RKO here, is building another big theatre, on the site of the Grand Opera House. That landmark is coming down, and in its place the finest theatre in Ohio will be erected.



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

There must be something that a showman gets in his blood which seals his life to the business. We found one of the first men in this business, right here in Cincinnati, who told the writer that he had to get in the real estate business to make enough money to stay in the show business. Of course this is not exactly true, but Jerome Jackson, one of the men who back in the old Patents days, owned one-half of this industry, before he sold it out to Carl Laemmle.

Last week Mr. Jackson told us that he sold out his downtown houses, and entered the realty game, made a strike and built a \$200,000 suburban house, where he finds it's increasingly difficult to

make it pay, in the face of increasing film rentals, booking restriction and a general slump in business here. But I like the way he said: "I just can't stay out of the game."

They Like Bill Howard In Cincinnati

It will be remembered that it was Jerome Jackson who gave "Billy" Howard his first start at the old Grand Opera House lecturing on Captain Scott's "Trip To The South Pole." "I knew Billy would go places then," he chuckled. "In fact "Billy" Howard has gone so far in Hollywood, that when I wrote to him months ago, he couldn't get a letter back." In Cincinnati William K. Howard the Director, is just plain "Billy," "Pat's" brother, who used to peddle film up the Ohio river, and get back to St. Mary's on the reservoir for his vacations.

RELEASES OF THE WEEK

(Continued from Page 5)

melodrama, while Kay Francis returns to the screen in this one in a strong featured role. Charles Coburn, Helen Vinson and Katharine Alexander include the featured cast. George Haight produced and John Cromwell directed from Bessie Breuer's novel. All indications point to this picture holding its own ground and possibly even building to higher box office averages.

COLUMBIA—2 New Ones

Columbia Pictures has two new releases, one a very strong "B" and the other a rather weak programmer.

Columbia's current best attraction, "COAST GUARD," has opened up fairly well at an 85% average and because of the high quality of this picture plus a fine cast with marquee names, it will probably do better on its future bookings although of course it is going to be more of a man's draw because of the title — "COAST GUARD." Randolph Scott and Frances Dee are co-starred and other good marquee names in the case include: Ralph Bellamy, Walter Connolly, and Warren Hymer.

Fred Kohlmer produced and Edward Ludwig, who scored heavily with the last Durbin picture, directed. Ludwig's direction gives

this action picture the class touch that lifts it in the figures.

Columbia's second release, "BEHIND PRISON GATES," 67%, is just a so-so programmer from the Irving Briskin unit. As Brian Donlevy is starred in this one, it might be a good idea for exhibitors to use this picture as a follow-up after "Beau Geste." Jacqueline Wells is seen opposite Donlevy, and Charles Barton directed.

PARAMOUNT—2 New Ones

Paramount comes through this time with a very disappointing week with two new releases, neither of which are showing any box office strength. The first is a new Bob Burns feature, "OUR LEADING CITIZEN," which has opened in numerous key city runs and is doing the poorest of any of his pictures to date, only averaging 72%. Some of the key city runs have been even much lower than this although in the smaller towns and corn belt this one has been doing fairly well on the strength of Bob Burns' personal following.

This is a story of capital-labor strife and has been poorly presented and furthermore the American public does not seem particularly interested in propaganda. Exhibitors with important runs should

(Continued on Page 12)

METRO • GOLDWYN • MAYER'S TECHNICOLOR MARVEL

The WIZARD of



IS ONE OF THE GREAT PICTURES OF ALL TIME, PERHAPS THE GREATEST PICTURE EVER MADE! BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS ARE ITS TECHNICOLOR WONDERS, AS THOUSANDS OF LIVING ACTORS CREATE SCREEN MAGIC TO THRILL THE WORLD!

Why Gild the Lily?

By now you know the answer to the question "How great IS The Wizard of Oz?" The answer is given by every writer on every trade paper and newspaper . . . and by the thousands of theatre-goers who have SEEN the greatest of all entertainments. No motion picture ever hit the screens of this country with a greater campaign behind it . . . and no other picture ever merited such a campaign. . . . M-G-M told the truth . . . told it in letters flaming with sincerity . . . and the trade and the public believed every last word.

M•G•M'S Wonder Show "THE WIZARD OF OZ" with Judy Garland • Frank Morgan • Ray Bolger • Bert Lahr • Jack Haley Billie Burke • Margaret Hamilton Charley Grapewin and The Munchkins • A VICTOR FLEMING Production • Screen Play by Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf • From the Book by L. Frank Baum Directed by Victor Fleming Produced by MERVYN LEROY

GET YOUR SHARE OF
THE GOLDEN RETURNS WITH "THE WIZARD OF OZ"



*It is not very often that the people who help make great pictures
get great credit, so here goes, and thanks to all the Wizards who made
"The Wizard of Oz" possible.*

Thank You,

VICTOR FLEMING

AND

ADRIAN
ARTHUR APELL
HAROLD ARLEN
POP ARNOLD
JOHN ARNOLD
GEORGE BASSMAN
CHRIS BERGSWICH
MARGARET BOOTH
MALCOLM BROWN
A. W. BROWN
GAVIN BURNS
ULRICH BUSCH
WILLIAM CANNON
GEORGE CAVE
CHARLES CHIC
SAMMY COHEN
BOBBY CONNOLLY
JOE COOK
KEN DARBY
ALAN DAVE
JACK DAWN

FRANCES EDWARDS
HARRY EDWARDS
NAT FINSTON
ARTHUR FREED
CHIPS GAITHER
CEDRIC GIBBONS
BUDDY GILLESPIE
ERNIE GROONEY
YIP HARBURG
TOM HELD
JANE HARRISON
BILL HORNING
HENRI JAFFA
SAM KRESS
NOEL LANGLEY
BETH LANGSTON
JOHN LEE MAHIN
DONNA MASON
BETTY MASURE
NORBERT MILES
WARREN NEWCOMBE

RAY O'BRIEN
SHEILA O'BRIEN
WEBB OVERLANDER
W. E. POHL
BARRON POLAN
ROY RAYMSEY
GERALD F. RACKETT
JACK ROHAN
HAL ROSSON
FLORENCE RYERSON
CHARLES SCHRAM
BLANCHE SEWELL
DOUGLAS SHEARER
AL SHENBERG
LEE STANFIELD
GEORGIE STOLL
HERBERT STOTHART
KEITH WEEKS
EDWIN B. WILLIS
EDGAR ALLAN WOOLF
WALLACE WORSLEY

P.S. And thanks to the never tiring exploitation heads:

HOWARD STRICKLING
SI SEADLER

HOWARD DIETZ
ANDY HERVEY

FRANK WHITBECK

and to you

ARTHUR FREED

you know how thankful I am.



**METRO-
GOLDWYN-
MAYER**

Victor Fleming

DIRECTED

Coming:

"GONE WITH THE WIND"

(For Selznick-International)



**METRO-
GOLDWYN-
MAYER**

MUSICAL NUMBERS

FOR "THE WIZARD OF OZ"

STAGED BY

Bobby Connolly

Just Completed

MARX BROS.
"AT THE CIRCUS"

Current Assignment

"BROADWAY MELODY"



**METRO-
GOLDWYN-
MAYER**

Every Moment We Worked
On the "WIZARD"
With Mervyn LeRoy,
Was a Moment of Joy.

Florence Ryerson

Edgar Allan Woolf



METRO-
GOLDWYN-
MAYER



FIELD MAN NICHOLS FINDS DETROIT WORRIED ABOUT FUTURE OF ONCE GREAT ORGANIZATION

Detroit, Mich.—“Nothing ever happens here, business is normal, exhibitors are happy and we have the greatest exhibitors' association in the country.”

True these words were uttered four years ago and for some sixteen years before that, but now the “greatest association” only applies to the up state exhibitors and not the city impresarios; and business is shot to pieces, there is none, and something is going to happen soon, as the leading exhibitors of the city are just commencing to feel the rumbling of an extinct volcano that they have been sitting on for years.

First, here we have a city of deluxe independent theatres, which have successfully kept out producer owned theatre operation. Nowhere in this state does the distributor own the leading issue of stock in a theatre corporation. Paramount has 25% in Butterfield, and Radio 10 per cent. Michigan Theatres in Detroit is only a minor affair with a few key runs, originally started by John Kunsky, aided and abetted by that sterling character, George Trendle, who has resigned, with Earl Hudson placed in charge, of what is now a B & K operation.

Technical News For Other Exhibitors

Believe it or not, there are no zoning or clearance books, (Los Angeles needs two) all major releases clear every house in the city within eight weeks. *Fifty-six days!* Compare that to Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans.

Second runs clear down town within 28 days after first run. One sees contracts all over Detroit that carry the provisions, “Open booking” over competition within five minutes car ride. But, friends, we are now talking about *independent competition*.

“What brought this ideal exhibition condition about?” we hear you say? To start in the beginning, One Ray Moon purchased the old C.B.O. from John Kunsky in February of 1930. Kunsky and Trendle agreed to remain out of the booking of group theatres for fifty years. Now, Ray having had plenty of experience in keeping exhibitors in line, had a contract drawn up that was as tight as the lawyers could make it. In fact the

exhibitor almost signed away his wife and children. This was the beginning of Co-Operative Theatres of Michigan. The sole purpose of this organization was to protect the investments of its members as the affiliate circuits were threatening to invade the lucrative exhibition field of Detroit.

Distributors were skeptical at first, but were gradually brought into line and the association prospered. This was the period known around this city as the “disinterested management.”

There you have the basis for an ideal theatre situation.

Interesting History of One Cooperative Group

But in 1937 Co-Op's board of directors ordered the contracts of all members to be changed to read, “No member can be a member of any other exhibitor organization.” So Allied moved to the country. The reason given at that time was that Co-Op had broadened its service to members to include insurance, aside from the booking, which was in charge of Allied.

But now the picture has changed. One of Co-Op's own members told us that “The present policy is now different than the impartial and disinterested management of its founders. It is now dominated principally by a small group of theatre interests.”

One member exposed his cost sheets to us, and they showed that he was paying \$27,000 for service of a major product against a gross of \$52,000 for this same company's product. This company knows he is oversold and admitted the fact, but also stated that they can do nothing as this theatre is a member of Co-Op and that they know by blind checking that other members are undersold, and, that they will eventually insist on an audit of all members' books. We don't blame them. The only way this independent theatre can get relief is to resign from Co-Op.

Now Co-Op's troubles are commencing to mount up by leaps and bounds. A committee that went to New York to ask sales executives for reductions was told to return



HARRY NICHOLS
Field Representative

home and take the matter up with their local branch managers. There has been no effort made by the local managers to sell Co-Op for next season's product, so we are informed by the local managers.

Ray Schreiber, president of the Mid-West Theatre Company, who owns the Colonial, Blackstone, Garden, Majestic and Forest theatres, has brought a civil action in the Federal Court for the East-

ern District of Michigan, for damages of \$200,000 against Co-Op and its members, under the Anti-Trust laws of the U. S. Here is an interesting price comparison as alleged in the Schreiber complaint, between a member of the Co-Op group who owns the Roxy and Mayfair theatres, and also the Ray Schreiber's theatres.

You Must Know Figures To Read From Now On

Colonial, First National, first run, 3 at \$355; 5 at 305; 18 at \$60.00.

Majestic, First National, first run, 3 at \$355; 5 at \$305; 18 at \$70.

Majestic, Warner, second run, 3 at \$65; 18 at \$45.00.

And then:

Roxy, Warner, first run, 3 at \$290; 5 at \$255; 18 at \$65.

Mayfair, Warner, first run, 3 at \$187; 5 at \$102; 18 at \$37.50.

Mayfair, First National, second run, 3 at \$62.50; 5 at \$42.50; 18 at \$22.50.

The case of Ray Moon, the founder of Co-Op, against Co-Op for breach of contract and salaries due, will be tried shortly in the local district courts. A part of his amended complaint reads as follows:

Here's An Extract From A Legal Brief in A Picture Suit

“8. Plaintiff further shows, that during the last year in which he was General Manager of the defendant corporation, one Lew Wisper and Frank Wetsman, members of defendant corporation, conspired to effect the discharge of this plaintiff; that they sought to disrupt, disorganize and disunite defendant corporation by willful,

wanton and malicious acts; that said Wisper and Wetsman were ringleaders of a small clique of some five or six out of the 44 members of defendant corporation, including themselves, Ben Cohen, and Barney L. Kilbride, whose purpose and intention it was to take over the management of the defendant corporation in their own special interests and against the best interests of the majority of the members of the corporation and against the best interests of the corporation itself. That said Wisper and Wetsman had previously been members of the corporation, and had withdrawn therefrom in 1936, hoping that it would collapse without their support. That said Wisper, prior to their reentry into defendant company, had attempted to influence members to withdraw, and had openly stated that if he could not break up defendant association from the outside, he would become a member and would break it up from the inside. That after said Wisper had again become a member of the association, among many other damaging statements illustrating his motives and attitude, he asserted that he did not intend to have his “style cramped” by this plaintiff.”

* * *

It is common talk around Detroit that the F. B. I. have been quietly checking up on Co-Op's present activities and that a government case is scheduled to be filed this Fall.

Releases of the Week

(Continued from Page 6)

definitely screen this picture before booking it.

Paramount's second release, “NIGHT WORK,” 66%, is another programmer. This one will probably get by on the average double bill but unless Charlie Ruggles and Mary Boland mean much to your patronage, be sure and book this one on a bank night or with a big percentage picture.

REPUBLIC—1 Reelase

Republic has a new program release this week, “SMUGGLED CARGO,” 65%. Rochelle Hudson, the former Fox featured player, is co-starred with Barry MacKay, if that means anything on your marquee. This one will probably get by in action houses and small town runs and is particularly suited to Fri.-Sat. bookings in place of the usual Western picture.

"The Star Maker" Will Get Money

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 120%)

Producer Charles R. Rogers
 Director Roy Del Ruth
 Based on a story by Arthur Caesar and William A. Pierce.
 Screenplay: Frank Butler, Don Hartman, Arthur Caesar.
 Star Bing Crosby
 Featured: Louise Campbell, Linda Ware, Ned Sparks, Walter Damrosch, Laura Hope Crews, Thurston Hall, Clara Blandick, John Gallaudet, Ben Weldon, Janet Waldo, Paul Stanton.
 Photographer Karl Struss
 Musical Director Alfred Newman
 Art Directors Hans Dreier, Robert Usher
 Film Editor Alma Macrorie
 Time 93 minutes

There is showmanship in "The Star Maker"—Bing Crosby for the important marquee duty, a swell entertainment idea for novelty, a new and widely publicized youngster in Linda Ware, and a generally tuneful and entertaining production.

That the picture does not reach the heights of greatness is due entirely to the story they handed Director Roy Del Ruth. The latter skillful veteran works with every trick in his bag, and it can be reported that for general audience purposes he comes close to overcoming a story that, for most of its course, is synthetic to the very extreme, and then, as the end approaches, not synthetic enough to provide a smashing climax.

But all the elements put together by Producer Charles Rogers—Del Ruth, Crosby, popular songs and symphonic numbers—do shape up as entertainment. In addition, there will be value in many spots in the personal appearance of fabled Walter Damrosch, and there is a corking supporting cast.

"Sherlock Holmes" Streamlined Actioneer

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Associate Producer Gene Markey
 Director Alfred Werker
 Screenplay Edwin Blum, William Drake
 Based on play by William Gillette
 Featured: Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Ida Lupino, Alan Marshall, Terry Kilburn, George Zucco, Henry Stephenson, E. E. Clive, Arthur Hohl, May Beatty, Peter Willes, Mary Gordon, Holmes Herbert, George Regas, Mary Forbes, Frank Dawson, William Dawson, William Austin, Anthony Kemble Cooper.
 Photographer Leon Shamroy
 Art Director Richard Day, Hans Peters
 Film Editor Robert Bischoff
 Time 85 minutes

The magic in the name of Sherlock Holmes has always been box office. Here, in a version played in the authentic period of Conan Doyle's stories and William Gillette's stageplay, but streamlined with modern guidance in scripting and production by Darryl Zanuck, it emerges as a class whodunit that will justify the values in the title.

This one tells of the episode in the eccentric Sherlock's life when he crosses swords with Doctor Moriarity, who has ambitions of his own to be the most famous criminal the world has ever known, and is even brazen enough to be known.

CURRENT REVIEWS

1. The Star Maker	PAR	120
2. Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	115
3. Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	90
4. The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	85
5. Full Confession	RKO	80
6. Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	75
7. Irish Luck	MONO	70

Of the support, the meatiest work goes to that grand trouper, Laura Hope Crews, and she spots her every scene effectively, while Ned Sparks, in a typical Ned Sparks role, is as assured and result-getting as you would expect of Ned Sparks. Louise Campbell, playing the romantic interest opposite Bing, isn't given the best of opportunities by the story, but registers a charm and poise that clearly indicate the girl will go places when she gets the right part.

Crosby gets many songs, new and old, and sells both songs and personality across the screen. The young discovery, Linda Ware, may not be a Deanna Durbin yet, but she can warble, and the fourteen year old youngster will get plenty of attention.

And then, there are kids, kids, and more kids. Delightful kids, talented ones. They give the picture a refreshingly "different" air. They should certainly give the picture word of mouth when it gets playing to family audiences.

The slender story concerns Bing as a self-confident aspirant to the stage, who marries Louise Campbell on hopes and little cash. When he can't sell his own services, he discovers there is money and fame in the presentation of kid acts. Starting with a group of newsboys, whose sidewalk performances gave him his idea, he

expands to the proportions of a magnate. Then comes a ban by the Children's Societies, and final triumph when the Great God Radio appears on the world.

The music parallels the career of Gus Edwards, whose life suggested the story. "School Days," and such numbers, are heard. In addition, Bing sings three new songs that are already beginning to hit on the radio. And there is a Carnegie Hall climax, with Damrosch and a symphony orchestra, that spots Miss Ware advantageously.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Rogers has put together a great batch of show elements. You can take your choice of a half dozen angles in the selling. The picture will satisfy. Previewed August 21st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Rich in novelty and musically appealing "The Star Maker" holds strong promise of doing big business. Its exploitable assets, including its hit song-plugging via radio, mark it for unusual potentials in major bookings."

VARIETY: "Out of the lore of show business and throbbing with the very pulse of the show world is this splendid, colorful and melodic piece of entertainment, certain to please everywhere and headed for important coin."

It runs up and down the scale much as a serial would, only about fifteen episodes of a serial have been crowded into the 85 minutes of the picture. There is no more credibility than you would expect to find in a compressed serial, but there are plenty of gasps, thrills, and shudders as you travel along. The faults it has are also what you would expect from a serial.

There are also laughs. Nigel Bruce supplies most of them, and the way he holds this picture up should get a number of producers to raking their memories and recalling how many pictures Nigel Bruce has held above the water line.

The picture, between natural draw in the Sherlock Holmes theme, and the production offered, should be a safe bet for American houses, particularly where they go for shudders; it should be exceptionally good for the British market. As a matter of fact, the one thing that may curb the picture's American success is that it is too authentically British in its treatment.

Bruce is most effective in the cast, while Rathbone is a standardized and satisfactory Sherlock Holmes. Ida Lupino does a fine job, making one wonder why this girl doesn't get

more good spots. Alan Marshall handles the romantic interest opposite Miss Lupino capably, while George Zucco goes to town with restraint in the menace role of Dr. Moriarity.

The plot does not entirely tell the picture, because director Al Werker has built for moments and situations to entertain, with no more basis than the fact that Moriarity, with designs on the Crown Jewels, and a healthy respect for Sherlock Holmes, seeks to draw the latter off with a murder plot. But, as you know, they never licked Sherlock—not while Doctor Watson was around.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good class mystery, with the added box office pull of the Sherlock Holmes tag. Not for carriage trade. Previewed August 18th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' is an attempted whodunit on a high scale but with most of the thrills of the 'B' mystery thrillers missing, and as such becomes rather tame screen fare."

VARIETY: "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' is a slick, ornate and cunningly involved who-perpetrated-it variation of the ordinary garden variety of whodunit. Its defiance of logic in plot cause and effect and character behavior is shrugged off with the weird and exciting fascination that hold unflagging attention."

"Fifth Avenue Girl" Radio-La Cava Hit

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Producer-Director Gregory La Cava
Screenplay Allan Scott
Star Ginger Rogers

Featured: Walter Connolly, Verree Teasdale, James Ellison, Tim Holt, Kathryn Adams, Franklin Pangborn, Ferike Boros, Louis Calhern, Theodore Von Eltz, Alexander D'Arcy.

Photographer Robert de Grasse
Art Director Van Nest Polglase
Film Editors William Hamilton, Robert Wise
Time 80 minutes

Gregory La Cava has given the screen another gem of light and happy entertainment; Ginger Rogers continues to clinch her right to comedienne honors, with or without her dancing shoes; Walter Connolly gets the meatiest part he has had in a month of moons, and goes to town.

While we are catching our breath, we will whisper that you probably won't hear a more crisply adult dialogue job for some time to come. Allan Scott is the name.

Essentially, there is not much more story—or plot, if that is the proper word—to "Fifth Avenue Girl" than an indie producer would consider sufficient for one reel of his picture. But La Cava possesses the faculty of making mountains out of molehills, or rather, frolicsomenely delightful moments out of human beings. He has had stronger material than "Fifth Avenue Girl"—as in "My Man Godfrey" and "Stage Door,"—but his skill is ever the same,

so they all come out at pretty standard rating.

It seems that Walter Connolly is a tycoon who lives in a house that would dwarf the Grand Central Station, with a wife, Verree Teasdale, who has grown so accustomed to him she finds more pleasure in mildly thrilling flirtations, a daughter, Kathryn Adams, who is a member of the outspoken new generation, a son, Tim Holt, whose mind is on polo.

So—along comes a day when Connolly learns that the pump business which built his millions is going to pot, and the day also happens to be his birthday. When he arrives home that night and finds that no one in the family even thought of the birthday, he diffidently decides to take a night out by strolling to the Central Park zoo.

There he meets Ginger. She is one of the million gals down on her luck. They strike up an unusual partnership. He moves her into his Fifth Avenue home and makes her confidante and companion on mysterious nightly prowls. It is all played with a touch of spice that convinces the rest of the family that he has moved "one of those women" into the home, and fools the audience until they are let into the secret.

Mother, daughter, and son, are in turmoil, and only the audience and the conspirators know that Ginger and Walter are spending their supposedly riotous evenings in innocuous rides around Central Park. There is a complication in the person of James Ellison, Communistically inclined—in a light way—chauffeur for the family, madly loved by the daughter. And a further complication when son,

Tim Holt, finds himself falling in love with Ginger.

Of course, all ends happily, and of course it all never meant much to the progress of world affairs, but what a lot of chucklesome, healthy fun it is as you roll along with these people.

In addition to the fine work of Miss Rogers and Mr. Connolly, La Cava has secured exceptional performances from each and every member of his cast. Verree Teasdale comes into her own as the stately—and, oh, so beautiful—matron. The youngsters in the cast, Tim Holt, James Ellison, and Kathryn Adams do fine jobs. Franklin Pangborn, allowed to play with restraint, gets choice moments.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Sophisticated entertainment, but with a Cinderella background that will hit with all classes. You will be happy to meet the customers at the door as they come out. Previewed August 16th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is on the zany side. But it has enough ingredients on the plausible, or at least understandable side, to give it a sound and quite earthy skeleton structure. All in all, it is a painstakingly clever and highly finished production."

VARIETY: "Gregory La Cava's lush and satiric work of comic pathos gives RKO another definite winner and Ginger Rogers another bright mark on her score card. It is a fine piece of high farce, ably expounded by an enthused cast."

"Full Confession" Is Impressive Picture

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Robert Sisk
Director John Farrow
Screenplay Jerry Cady
Story Leo Birinski

Featured: Victor McLaglen, Sally Eilers, Joseph Calleia, Barry Fitzgerald, Elisabeth Risdon, Adele Pearce, Malcolm McTaggart, John Bleifer, William Haade, George Humbert.

Photographer J. Roy Hunt
Musical Score Roy Webb
Film Editor Harry Marker
Time 72 minutes

If "Full Confession" had been made in pre-Nazi Germany the cables from Hollywood would be burning up tempting the director, writer, scripters, and all of the cast, with offers to come to our little village by the sea, particularly the director.

It is that sort of picture; so intelligently conceived, so well written and directed that it should have a very impressive Teutonic name to give it class, or an equal amount of class would be given by such an American name as John Ford. Of course the name that made the picture is John Farrow, and the producer with vision sufficient to back it into the budgets is Robert Sisk. So we do not suppose that the "arty" critics will start talking about Academy Awards.

The picture is something of an experiment. It is so truly Catholic in its conception that even your reviewer and many others will won-

der about its possible reception. But on the other hand, it is so widely human in its premise, and so deeply human in its sincerity, that it will really fit for all of any age and any race.

An interesting, and probably even a significant point, is that while the subject is so truly Catholic, screenplay was written by Leo Birinski, who is, we understand, of the class which Mr. Hitler does not like, but who is a craftsman with the ability to turn out a good job if provided with a good theme.

We suppose it is about time that we tell the story. In a quick and melodramatic opening, Victor McLaglen kills a man. Later, the love of McLaglen, lumbering big brute, for a girl, Sally Eilers, is established. McLaglen goes to jail for a two year sentence on the charge of stealing a fur coat, but events work around to where he is apparently in danger of death and he makes his confession, under all the sacred rules, to Joseph Calleia, the priest in the picture. That presents a problem which is as dramatic as anything one could conceive, because by this time an innocent man has been arrested and is within a few days of execution for the crime which McLaglen committed. The priest knows the truth, but he cannot violate his oath. McLaglen battles because of his love for the girl, but he cannot fight against the thought which the priest has put in his mind that: "I will never say anything, but your own conscience will make you tell the truth."

Farrow's direction is top skill. And it must have been a very happy troupe working, because Joseph Calleia, Victor McLaglen, and Sally Eilers have never delivered to a more happy result. There is a choice and meaty spot for Barry Fitzgerald, and since his current Broadway stage success it would seem rather redundant for us to state that he scores.

Producer Robert Sisk, Director John Farrow, and Scriptor Jerry Cady must have had an encouraging time making this picture. Cady's screenplay is a high mark in the year. As a matter of fact, the whole troupe must have been happy. It should be mentioned that the musical score by Roy Webb, and the editing by Harry Marker all add up to the general result.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: It is straight, heavy drama with a strong religious theme. Not for the marquee in every spot, but a whale of a surprise in many. Boston, San Francisco, and New York subscribers, for example, can clean up if they see it first and then realize its values. Previewed August 18th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Reminiscent in mood and treatment of 'The Informer,' with Victor McLaglen in a similar character, 'Full Confession' is an excellent piece of craftsmanship and a general audience picture of substantial box office promise."

REPORTER: "'Full Confession' is a courageous attempt at drama built around a religious motif."

For the type

of review written about

“When Tomorrow Comes”

John M. Stahl thanks the

men and women of the

press and the cast,

the writers and crew who

are responsible for the

production.

"Nurse Edith Cavell" Powerful But Heavy

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer-Director Herbert Wilcox
 Associate Producer Merrill G. White
 Screenplay Michael Hogan
 Original Capt. Reginald Berkeley
 Star Anna Neagle
 Featured: Edna May Oliver, George Sanders, May Robson, Zasu Pitts, H. B. Warner, Sophie Stewart, Mary Howard, Robert Coote, Martin Kosleck, Gui Ignon, Lionel Royce, Jimmy Butler, Rex Downing, Henry Brandon, Fritz Leiber, Gilbert Emery, Lucien Prival, Richard Deane, Bert Roach, Halliwell Hobbes, Ernst Deutsch, Egon Brecher, Will Kaufman, Gustav Von Seyfertiltz.
 Photographers F. A. Young, Joseph H. August
 Musical Director Anthony Collins
 Film Editor Elmo Williams

"Nurse Edith Cavell" is a powerfully dramatic, expertly produced, documentary picturization of this tragic episode in World War history.

Its entertainment and box office values for the American market must be held in the balance until the public gives its own answer. A version of the subject made along about 1919 or so was considerable of a money maker here. But the nation was in the throes of war propaganda then, and the hideousness of the tragedy was freshly burning in every heart.

The question for today is, just how ready are the bulk of cash customers over the country prepared to go to war with Germany, or,

to put it another way, just how much of an evening's entertainment is there in digging into old wounds?

In strongly anti-Nazi metropolitan sections, particularly along the Eastern sea-board, the picture will have its best chance, principally for propaganda reasons. In Great Britain and the Dominions, its success is unquestioned.

But for the great bulk of American houses the picture requires careful consideration, despite its class and quality of production. This careful thought is largely due to the fact that Anna Neagle has never been established as an American box office factor. Her pictures have been too strongly "Empire."

"Nurse Edith Cavell" is still "Empire"—a fact that cannot be sidetracked even though its actual production was handled in Hollywood. It is still as British as Denham. Its high spots are many, as would be expected from a Herbert Wilcox production; its weaknesses are those to be expected from a British propaganda picture in this current phase of international discussions.

But enough of the box office worries, and the background angles. Let's get to the picture: It is a superbly made presentation of the British nurse in Brussels who gave her aid to the underground escape of war prisoners, and paid for her humanity with her life before a firing squad. It is an illustration of the dumbness of Teutonic military minds.

There is practically no lightness in the picture; it is factual and documentary, portrayed with skill by a hand-picked cast, written and directed with obvious sincerity and equally obvious ability, fine in its settings, photography, and other technical details.

The presentation is unrelenting in its grim atmosphere of a war-shadowed city, of impending and inevitable tragedy. Miss Neagle lives and breathes Edith Cavell. Edna May Oliver is present to fine effect; May Robson, ditto; and some good moments for Zasu Pitts.

The male characters, most of them played for Teutonic menace, are also in good hands.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Powerful drama that word of mouth may help, but unless the madman of Europe creates some new headline diversion, it needs careful consideration. More for the arty theatres than for mass appeal. Previewed August 17th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "One of the most imposing documentary films to come out of Hollywood, 'Nurse Edith Cavell' is intensely moving in its subdued tones, ruthlessly violent in its brutal moments, but invariably engrossing in its methodically mounting dramatic pulsations."

VARIETY: "Reproduction of the historical tragedy known around the world is done with dignity, restraint and close adherence to the documented facts, giving it the factual quality which needed no artificial dramatization. It never descends to cheap melodrama or tricking of the easily excited emotions."

"Hawaiian Nights" Enjoyable Programmer

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Associate Producer Max Golden
 Director Albert S. Rogell
 Screenplay Charles Grayson, Lee Loeb
 Original Story John Grey
 Featured: Johnny Downs, Mary Carlisle, Constance Moore, Eddie Quillan, Etienne Girardot, Thurston Hall, Samuel S. Hinds, Robert Emmett Keane, Willie Fung, Matty Malneck and His Orchestra, Sol Hoopi Hawaiian Band.
 Photographer Stanley Cortez
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Otto Ludwig
 Time 64 minutes

"Hawaiian Nights," without boasting any marquee strength, will neatly fill the bottom spot on many bills, and stand up for a better break in most neighborhood houses.

The principals are youthful and personable, there are Matty Malneck and his orchestra, with some tuneful music to their hands, story and direction are breezy.

The story concerns Johnny Downs, as the son of a chain hotel magnate, destined also for a big business future, but with private ambitions centered on the orchestra he has organized among his father's employees, and of which he is the leader. Eddie Quillan is prominently present as his manager, Mary Carlisle as the orchestra's stellar singer, and Constance Moore for the eventual love interest.

Things start happening when Johnny is ordered to Hawaii to learn hotel running from the ground up at one of his father's hostelrys. Johnny smuggles his orchestra along, and when smitten with romance in the person of Miss Moore, messes things up by becoming—with his tooters—the saviour of her father's hotel, rival of the one in his own family.

Development of the story gives opportunity to balance between the hot stuff of Malneck's and the soft melodies of Sol Hoppi's Hawaiians. Scripting by Charles Grayson and Lee Loeb

takes full advantage of the talents in the youthful cast, and Al Rogell steps it along with veteran skill.

Jack Otterson has handled the art direction with taste, and with an effect of class probably above its budget classification.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A welcome little surprise picture that will be valuable in a lot of spots because of its light airiness and satisfying music, and a bargain buy for many neighborhoods. Previewed August 16th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Universal's 'Hawaiian Nights' is a trim little affair which moves along at a merry clip. The production is a light whimsical comedy, which although lacking in marquee names should give ample satisfaction in the second division for which it is shaped."

VARIETY: "Intriguing tunes linked together by laugh-generating story, the whole backed by able performances and deft direction, build 'Hawaiian Nights' into real entertainment."

The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

. . . The Box Office **DIGEST**

"Irish Luck" Okay In Its Class

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Scott R. Dunlap
 Associate Producer Grant Withers
 Director Howard Bretherton
 Screenplay Mary C. McCarthy
 Based on story by Charles Molyneux Brown
 Featured: Frankie Darro, Dick Purcell, Lillian Elliott, Sheila Darcy, Dennis Moore, Manton Moreland, Howard Mitchell, James Flavin.
 Photographer Harry Neumann
 Film Editor Russell Schoengarth

"Irish Luck" will get a good reception from Monogram contract holders. It rates high in the Frankie Darro series in so far as Frankie's appeal is concerned; it also is paced for fast action, with the twists, turns, and surprises that action fans welcome.

The story gets under way with a bang-bang of action, and then seldom falters, as Frankie a would-be Sherlock Holmes goes through thick and thin and what-have-you to help the police unravel a murder mystery. He has to do all this without much help from the police, and with many a stern word from his mother.

Director Bretherton has stepped his picture along in crisp fashion, while Producer Scott Dunlap aided with a cast that may not include names, but does include troupers. Lillian Elliott delivers neatly in the fattest supporting role as the Irish mother of Frankie, there is a youngster named Manton Moreland who is okay. Shelia Darcy takes over a bit of romantic interest as Frankie's elder sister, while James Flavin is a thorough-going sleek and deceptive heavy.

The picture is the first production effort under the guidance of Grant Withers, and he can feel well satisfied.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Good actioneer, especially for Saturday matinees, with an extra pull where the "Irish" part of the title has a draw. Previewed August 18th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Easily the best Frankie Darro offering to date, Monogram's 'Irish Luck,' sprinkled with just the right amount of Irish humor and background, is certain to prove highly enjoyable to the average Darro fan."

VARIETY: "Monogram has an entertaining picture in 'Irish Luck,' a drama which features Frankie Darro film, first chose of Grant Withers as an associate producer, will garner plenty of laurels in spots for which it is directed."

The Box Office DIGEST



IS THE FASTEST GROWING
PAPER IN THE INDUSTRY

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunua Din	RKO	180
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	161
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	137
Beau Geste	PAR	136
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	129
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	127
Starcoach	UA	126
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	125
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
In Name Only	RKO	122
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	121
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Four Feathers	UA	121
Bachelor Mother	RKO	120
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Love Affair	RKO	118
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Second Fiddle	FOX	115
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	112
Midnight	PAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Honolulu	MGM	107
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Falls in	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91
They Shall Have Music	UA	91
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
The Mikado	UNIV	81
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128
Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Maisie	MGM	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hotel For Women	FOX	95
On Borrowed Time	MGM	92
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Frontier Marshal	FOX	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokono	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Winter Carnival	UA	80
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	80
Coast Guard	COL	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the BossCOL..... 81 %

Whispering Enemies	COL.....	75
Devil's Island	WAR.....	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR.....	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX.....	77
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX.....	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR.....	76
Inside Story	FOX.....	75
Pacific Liner	RKO.....	75
It Could Happen To You	FOX.....	74
Hell's Kitchen	WAR.....	74
Blondie Takes A Vacation	COL.....	73
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV.....	73
Boy Slaves	RKO.....	73
Disbarred	PAR.....	73
Missing Daughters	COL.....	73
King of Chinatown	PAR.....	72
Society Lawyer	MGM.....	72
Persons in Hiding	PAR.....	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV.....	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX.....	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO.....	72
Island of Lost Men	PAR.....	72
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR.....	71
Prates of the Skies	UNIV.....	71
Sorority House	RKO.....	71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR.....	71
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV.....	71
The Girl and the Gambler	RKO.....	71
Quick Millions	FOX.....	71
Unexpected Father	UNIV.....	70
Chasing Danger	FOX.....	70
Family Next Door	UNIV.....	70
Unmarried	PAR.....	70
News Is Made at Night	FOX.....	70
Million Dollar Legs	PAR.....	70
Romance of the Redwoods	COL.....	70
Ex-Champ	UNIV.....	70
Winner Take All	FOX.....	70
Big Town Czar	UNIV.....	70
On Trial	WAR.....	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR.....	70
Ambush	PAR.....	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO.....	70
Torchy, Fire Mayor	WAR.....	70
The Girl From Mexico	RKO.....	70
Within the Law	MGM.....	70
Grand Jury Secrets	PAR.....	70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR.....	70
Some Like It Hot	PAR.....	69
The Kid From Texas	MGM.....	69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Politc	PAR.....	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX.....	69
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO.....	68
A Woman in the Judge	COL.....	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR.....	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX.....	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR.....	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO.....	68
Fixer Dugan	RKO.....	68
The Saint in London	RKO.....	68
For Love or Money	UNIV.....	68
Miracles For Sale	MGM.....	68
Blind Alley	COL.....	67
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL.....	67
Forgotten Woman	UNIV.....	66
Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation	FOX.....	66
Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX.....	66
Code of the Streets	UNIV.....	66
Beauty for the Askins	RKO.....	66
Sudden Money	PAR.....	66
They Asked For It	UNIV.....	66
The Ware Case	GB.....	66
Cowboy Quarterback	WAR.....	66
Night Work	PAR.....	66
Boy Trouble	PAR.....	66
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM.....	65
Secret Service of the Air	WAR.....	65
6,000 Enemies	MGM.....	65
Tell No Tales	MGM.....	65
Playing With Dynamite	WAR.....	65
This Man Is News	PAR.....	64
They All Come Out	MGM.....	64
Exile Express	GN.....	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR.....	63
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX.....	58
Career	RKO.....	53

The Girl Downstairs	MGM.....	79
Never Say Die	PAR.....	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR.....	77
Prison Without Bars	UA.....	77
Let Us Live	COL.....	77
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX.....	76
I Stole A Million	UNIV.....	76
The Lady Vanishes	FOX.....	75
The Gorilla	FOX.....	75
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR.....	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO.....	74
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV.....	74
Bridal Suite	MGM.....	72
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX.....	72
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR.....	72
Boy Friend	FOX.....	72
Our Leading Citizen	PAR.....	72
The Lady and the Mob	COL.....	71
Back Door To Heaven	PAR.....	70
King of the Turf	UA.....	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR.....	70
Clouds Over Europe	COL.....	70
Stronger Than Desire	MGM.....	70
Way Down South	RKO.....	68
Hotel Imperial	PAR.....	66
Zenobia	UA.....	66
Grace Allen Murder Case	PAR.....	64
Spirit of Culver	UNIV.....	63
The Flying Irishman	RKO.....	63
Smiling Along	FOX.....	63
Climbing High	GB.....	63
Women in the Wind	WAR.....	62
Stolen Life	PAR.....	61

Whispering Enemies	COL.....	75
Homicide Bureau	COL.....	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO.....	71
Woman Doctor	REP.....	71
North of Shanghai	COL.....	71
Parents on Trial	COL.....	70
She Married A Cop	REP.....	70
Hidden Power	COL.....	70
The Sunset Murder Case	GN.....	70
Pride of the Navy	REP.....	70
Tough Kid	MONO.....	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP.....	70
Trapped in the Sky	COL.....	70
Orphan in the Street	REP.....	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO.....	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP.....	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV.....	69
Corvick's Code	MONO.....	69
Streets of New York	MONO.....	68
Inside Information	UNIV.....	68
I Was A Convict	REP.....	68
Navy Secrets	MONO.....	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP.....	68
Walf Call	MONO.....	68
Mickey the Kid	REP.....	68
Should Husbands Work	REP.....	68
Behind Prison Gates	COL.....	67
House of Fear	UNIV.....	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP.....	67
Long Shot	GN.....	67
Forged Passport	REP.....	66
First Offenders	COL.....	66
Rookie Cop	RKO.....	66
Wanted by Scotland Yard	MONO.....	66
Waterfront	WAR.....	66
The Zero Hour	REP.....	65
Outside These Walls	COL.....	65
S O S Tidal Wave	REP.....	65
Mr. Wong in Chinatown	MONO.....	65
Smuggled Cargo	REP.....	65
Mystery Plane	MONO.....	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL.....	64
Code of the Secret Service	WAR.....	64
Should A Girl Marry-	MONO.....	64
Street of Missing Men	REP.....	63
Star Reporter	MONO.....	63
Undercover Agent	MONO.....	63
The Man Who Dared	WAR.....	63
Panama Lady	RKO.....	62
Panama Patrol	GN.....	62
Boy's Reformatory	MONO.....	61

Some Like It Hot	PAR.....	69
The Kid From Texas	MGM.....	69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Politc	PAR.....	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX.....	69
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO.....	68
A Woman in the Judge	COL.....	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR.....	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX.....	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR.....	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO.....	68
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Boy Trouble	PAR.....	66
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6,000 Enemies	MGM.....	65
Tell No Tales	MGM.....	65
Playing With Dynamite	WAR.....	65
This Man Is News	PAR.....	64
They All Come Out	MGM.....	64
Exile Express	GN.....	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR.....	63
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX.....	58
Career	RKO.....	53

Sorry . . .

Due to the unfortunate illness of CAROLE LOMBARD, we regret our inability to deliver "VIGIL IN THE NIGHT" to Exhibitors in October, as we had planned.

We Are Happy

however, to announce that MISS LOMBARD is recovering swiftly; that production will be resumed soon; and that "VIGIL IN THE NIGHT" will be delivered at the earliest possible date.

And to Carole . . .

a speedy recovery . . . and hurry back HOME . .

RKO RADIO PICTURES

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, Number 1

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"WIZARD OF OZ" TOPS WEEK AT BOX OFFICES

SEE PAGE 5

THE FIELD MEN ARE COVERING MID-WEST LIKE A BLANKET

SEE PAGE 6

HIGHLIGHTER AND EDITOR WORRY ABOUT WAR PROBLEMS

SEE PAGE 4

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Only
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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

★ *The Box Office*
"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **M-G-M** Wins With
"THE WIZARD OF OZ"—151%



Producer
MERVYN LeROY



Director
VICTOR FLEMING

Screenplay
FLORENCE RYERSON
EDGAR ALLAN WOOLF

Adaptation
NOEL LANGLEY

From Book by
L. FRANK BAUM



JUDY GARLAND

Photographer
HAROLD ROSSON, A.S.C.

Technicolor Director
NATALIE KALMUS

Recording Director
DOUGLAS SHEARER

Film Editor
BLANCHE SEWELL



JACK HALEY



FRANK MORGAN



BILLIE BURKE



RAY BOLGER

FACE THE FACTS!

Editorial Thoughts Reported by ROBERT E. WELSH

The Digest's field reports make it increasingly clear that this is one of the slowest selling seasons on record. The circuits are chiselling; the independents are stalling.

All of which is unfortunate.

The American picture industry, which essentially means the entire motion picture industry, never faced a more crucial season.

World markets are disappearing, the domestic market was never more capricious. And the foundation of any industry is its market value in dollars and cents, whether you are selling shoelaces, automobiles, or motion pictures.

A man can make a diamond studded mouse-trap and expect to come out with a profit because somewhere there must be a single someone ready to buy a diamond studded mouse-trap. But he cannot go confidently into the business of mass producing mouse-traps unless there is some stability between the factory and the retailer.

* * *

It might not be amiss to attempt a cool glance at the reasons for the slow selling as this season approaches, and the possible consequences of such a condition.

First of all, there is a reason beyond the control, apparently, of any human—either economic conditions and the apathy of the public appetite for pictures made the past season a pretty tough one for many exhibitors.

Yet, last season saw many good attractions, and a few top ones overcame both depression and apathy.

The second reason that can be advanced for a slow selling season is that the agitation over the proposed new Code, and the discussions and near enactment of the Neely Bill, had too many exhibitors waiting around for "pennies from heaven."

The third reason is that the factories—the producers—faced with a foreign market diminishing with terrific astringency, spurred by a constantly increasing cost race, have been forced to unload on sales departments the problem of getting more money from domestic exhibitors.

* * *

The last reason mentioned may, in final analysis, be the most important. It includes the others.

The exhibitor, his books and memory telling him how tough it is to get by these days, is faced—as in most seasons since the memory of man—with contract arrangements which strike him as going even stronger than ever.

He rebels, if possible, or stalls at any rate.

The distributor has to get the money, or else—

The producer will tell him: "I can't give you big million dollar pictures if you can't sell them at million dollar prices."

It is the well known "vicious circle."

And it leaves everybody unhappy.

* * *

Your editor can give many of the usual reasons for the condition. He can say: "It is the buying and selling season, and any buyer naturally—in any business—buys as closely as he can, and finds as many reasons as he can for his actions." We can reverse the sentence and apply it to the film distributors.

But we all face one problem which cannot be answered off-hand:

The cost of producing real BIG picture attractions has increased to such a point—with diminishing markets—that producers are pretty well out on the end of a rope.

Your editor can add the usual line to that: "There are too many Hollywoodians drawing four figure salaries who do not deserve them." But it does not answer the problem. Because the business of creating entertainment has always been that way. Genius has starved in garrets, while fawners have lived at the King's court. It is always that way, whether you are a poet, a minstrel, or an undiscovered Shakespeare.

The fact remains: Picture costs, for big time attractions, are at the frantic point. Any top producer in Hollywood today is not satisfied with one star, he crams all the stars he can into a cast; he can't afford to take a chance on one script, he must get all the brains and alleged brains he can into the script before shooting starts;

(Continued on Page 17)

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Distributor Name, and Releases. Lists 12 distributors including United Artists, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, RKO-Radio, Paramount, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont-British.

THE HIGHLIGHTER WORRIES ABOUT WAR; THEN TREMBLES OVER POSSIBLE STRIKES

As The Highlighter goes to press it seems rather presumptuous of him to discuss motion picture affairs with the War of Nerves going on. . . . He even has to consider that it may be a war with more than nerves concerned before the printer gets through with the job. . . . But there are important picture considerations. . . . Let's look at it this way: For more than a year the only important foreign market for American pictures has consisted of the British market. . . . Some of our biggest successes—speaking in headline phrases—have actually made more money in England than they have in the States. . . . In fact, and this is fact, it has been the encouragement of the British market's healthy returns that has given the courage to many producers to go to the million mark and over on quite a number of subjects. . . . So, a question arises. . . . What knifing will producers be forced to do in coming weeks—war or no war, since production schedules must be kept up—because of the present conditions? . . . That question brings on another. . . . If domestic exhibitors are complaining that they haven't made money for a couple of seasons—that's what they say—what will they do with pictures on which the producers have shaved off a half million or so with the crisp determination that you use when clipping the end off a cigar? . . . We are in for some thoughtful days, my hearties.

Things That Do Not Help The Picture Business

Half of the picture industry's troubles are created by the business itself. . . . For example, it is not good for the picture business to have even national—and international—news service conveying the news that one Harry Bridges, under a deportation trial by the AMERICAN GOVERNMENT admit that he was a social pal of three Hollywood stars. . . . The names mentioned are those of Robert Montgomery, Lionel Stander, and Fredric March. . . . Bridges may be innocent or guilty, the picture players likewise of their alleged association, but the items go out over the wires to all corners of the earth, and the people concerned fail to realize that in the end they are, with or without ability, only puppets on whom the livelihood of many hundreds of thousands depend. . . . It could be stated as an axiom that any time an actor desires to enter ideologies he should quit acting. . . . Nor does it help the picture business to have such a widely read column as that of Louella Parsons talking of the Hopkins-Litvak divorce as though it was just another afternoon on the badminton court. . . . This just happens to be a concrete example because it is the latest. . . . But it, and more ridiculous happenings, just go to add up to that total which reads: "Things That Do Not Help The Picture Business." . . . And make headaches for the exhibitor whose customers still do not believe in Communism, in the one case, and, in the other, do still believe in marriage.

2 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. Bachelor Mother	RKO	120	123
2. Blind Alley	COL	67	65

Let's Get Around To The News of the Week

Truth to tell, there wasn't much news. . . . We can start with the sneak-previews, however, and report to exhibitors that the town is hot on "The Rains Came," and "Hollywood Cavalcade," the latter in Technicolor. . . . The "sneakers" who travel twenty-five miles or so to capture these early showings report that Darryl Zanuck has hit the bell with a resounding ring on both pictures. . . . The same insiders report that the chief trouble with "Gone With The Wind" right now is getting it down to length that can be shown in a single evening at the theater. . . . Maybe it will be "Gone With The Wind" that eventually kills the double bill evil. . . . And, just in passing, did you read that crack in last week's Collier's in which Paulette Goddard is credited with saying, "David Selznick is down to his last Whitney." . . . The news comes that Doctor A. H. Giannini has joined the board of directors on Sol Lesser's new United Artists enterprise—productions by Ernst Lubitsch. . . . Off-hand trade paper readers frequently get the wrong impression from headlines on such news as this. . . . Because of his banking background, it appears to them that the great Giannini name is involved closely with each deal. . . . It begins to look, from this viewpoint, as though the Doctor had his hand and money in a half dozen pies. . . . Truth is, if our close checking of some twenty years of picture industry evolutions is correct, the Doctor is usually the "patsy" who lends his integrity and his sincerity to organizations that appreciate having some of those qualities prominent in their set-ups. . . . And he only loans the arbitrator quality he possesses to organizations in which he has confidence. . . . Which builds up to a great picture: We would feel pretty proud to reach the point after so many years in an industry where people would say, "Let's get The Highlighter in to settle our arguments because we can TRUST him."

Wars Are Easy When Compared To Strikes

As we go closer and closer to press time it is increasingly difficult to decide whether the

6 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. The Lady of the Tropics	MGM	129	119
2. They Shall Have Music	UA	91	86
3. Mickey The Kid	REP	68	65
4. Night Work	PAR	66	61
5. This Man Is News	PAR	65	52

most important event on the world's horizon is a possible World War, or the imminent strike of motion picture actors next week. . . . As one of those good-natured side line coaches you can look us over and know that we would love to be the wise chap who gave the best editorial advice on the situation. . . . But it is all so silly. . . . There are enough people out of work, both IATSE technicians and handsome actors, that we should all be working together for the common cause of putting everybody to work. . . . That wouldn't be a bad slogan, would it: "Put everybody to work." . . . And the picture business has plenty of work for everybody—so why do we kick the gong around with such abandon, and with no results? . . . Everybody will admit that the IATSE or some such organization is necessary to protect the technicians in this industry; everybody else will admit that actors are not laborers in the union sense of the word. . . . If they became so in recent years, they are paying the penalty now. . . . They can strike until Vesuvius freezes over, and the IATSE can lick them overnight by calling out one local in a hundred key cities. . . . Actors have never been paid for not working. . . . And if theaters are shut down because there is no union man to turn the projection machine, who should bother making pictures?

Rounding The Studio Corners At a Fast Pace

There's so darn much strike and Government trust suit news this week that it is pretty difficult for The Highlighter to remember that a number of items of more interest to the picture business are floating around. . . . James Roosevelt has a job trying to find what is wrong with Hollywood. . . . Did I hear you laugh? . . . The Government is trying to make criminals out of anybody and everybody with a bank account. . . . When they get through the 1940 elections will be over. . . . And so it goes. . . . About September 7th the Dies Committee is due for a junket to Hollywood. . . . It will be pretty tough on the investigators if a World War has started, and they can't get a line on the front page. . . . On the other hand, suppose there is no World War, and they do get the headlines. . . . What they are going to do to Hollywood, true or not, is going to be just too bad.

Shucks, There Is Lots of Good News Around Town

The Highlighter could mention the enthusiasm that is burning up that Universal lot where they have just jacked up next year's budget by a million or so. . . . "Three million," the papers said. . . . But if it is only two thirds of that amount Nate Blumberg deserves some sort of pat on the back for what he is doing to that organization. . . . Bill Rodgers—W. F.

(Continued on Page 17)

"WIZARD OF OZ" OFF TO SENSATIONAL START; BUSINESS IN GENERAL SHOWS IMPROVEMENT

MGM—2 New Releases

Leo the Lion roars good and loud this week with a big new box office hit, Mervyn LeRoy's fantasy production, "THE WIZARD OF OZ." In the past week "THE WIZARD" has broken in some thirty key city first run situations and in many instances has been held over while in other cities it has been moved to other houses for extended runs. On its first bookings it is averaging approximately 50% above normal business. While this is not quite as strong as we had estimated, still the box office is being held back from bigger grosses because of the many children admissions which in most cases are around 15c as against the average adult admission which generally varies from 30c to 65c on first run houses. However, the fact that this picture is averaging 150% indicates that there are also a large number of adults who are attending "THE WIZARD OF OZ" with their children as also was the case with "Snow White."

"THE WIZARD OF OZ" has had a splendid exploitation campaign and with its musical score of five big song hits continually being plugged over the radio on coast-wide hookups, it is bound to gather momentum as it goes along and word of mouth is very good on this one. So this picture will probably climb to a higher percentage when it hits the nabes and if the war doesn't break out it should turn in very outstanding foreign grosses for the same reason that "Snow White" did. Then again we must also remember that there were over ten million copies of the late Frank Baum's Oz books sold internationally.

Production credit for "OZ" goes to Mervyn LeRoy, who conceived the idea and sold MGM the idea on making the picture. Mr. LeRoy gets full production credit with Victor Fleming responsible for the fine direction. Bobby Connolly handled the musical numbers and Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf wrote this very unique screenplay. Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg come in for considerable praise for their outstanding musical numbers particularly "Over The Rainbow," which is now one of the nation's top tunes.

Judy Garland is starred as Dorothy, Frank Morgan as the Wizard, Jack Haley, Ray Bolger and Bert Lahr appearing as the tin man, the scarecrow and the cowardly lion. Billie Burke, Margaret Hamilton, and Charley Grapewin head the big cast of featured players which includes the famous Singer Midgets.

MGM's second release this week is a much better than average programmer, "THESE GLAMOUR GIRLS," which is doing satisfactorily at an 83% average. This one is the latest Lew Ayres starring vehicle for MGM and the glamour girls in particular are Lana Turner, Jane Bryan, Anita

Of Eight New Releases In The Past Week, Two Ran Over 100%, Two Came Through Okay, and Four Were Rather Weak.



Louise, Marsha Hunt, Ann Rutherford, and Mary Beth Hughes—quite a bevy. Tom Brown, Richard Carlson and Ernest Truex complete the cast of featured players. "THESE GLAMOUR GIRLS" was produced by Sam Zimbalist and directed by S. Sylvan Simon.

WARNERS—2 New Releases

Warners-First National also have two new releases this week, one a new Bette Davis triumph, while the second is also a very strong attraction.

Bette Davis' latest starring picture, "THE OLD MAID," although it has only opened in two spots, is doing considerably above what we had estimated as on its first bookings it is holding around 125%. As this one is very much a woman's picture with little appeal for the men we are not of the opinion that it will maintain its present high batting average of 125%.

Playing opposite Miss Davis is Miriam Hopkins throughout the entire picture, while George Brent is killed off in the second reel. Those who like a heavy melodrama will probably go for "THE OLD MAID," but it should be booked with a much lighter vehicle, preferably a comedy or a musical.

Other featured players include: Donald Crisp, Jane Bryan, Louise Fazenda and James Stephenson. Henry Blanke produced under Hal Wallis' supervision with Edmund Goulding, who was also responsible for "Dark Victory" handling the direction. Casey Robinson wrote the screenplay from Zoe Akins successful stage-play of the same name.

Warner Brothers' second release this week is a new Dead End Kid picture, "ANGELS WASH THEIR FACES," 86%, and incidentally is much better than their most recent offerings, as the box office figures indicate. Of course this one also has the addition of Ann "Oomph" Sheridan, whose name now means plenty on any marquee after the big publicity breaks that Charles Einfeld and Bob Taplinger have been throwing her way.

The concensus of opinion from exhibitors is that the public is tiring of so many Dead

End Kid pictures and consequently this will be their last appearance for Warner Brothers, as their contracts have been terminated.

Supporting the kids and Miss Sheridan is a good strong cast including Ronald Reagan, Henry O'Neill, Bonita Granville, Frankie Thomas and Eduardo Cianelli.

Max Siegel produced under Hal Wallis supervision and Ray Enright directed.

RKO—2 Releases

RKO-Radio has two programmers from the Lee Marcus unit, one fairly good and one fairly weak. "THE SPELLBINDER," which is the latest in the Lee Tracy series, is getting by fairly well at a 76% average and will fit in satisfactorily on the average double bill. Tracy, who again appears as the fast talking lawyer, is supported by Barbara Read and Patric Knowles. Cliff Reid supervised and Jack Hively directed.

RKO's second release, "CONSPIRACY," 67%, is a rather weak programmer almost entirely lacking in marquee names. Allan Lane and Linda Hayes are co-featured, if that means anything. It probably means that this one will have to be doubled with a much stronger attraction. Cliff Reid also supervised this one and Lew Landers directed.

COLUMBIA—1 Release

Columbia Pictures has one new release this week, a fair programmer entitled "THE MAN THEY COULD NOT HANG," 86%. This one stars Boris Karloff, supported by Roger Pryor and Robert Wilcox. This one will probably get by where mystery, melodrama and action pictures are profitable.

"THE MAN THEY COULD NOT HANG" was produced by the Irving Briskin unit under Wally McDonald's supervision and directed by Nick Grinde.

MONOGRAM—1 Release

Monogram's new release this week is another Movita picture entitled "THE GIRL FROM RIO," which is doing rather poorly at a 61% average.

After Movita appeared as a native girl with Clark Gable in "Mutiny on the Bounty," the critics predicted a bright future for her and she was placed on a contract by Monogram where she has been starred the last two years in various program pictures. However, not being backed by a sufficient publicity and ad campaign Movita's name has failed to mean very much on the average marquee and we understand that this will be the last picture she will make for that company. The young senorita is a good starring possibility—but stars or featured players with any studios are valueless without sufficient publicity campaigns to insure public interest. This E. B. Derr production was supervised by Jerrold Brandt with Lambert Hillyer directing.

8 New Releases Not In The Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. Wizard of Oz	MGM	151	160
2. The Old Maid	WAR	126	115
3. Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	86	85
4. These Glamour Girls	MGM	83	80
5. The Spellbinder	RKO	76	75
6. The Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	68	70
7. Conspiracy	RKO	67	65
8. The Girl From Rio	MONO	61	65

FIELD MEN FIND SELLING SEASON SLOW IN MOST OF MIDWESTERN SECTIONS



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Cincinnati, Ohio. — Notwithstanding statements to the contrary by the distributors, there has been very little film sold so far, outside of those accounts handled by the Branch and District Managers. The small and independent theatres are just not going for the new contracts. One company and a big one, has sold but 5 contracts outside of the chains. And they have several salesmen working. Their deal is too tough. They are standing firm. So are the independents. The newly organized Co-operative with nearly 100 theatres has only signed for members that are up against it for early releases. Daily conferences are on, and daily

turn downs. The big argument seems to be over the unusual number of pictures all majors are allocating in the highest two brackets. An independent using four major products would have to have 72 Sundays in a year to meet their demands for preferred playing time. All except Metro are demanding both preferred playing time and a guarantee equal to last year's top, together with more pictures in these groups. With all except Metro, it's to hell with the Code. We have to get in contracts, quoth the Forgotten Men, or we will lose our jobs. Film salesmen frankly admit the deals are pretty rough, but claim that they are carrying out direct instructions from their home offices. This your correspondent is sure is correct, as we have seen some of the letters and are they cruel toward the proposition! Looks like most of the majors looked for one more year, and then curtains. They want it all now. If increases in Fords and Chevrolet prices had kept apace with film rentals in the past five years, we would be paying a couple of thousand dollars for them at the factory.

Lancaster, Ohio.—This city of

Lancaster has been the promised land for the film distributors for many years, and this year is no exception, except that Mr. Shay finally got his hands on one house. Film rentals frequently mount to 50%, in order for one house to stay open. But how this can go on, is the question Harry Abrams asks. Harry is a fine showman. He operates a 1000 seater. It is ten years old and has just about made the grade. He had a lot of good product for years, but the smaller houses bid it up beyond prices he could live under. Today he has Fox and United Artists as the base of his program.

"My house is ten years old, and needs a lot of remodeling," he stated, "but how on earth can one do it without borrowing money. The film companies will not allow one to make enough to put away one penny for repairs. Nothing will even be discussed about depreciation, in figuring film rentals. We need new booth equipment. It needs an entire remodeling. The chains can do it. They just tell the distributor what the overhead and other proper charges are, and the film companies acquiesce.

Something must be done to correct this situation. I hope it will not be necessary for that kindly old man with the long grey beard, Uncle Samuel, to take a hand in this business. Seems that the big boys in production and distribution have grown so rich and fat that they cannot see the tide of Government intervention, that is about to sweep over us. Every year it is 'more pictures at the top rental.' We all know and have known a long time that it is not possible to make ever-increasing numbers of top box office attractions. It is these hoped-for pictures, that never materialize that are sinking us. It may take the Neely Bill to stop this Hitlerism march against us. There is plenty and more for all of us, if the distributors would but listen to reason."

Mr. Abrams is a good showman. He gets all there is out of a picture. He is conservative in administration, and as energetic and versatile as a Harry Brand in exploitation. However, he feels mighty sad over the prospects, of his little city being subdued by the chains. Shay is after them and they know it.

"THE CODE IS DEAD"

Indianapolis, Ind.—"The CODE is dead," and all the money and time spent on trying to put over this problem child on the industry is just so much water over the dam.

The following wire was received by the Associated Theatre Owners of Indiana from their headquarters in Washington: "Dept. of Justice today disapproved proposed code saying, 'It's adoption can only lead to combined and possibly additional prosecution.' One wonders why the distributors with their master legal minds could not have let the Dept. of Justice see their plans before they went to all this trouble. We want to correct some of the wild statements of some of the so-called exhibitor polls that are appearing in some of our trade papers. Here is a partial result from a questionnaire sent out by Don Rossiter, executive secretary of the local Indiana exhibitors association:

BALLOT

Are you in favor of the proposed Fair Trade Practice Code?

YES 11 NO 24

Are you in accord with Allied's rejection of the Code?

YES 28 NO 65

Do you agree with the ATOI Board in approving Allied's rejection of the Code?

YES 26 NO 5

Are you in favor of the passage of the Neely Bill?

YES 23 NO 12

Additional Comments: PLEASE DO NOT SIGN THIS CARD.

The above was the result of only two days replies. And we saw them with our own eyes and can vouch for their authenticity.

Believe it or not—one of the major distributor-managers in Chicago was compelled to join the janitors' union. That's one way to take care of your union troubles in the back room.

While in Detroit we noticed on contract after contract that the local exchanges were taking care of their customers on percentage bookings, that were also playing a double feature flat rental, other than their own, by allowing the rental price on the extra feature to be charged off as a house expense and deducted from the net. This was by no means an excep-

tional case but a general practice. Now in Indiana, MGM has a plan that is purely local and fair and equitable on all their percentage bookings. They allow a five percent reduction in their take where the customer plays double features on their percentage dates. This practice is not so prevalent as the Detroit situations, but never the less is written in the contracts of a great many independent theatre owners.

Charleston, W. Va.—Hells a poppin down here in the land of Senator Neely and the Hatfield Clan. This section of the United States always gives the rest of the country headlines, and it looks now like the West Virginia exhibitors, who will assemble at White Sulphur Springs the 30th and 31st of August will keep up the State's reputation. They have all the problems confronting the theatres of America up for discussion. Things left undone by the Allied convention in Minneapolis will be up for further action. New problems that the distributors claim the Code would eliminate, will find a place



HARRY NICHOLS
Field Representative

on the program. The Neely Bill will get a new birth of enthusiastic support. In fact it is hoped that the fiery Senator from Charleston will be among them. We will hold our fire for next week's issue. We will be there, and assure you in advance that there will be some of the most interesting reading yet emanating from any exhibitor's convention, come out of this one. Men like "Date" Meadows, "Tim" Kears, Claud Robinson, George Zeppos, "Gene" Custer, the Hyman brothers and a score more, who

(Continued on Page 12)



Roy Del Ruth

DIRECTED



“THE STAR MAKER”

FOR PARAMOUNT



NEXT RELEASE

“HERE I AM A STRANGER

20th CENTURY-FOX



"The Women" Loaded With Box Office

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 130%)

Producer Hunt Stromberg
Director George Cukor
From the play by Clare Boothe
Screenplay Anita Loos, June Murfin
Stars: Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell.
Featured: Paulette Goddard, Phyllis Povah, Joan Fontaine, Virginia Weidler, Lucile Watson, Florence Nash, Muriel Hutchison, Esther Dale, Ann Morriss, Ruth Hussey, Dennie Moore, Mary Cecil, Mary Beth Hughes, Virginia Grey, Marjorie Main, Cora Witherspoon, Hedda Hopper.
Photography: Oliver Marsh, Joseph Ruttenberg
Art Direction: Cedric Gibbons; Associate, Wade Rubottom.
Musical Score Edward Ward, David Snell
Film Editor Robert J. Kern
Time 134 minutes

Hunt Stromberg has taken the Broadway stage hit, "The Women," and delivered to the screen a great big prize package of showmanship. Directed with consummate skill by George Cukor, played by an all-feminine cast of trouping scene-stealers, scripted for the screen with adroit intelligence, it adds up to one of the pictures of the year.

It is usually something of a left-handed compliment to say that a picture is a "woman's picture." But in the case of "The Women" it is the phrase that must be used, and can be used with full-throated enthusiasm. Because, being such a good "woman's picture" it becomes a corking man's picture. Or, to put it in plain talk, a picture for all above the age of twenty-one.

Before we begin to discuss story or performances, we feel that first attention should be paid to the showmanship angles crammed into the picture. What might have been a hoity-toity version of an ultra-ultra Broadway piece of sophistication has evolved in the hands of Stromberg, Cukor, et al, into something of a near miracle. On the one hand, the picture retains the sophistication of the play; on the other, story values suddenly take hold with plain, downright, mass heart interest.

This was quite a job for the producers. There are lines over which a puritan might ponder, but there is fundamentally a mass appeal argument against divorce. The ladies of the piece go in and out of scenes with their wearables and unmentionables as obvious as a night in a Turkish bath, but there is never any feeling that the producers are reaching for anything. So, the spice is present, without the bitter taste. That makes a pretty good

"Fighting Gringo" Below Par For O'Brien

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 65%)

Producer Bert Gilroy
Director David Howard
Story and Screenplay Oliver Drake
Star George O'Brien
Featured: Lupita Tovar, Lucio Villegas, William Royle, Glenn Strange, Slim Whitaker, LeRoy Mason, Mary Field, Bill Cody, Sr., Cactus Mack, Chris-Pin Martin.
Photographer Harry Wild
Musical Director Roy Webb
Film Editor Frederic Knudtson
Time 59 minutes

show combination for the average exhibitor, in any town or any clime.

By now we should get around to talking about the performances. They are screen highlights that combine for a job to be talked about for many moons. Imagine Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford and Rosalind Russell, great troupers, all lined up against each other—but playing so that you should say "all on their toes."

That's enough to start you off. But then add to the trio the Stromberg-Cukor hands at work on as great a supporting cast as the screen has seen—and all she-male. For bits of broad comedy there is Mary Boland, for sophisticated awareness Paulette Goddard, for—oh, shucks—look at the balance of that cast, and then just decide that the players have had the opportunities of their lives.

For Hollywood preview audiences, and possibly for New York, the Rosalind Russell part steals the picture. She is just one of those two legged cats with an uncanny ability for making trouble. For general audiences, after the picture leaves the key runs, Norma Shearer will put over the punch. She is the wife who succumbs to a Reno urge because of her "pride," but who deep down never stops loving her man, and who returns to him at the end. For those of the upper crust and the ordinary crust, there is a corking interpretation of "the other woman" by Joan Crawford.

Miss Crawford has received some bad breaks in recent casting assignments. She took a thankless part—from the standpoint of sympathy—in "The Women," and turns it into one of her best screen performances.

We have saved for last mention, the youngster who will have a lot to do with putting the picture over the hill from success in sophisticated spots, to general appeal. Little Virginia Weidler got the assignment as the child of a divorce stricken home, and how she does come through with it.

George O'Brien isn't going any particular place, but at least it can be said that he is standing still, and not slipping back, as long as they stick to formula and trick it up with enough of the riding, tooting, shooting stuff.

"The Fighting Gringo" is true to formula, capably directed by David Howard, and can rate as satisfactory Saturday matinee material, without offering anything above the average.

It is version C of the western recipe, with George O'Brien as the Robin Hood cutting a wide and reckless swathe on behalf of the poor

Perhaps we should tell you something of the story. Truth to tell, it is not so much a story as an excursion behind the scenes with a group of women who represent about every type that might be found among women. We have the faithful wife, the catty gossip, the inane beauties, the motherly advisors, the elderly high-steppers, the conniving "other women." There are probably more types we have neglected to mention.

But they are all there. And they all take their hair down in the action and the dialogue, because they do not know we are watching them. Holding all this together as a story line is the slender thread of Norma Shearer's loss of her husband, never seen on the screen, her successful trip to Reno, climaxed by her regaining of the unseen hubby.

Stromberg has covered his possibly slow moments with showmanship. There is a Technicolor sequence displaying latest fashions, and quite a bit of pulchritude, that may or may not have anything to do with the story, but which has plenty of eye-filling value. It is likewise with all other elements—music, recording, art direction, and gowning—they are put together with a showman's hand.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Not for the juvenile days, but a knockout for any and all other days. Give it exploitation that combines the sexy angle with the acceptable slant on divorce. Previewed August 31st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has a top hit in "The Women." It is a picture the women will flock to see and remain to laugh and cry with. The men will come to laugh at it—and will be honestly and deeply affected by its poignancy and convulsed by its barbed humor."

VARIETY: "Elaborating on the stage play without disturbing its fundamentals and changing it only to encompass the widest potential film audience, 'The Women' has all the elements of a smash success."

or oppressed, while making the dastardly villains pay off.

The girl is Lupita Tovar, with LeRoy Mason in the top menace role. Of course they are fighting over a ranch owned by the girl's father. We won't tell you which side wins. Maybe you can guess.

Director Howard and the scripters have concentrated on action, and the safe and sure elements for the kids, not worrying particularly about the smoothness of the story line.

CURRENT REVIEWS

		We Est.
1. The Women	MGM	130
2. The Under-Pup	UNIV	95
3. Death of a Champion	PAR	75
4. Stop, Look and Love	FOX	70
5. Conspiracy	RKO	70
6. Fighting Gringo	RKO	65



PEYTT



Elsa says:

"Nice thing, love! Too bad so many people rush around so fast they leave it behind!"



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 Elsa Maxwell springboards your
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 JUNE GALE · KATHARINE ALDRIDGE · ALAN DINEHART · SIDNEY BLACKMER

Directed by GREGORY RATOFF
 Associate Producer Roymand Griffith · Screen Play by Kathryn Scala
 and Dorrell Wore · Based on a story by Elsa Maxwell and Kathryn Scala
 Song "Whistle A Little Old Melody" by Elsa Maxwell
 A 20th Century-Fox Picture · DARRYL F ZANUCK in Charge of Production
 A Cosmopolitan Production.



"Under-Pup" An Audience 'Natural'

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Producer Joe Pasternak
 Director Richard Wallace
 Screenplay Grover Jones
 Original I. A. R. Wylie
 Star Gloria Jean
 Featured: Robert Cummings, Nan Grey, C. Aubrey Smith, Beulah Bondi, Virginia Weidler, Margaret Lindsay, Raymond Walburn, Ann Gillis, Paul Cavanagh, Billy Gilbert, Kenneth Brown, Bill Lenhart, Frank Jenks, Shirley Mills, Samuel S. Hinds, Ernest Truex, Doris Lloyd Dickie Moore.
 Photographer Hal Mohr
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Film Editor Frank Gross
 Time 87 minutes

Joe Pasternak keeps his batting average at 1000; Universal acquires a new star; and Richard Wallace turns in a grand piece of entertainment.

That about sums up "The Under-Pup." Its box office value must, of course, depend on word of mouth until the public and press discover Gloria Jean and the picture's qualities register by word of mouth.

It is a typically human Pasternak picture, with the veteran Richard Wallace also at his best, and Scriptor Grover Jones turning in a delightfully spontaneous screenplay.

And, less you feel that an 11-year-old youngster making her screen debut may be something of a problem, let it be recorded that

little Gloria Jean makes her debut with all the assurance of a Deanna Durbin. Pasternak apparently gave her the same treatment with which he stepped off Deanna in her celluloid bow and his fellow conspirators in the production of the picture cooperated in top notch fashion. The youngster has eye appeal, and a singing voice on which the pictures does not make too heavy demands, while at the same time giving opportunity for effective numbers.

The story is a variation of the Cinderella theme, adapted to the premise of an eleven-year-old youngster, and to the talents of both little Jean and a fine surrounding group of talented moppets. Jean is a tenement youngster, mothered and taught not only by her own mother, but by an assorted group of a half dozen or so uncles and a grandfather. This background builds for many laughs and fine touches of humanness. Story line really gets under way when Gloria wins an essay contest which entitles her to an outing with a snooty bunch of kids from higher strata.

Then the Cinderella angle gets moving and G'or'a must take it on the chin from the snobs, and bounce up and down again and again. Such dependable audience youngsters as Virginia Weidler, Dickie Moore, Ann Gillis, and Shirley Mills aid through this action.

There is also a surprise team of youngsters, with impish personalities and no little musical ability, reported as being seven and eight years

old. Billy Lenhart and Kenneth Brown are the names. They are a knockout, and captivated the preview audience.

Of the adults, reliable Billy Gilbert supplies his share of comedy, C. Aubrey Smith is his usual safe self, Nan Grey and Robert Cummings capably supply the romantic interest. A glance at the other names on the credit list above will indicate how shrewdly Pasternak has cast his picture.

Production values are on a par with the high rating of the picture. Jack Otterson's art direction must have been a labor of love, so well does it combine beauty with effectiveness. Hal Mohr was on the photography, which means "enough said."

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A corking picture for all ages and all classes. Give it an advance build-up so that you don't lose anything by the fact that it presents a new star. Word of mouth will take care of things after that. Previewed August 23rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Chalk up another one for Joe Pasternak—for Universal—for the picture business. 'The Under-Pup' is a solid smackeroo and right in the proper spot to cash in big dividends for Universal, for exhibitors and a great entertainment for the public."

VARIETY: "'The Under-Pup' captivates the eye, beguiles the ear and warms the heart. It has the stuff for general audience appeal and will most certainly bring heavy returns on the investment."

"Conspiracy" Thrown For B. O. Loss

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Cliff Reid
 Director Lew Landers
 Story by John McCarthy
 Screenplay Jerome Chodorov
 Featured: Allan Lane, Linda Hayes, Robert Barrat, Charley Foy, Lionel Royce, J. Farrell MacDonald, Lester Matthews, Henry Brandon, William Von Brincken.
 Photographer Frank Redman
 Film Editor George Hively
 Time 58 minutes

Except for strictly action houses, and possibly Saturday matinees at that, "Conspiracy" serves little purpose. Director Lew Landers and the cast are thrown for a loss by a story that might have made a serial, but is not feature ranking.

It's one of those spy things. It would begin to appear that the picture industry can make more poor pictures out of the spy formula

than almost any other of the hardy perennials. Perhaps the reason is obvious—the effort to combine action with plausibility is too difficult for the cold reality of the screen, even though it can dazzle in the printed words of an E. Phillips Oppenheim.

This one picks out an unnamed country in Europe, where there seem to be more factions and counter-spies than any single plot can stand. J. Farrell MacDonald is piloting a munitions-laden ship to the country, while the rival conspirators are above deck and below deck, and almost everywhere but in the radio room, where a stalwart American, Allan Lane, holds true to the traditions of heroes.

For his innocence, Lane gets caught in the middle, and is on the way to becoming a scapegoat for one side in the quarrels when he jumps overboard and swims to shore.

You've guessed the next step. He meets the girl, Linda Hayes. Yes, she is working for one

of the factions too. She befriends him, etc., and some more etceteras.

The picture marks the debut of Miss Hayes on the screen. The girl has possibilities, though this does not seem to have been the right story to launch her career.

Director Lew Landers keeps the serial-like material fast-paced, and a bit breathless. Frank Redman turns in a neat photographic job.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just an action filler. Previewed August 21st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Conspiracy' is a mediocre melodrama based on a composite picture of the various dictator-ridden countries that will go for the Saturday matinee trade. Picture is one continuous chase from the opening shot to the final fadeout. Production has no names in the cast to boast of and it is apparent that the budget allotted it was very skimpy."

VARIETY: "Hokish, unbelievable screenplay and amateurish direction and performance combine to relegate 'Conspiracy' to filler classification."

THE DIGEST

Publishes the Only
 Authentic Box Office Ratings

HERE AND THEREABOUTS

IN HOLLYWOOD

DOING A JOB NOTE: We have heard a lot of praise, but we do not think there has been enough for that program which Nat Alschuler, George Bilson, David Bader and Mrs. Zide turned out for the recent big social evening held by the Beverly Hills B'nai B'rith section. . . . There was apparently a lot of hard work, and quite a bit of brains put into a publication that any organization would put away in the files as a mark for future efforts.

* * *

GOOD HUMOR MAN: The Good Humor Man is calling around with a cheerful note. . . . He likes the way Benny Rubin's picture pals are crowding around to throw events and affairs towards the Victor Hugo. . . . It is always something of a cheerful shock to learn that there are friends in the picture business. . . . Which reminds us, Harry Green is back from England, and since he is now quite a big publisher of shockers on the Isles, a number of people remember Harry who were beginning to forget when he left these shores as an actor. . . . Funny world, isn't it? . . . Incidentally, Harry took his undeniable countenance into Berlin not more than a couple of months ago to aid the evacuation of refugee children.

* * *

OFF-HAND NOTE: If you think you have headaches after a bad night you should go up and talk to Jack Warner and Hal Wallis about their problems casting the part of Knute Rockne for the coming big football epic. . . . Aside from the fact that there are plenty of official okays to get on everything connected with the story and picture, the public has its own ideas about Knute Rockne. . . . Several months ago it seemed that Pat O'Brien would be the choice, but we remember that even The Highlighter found it difficult for Pat to be a Scandinavian. . . . A few weeks ago it was hot that Jimmy Cagney would be the choice, and as we hear it, the name was even sent back to South Bend for okay. . . . But, if your imagination is still working, can you imagine Jimmy Cagney, gangster's model, playing

Knute Rockne. . . . Oh, well, we said it was a headache. . . . Spencer Tracy could probably settle the problem, but who am I to tell the Lion to loan its current best box office bet to the Burbank wilds.

* * *

POLITICAL NOTE: They tell us that one of the best ways into the California state administration is to know Carl Laemmle, Jr. . . . The younger Laemmle — now a pretty staid citizen who should no longer be called "Junior"—did his part in the campaign, and is as close as your eyebrows to Richard Olson, son of the Governor of the State, and very active. . . . Speaking of politics: We think that Jimmy Roosevelt let himself get perched out on a limb with this assignment to investigate the picture industry. . . . Isn't it possible that if the industry in Hollywood needs some coordinating, there might be picture people who know something about what is needed, or maybe nothing is needed but experience and common sense.

* * *

CONGRATULATIONS. To two columnists. . . . First to Jimmy Fidler who did not inflict his readers with those terrible "guest columns" when he went away on a vacation. . . . But then even went several steps ahead of that good mark, and worked out a scheme by which he and his staff bounced back and forth with some mighty readable stuff from here to Honolulu and back again. . . . Our chief vote probably goes to him because of the avoidance of the "guest flops," because they have become an abomination to our eyes. . . . But as a newspaperman—allegedly—we give him and his staff the laurel wreath for showing up guest columns so efficiently. . . . Our second columnist bouquet goes to Hedda Hopper for the fine audience reception she received at the premiere of "The Women," with an extra orchid for her good sense in taking what is practically a bit part. . . . You can't keep a good gal down.

* * *

SOUR NOTE. The boys about town have more worries than the European war. . . . One thing and

another has resulted in the gambling ships being closed up, the Clover Club is on a stop and go permit, and it's a long distance to Bing Crosby's racetrack at Del Mar. . . . With Caliente only operating on week-ends. . . . Some reporters record a surplus of activity in the studio writing staffs because the boys don't know what else to do with their time but work.

* * *

ODDS AND ENDS. There is really something of value in the revival of the flamboyant Hollywood premieres, as The Highlighter suggested a few weeks ago. . . . One crowd doesn't make a national gross, but the build-up that started with Harry Brand's work on "Stanley and Livingstone" keeps on mounting. . . . And the important point is that the crowds who storm the premieres—pack specially built grandstands—represent quite a number of the States in these United States. . . . And they don't sit on hard benches from afternoon to midnight unless there is interest in pictures and picture people. . . . Which means they are not going home without chuckling tales about their night at a Hollywood

premiere. . . . That's one of the things that sells pictures. . . . In your town or mine. . . . It is also a good way to sell butter and eggs.

THE FIELD MEN

(Continued from Page 6)

know what it is all about, will be there to blow the lid off, and how.

* * *

Pete Wood has gone east to confer with Abram Meyers and other Allied Leaders about legislation that will be backed in Ohio next year, if the industry does not work out a favorable Code, that at least gives the independent exhibitor a chance for a living. "Pete" is doing a bang-up job in legislative matters in Ohio. He has been able through his organization to hold down inimical legislation to a minimum. Right now the question of imposing the three per cent sales tax on film rentals is bobbing up. It looks very much like the Buckeye tax collectors will pounce down on the Ohio exhibitors, and require its payment. It seems that the boys feel like this cannot be stopped, but they are hopeful that it will not be retroactive. This will hurt, and how.

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THE FASTEST
GROWING
PAPER
IN
THE
INDUSTRY

*The
Box Office*

DIGEST

"Death of a Champion" Very Weak

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer William H. Wright
 Director Robert Florey
 Screenplay: Stuart Palmer, Cortland Fitzsimmons.
 Story Frank Gruber
 Featured: Lynne Overman, Virginia Dale, Joseph Allen, Donald O'Connor, Susan Paley, Harry Davenport, Robert Paige, May Boley.
 Photographer Stuart Thompson
 Film Editor Archie Marshek
 Times 67 minutes

"Death of a Champion" is not very hot stuff, even in the B bracket. It is one that can be passed up without any great loss, if you have any privileges left under your contract, or saved for a spot Saturday matinee filler.

The "champion" murdered is a Great Dane prize winner, and the action muddles itself around a dog show, with some human beings coming in for bullets also in the course of the action.

Lynn Overman and Harry Davenport are buried under the complications that the writers tie into knots, and besides, the characters involved never mean sufficient to arouse any great amount of interest. Young Donald O'Connor, who got his first break in a Bing Crosby opus, receives the most interestingly

drawn part and the youngster comes through to advantage. Virginia Dale shows promise in the part of the nurse.

It seems that O'Connor is one of those youngsters who is already given to avaricious reading of detective thrillers, and when fate tosses him in the spot where he witnesses a few actual murders he is inspired to go out and capture the guilty one. There is a fairly interesting thrill finish with Overman in danger at the hands of the murderer, which saves it for the juvenile trade.

Direction didn't have much chance with the screenplay provided, but at that, Robert Florey shouldn't have tackled it if he didn't see a chance to keep it intelligible and even paced.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Forget it. Previewed August 24th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Death of a Champion' is a humorous murder mystery that will fit favorably into the niche for which it is intended—that of the second feature on a dual bill."

VARIETY: "Spotty direction, which at times permits unfolding of a not-too-potent story to sag to point of boredom, dooms 'Death of a Champion' to filler bracket."

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

Rodgers to most of us—has been out at the MGM studio to look over product and talk policies. . . . We mention it because it should be recorded that our Field Men seem to come through consistently with reports that Bill has his sales force so well in hand that it is the one trying most sincerely to live up to the good parts of the proposed Code. . . . That's what we hear, and the boys in the field have no incentive to kid us. . . . We believe it, because we remember this Rodgers fellow way back to General Film days. . . . MGM will tackle "Quo Vadis" again. . . . That's the courage of a lion. . . . If you remember the four million dollars or more that the first version cost Marcus Loew. . . . Executives at MGM gave Howard Strickling a surprise birthday luncheon in big Hollywood fashion last week, and while it is easy to say they could not have found a better cause, it is more important to record the spontaneous enthusiasm of the real big shots on the lot who conceived the event.

"Stop, Look and Love" Okay Programmer

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Sol M. Wurtzel
 Director Otto Brower
 Story Harry Delf
 Screenplay Harold Tarshis, Sada Cowan
 Featured: Jean Rogers, William Frawley, Robert Kellard, Eddie Collins, Minna Gombell, Cora Sue Collins, Jay Ward, Roger McGee, Lillian Porter.
 Photographer Lucien Andriot
 Film Editor Nick DeMaggio
 Time 58 minutes

A great group of troupers get together in this Sol Wurtzel production for 20th Century-Fox, and with the benefit of a fine screenplay and skilful direction by Otto Brower come up with one of those surprise program pictures that occasionally brighten the exhibitor's life.

It is not a big picture, this "Stop, Look and Love," but it is pretty close to a continual sequence of laughs from start to finish, and it will find many a welcome spot on programs, particularly when you want to balance something heavy.

A stage success of a decade or so ago, "The Family Upstairs," forms the basis of the story. It has been modernized with crisp scripting and dialoguing by Harold Tarshis and Sada Cowan, and then handed to the troupers and the directors for a happy result.

William Frawley gets what is probably the fattest opportunity of his screen career, and delivers wonderfully, paced step for step by Minna Gombell. It is a family yarn, the family

consisting of Ma and Pa, Gombell and Frawley, and children Jean Rogers, Cora Sue Collins, and Jay Ward. Responsible for most of the fireworks are Ma Gombell's efforts to marry off her daughter, Miss Rogers, surrounded by about all the hilarity that could be crowded into a family story, and topped by a wild climax that skirts the edge of slapstick, but will send 'em out of the theater with something approaching aching ribs.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Not big, but grand mass entertainment for all the family. Previewed August 25th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Stop, Look and Love' emerges as a sleeper that will more than hold up its end of the bill."

VARIETY: "It's not a pretentious film, this 'Stop, Look and Love,' but in matter of sheer entertainment it leaves nothing to be desired. Rating a laugh every 60 seconds for each of its 58 minutes, it is destined to find its way into upper bracket on many a dueler where it is thrown into competition with features costing several times its investment."

FACE THE FACTS

(Continued from Page 3)

he makes and remakes scenes until the celluloid costs mount sky-high.

The system may be wrong.

But there it is. It's the only one we have.

The exhibitor must face the fact. But the distributor and exhibitor must get together to let the public know the facts.

Or else we might go back to the nickleodeon days and all make money.

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The Dun and Bradstreet
of the Motion Picture Industry

. . . The Box Office **DIGEST**

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	155
Wizard of Oz	MGM	151
Union Pacific	FAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	137
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Beau Geste	FAR	131
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131

Stagecoach	UA	126
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	123
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Bachelor Mother	RKO	123
Man About Town	FAR	122
In Name Only	RKO	122
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	121
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Four Feathers	UA	121
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	119
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Love Affair	RKO	118
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Second Fiddle	FOX	114
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	112
Midnight	FAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Honolulu	MGM	107
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	FAR	102
Withering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	FAR	102

Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	FAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Tails'n	FOX	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91

St. Louis Blues	FAR	87
They Shall Have Music	UO	86

Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
The Mikado	UNIV	81
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pymathion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128
The Old Maid	WAR	126

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	FAR	110

Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
--------------------------	-----	-----

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Maisie	MGM	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hotel For Women	FOX	95

On Borrowed Time	MGM	92
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Frontier Marshal	FOX	86
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	86
Oh The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Five Came Back	RKO	83
These Glamour Girls	MGM	83
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	FAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Winter Carnival	UA	80
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	80
Coast Guard	COL	80
I'm From Missouri	FAR	79

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the Boss COL..... 81

Whispering EnemiesCOL..... 75

Devil's IslandWAR..... 78
 Blackwell's IslandWAR..... 77
 Chicken Our NerveFOX..... 77
 Chardon Wagon FamilyFOX..... 77
 You Can't Get Away With MurderWAR..... 76
 The SpelbinderRKO..... 76
 Inside StoryFOX..... 75
 Pacific LinerRKO..... 75

It Could Happen To YouFOX..... 74
 Hell's KitchenWAR..... 74
 Blondie Takes A VacationCOL..... 73
 Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 73
 Boy SlavesRKO..... 73
 DisbarredPAR..... 73
 Missing DaughtersCOL..... 73
 King of ChinatownPAR..... 72
 Society LawyerMGM..... 72
 Persons in HidingPAR..... 72
 Society SmugglersUNIV..... 72
 Mr. Moto's Last WarningFOX..... 72
 Twelve Crowded HoursRKO..... 72
 Island of Lost MenPAR..... 72
 Nancy Drew ReporterWAR..... 71
 Pirates of the SkiesUNIV..... 71
 Sorority HouseRKO..... 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble ShooterWAR..... 71
 Mystery of the White RoomUNIV..... 71
 The Girl and the GamblerRKO..... 71
 Quick MillionsFOX..... 71
 Blind AlleyCOL..... 71
 Unexpected FatherUNIV..... 70
 Chasing DangerFOX..... 70
 Family Next DoorUNIV..... 70
 UnmarriedPAR..... 70
 News Is Made at NightFOX..... 70
 Million Dollar LegsPAR..... 70
 Romance of the RedwoodsCOL..... 70
 Ex-ChampUNIV..... 70
 Winner Take AllFOX..... 70
 Big Town CzarUNIV..... 70
 On TrialWAR..... 70
 Torchy Blane in ChinatownWAR..... 70
 AmbushPAR..... 70
 They Made Her A SpyRKO..... 70
 Torchy For MayorWAR..... 70
 The Girl From MexicoRKO..... 70
 Within the LawMGM..... 70
 Grand Jury SecretsPAR..... 70
 Bulldog Drummond's BridePAR..... 70

The Girl DownstairsMGM..... 79
 Never Say DiePAR..... 78
 I Stole A MillionUNIV..... 78
 The Lady's From KentuckyPAR..... 77
 Prison Without BarsUA..... 77
 Let Us LiveCOL..... 76
 Charlie Chan in HonoluluFOX..... 76
 The Sun Never SetsUNIV..... 76
 The Lady VanishesFOX..... 75
 The GorillaFOX..... 75
 The Magnificent FraudPAR..... 74
 Fisherman's WharfRKO..... 74
 Our Leading CitizenPAR..... 74

Bridal SuiteMGM..... 72
 The Jones Family in HollywoodFOX..... 72
 Indianapolis SpeedwayWAR..... 72
 Boy FriendFOX..... 72

The Lady and the MobCOL..... 71

Back Door To HeavenPAR..... 70
 King of The TurfUA..... 70
 Che Third of a NationPAR..... 70
 Clouds Over EuropeCOL..... 70
 Stronger Than DesireMGM..... 70

Way Down SouthRKO..... 68

Hotel ImperialPAR..... 66
 ZenobiaUA..... 66

Gracie Allen Murder CasePAR..... 64
 Spirit of CulverUNIV..... 63
 The Flying IrishmanRKO..... 63
 Smiling AlongFOX..... 63
 Climbing HighGB..... 63

Women in the WindWAR..... 62
 Stolen LifePAR..... 61

I Am A CriminalMONO..... 69
 Fighting ThoroughbredsREP..... 69
 Gambling ShipUNIV..... 68
 Convict's CodeMONO..... 68
 Parents on TrialCOL..... 68
 Streets of New YorkMONO..... 68
 Inside InformationUNIV..... 68
 I Was A ConvictREP..... 68
 Navy SecretsMONO..... 68
 Federal Man HuntREP..... 68
 Should Husbands WorkREP..... 68

Behind Prison GatesCOL..... 67
 House of FearUNIV..... 67
 My Wife's RelativesREP..... 67
 Long ShotGN..... 67
 Wolf CallMONO..... 66
 Forged PassportREP..... 66
 First OffendersCOL..... 66
 Rookie CopRKO..... 66
 Wanted by Scotland YardMONO..... 66
 WaterfrontWAR..... 66

Mickey The KidREP..... 65
 The Zero HourREP..... 65
 Outside These WallsCOL..... 65
 S. O. S. Tidal WaveREP..... 65
 Mr. Wong in ChinatownMONO..... 65
 Shuffled CardsREP..... 65
 Mystery PlaneMONO..... 64
 My Son Is A CriminalCOL..... 64
 Code of the Secret ServiceWAR..... 64
 Should A Girl MarryMONO..... 64
 Street of Missing MenREP..... 63
 Star ReporterMONO..... 63
 Undercover AgentMONO..... 63
 The Man Who DaredWAR..... 63
 Boy's ReformatoryMONO..... 63
 Panama LadyRKO..... 62
 Panama PatrolGN..... 62
 The Girl From RioMONO..... 61

Some Like It HotPAR..... 69
 The Kid From TexasMGM..... 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret PolicePAR..... 69
 Everybody's BabyFOX..... 69
 The Saint Strikes BackRKO..... 68
 A Woman is the JudgeCOL..... 68
 Undercover DoctorPAR..... 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger IslandFOX..... 68
 Adventures of Jane ArdenRKO..... 68
 Almost A GentlemanRKO..... 68
 Fixer DuganRKO..... 68
 The Saint in LondonRKO..... 68
 For Love or MoneyUNIV..... 68
 Miracles For SaleMGM..... 68
 The Man They Couldn't HangCOL..... 68
 Lone Wolf Spy HuntCOL..... 67
 ConspiracyRKO..... 67

Forgotten WomanUNIV..... 66
 Mr. Moto Takes a VacationFOX..... 66
 Charlie Chan in RenoFOX..... 66
 Code of the StreetsUNIV..... 66
 Beauty for the AskingRKO..... 66
 Sudden MoneyPAR..... 66
 They Asked For ItUNIV..... 66
 The Ware CaseGB..... 66
 Cowboy QuarterbackWAR..... 66
 Boy TroublePAR..... 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'ConnerMGM..... 65
 Secret Service of the AirWAR..... 65
 6,000 EnemiesMGM..... 65
 Tell No TalesMGM..... 65
 Playing With DynamiteWAR..... 65
 They All Come OutMGM..... 64
 Exile ExpressGN..... 64
 Sweepstakes WinnerWAR..... 63

Night WorkPAR..... 61
 Inspector HornleighFOX..... 54
 CareerRKO..... 53
 This Man Is NewsPAR..... 52

Inspector HornleighFOX..... 54
 CareerRKO..... 53
 This Man Is NewsPAR..... 52

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

The
WIZARD
of
OZ

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK
1911
X100

Jack Haley

plays
THE TIN MAN



**METRO-
GOLDWYN-
MAYER**

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 2.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, SEPTEMBER 9, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

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The Editor Says:

**"We Still Have America"
And Warns About Panic**

SEE PAGE 3

**"Star Maker" Tops Week
With Crosby and New
Star Selling Strong**

SEE PAGE 5

**Field Investigator
Gets Surprising News
From Neely's Home State**

SEE PAGES 6-7

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★ *The Box Office*

"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With
"THE STAR MAKER"—126%



Producer
CHARLES R. ROGERS



Director
ROY DEL RUTH

Based on Story by
ARTHUR CAESAR
and
WILLIAM A. PIERCE

Screenplay
FRANK BUTLER
DON HARTMAN
ARTHUR CAESAR



BING CROSBY

Musical Director
ALFRED NEWMAN

Film Editor
ALMA MACRORIE

Photographer
KARL STRUSS



LOUISE CAMPBELL



Co-Author
WILLIAM A. PIERCE



LINDA WARE

WE STILL HAVE AMERICA

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

This is a time when Editors should not write.

Because the more words are spilled over a dam, the more frothing there will be below the dam. And froth never meant anything more than white water, while rushed words mean less.

There is a war.

It is going to play Sherman's part in the international gross of the picture business.

That is important, we will admit.

But why the panic? Why the rush to editorial words shouting "Don't cut salaries," or, "Now you will learn how to make good attractions for less money!"

Why? Let's look at it calmly.

It is a fact that, for a few seasons past, the British market has given the returns making possible many of our big pictures, and even more so, prompting the ambition that attempts those big pictures.

So we set down as the premise: The British market will be lost for a time to come.

Then we can go on to two thoughts:

Will the big shots answer this problem by cutting salaries in production—or will they try to settle it by making the American exhibitor pay more than he has ever paid for his attractions?

Okay, let's take those two problems.

That brings us down to cases.

* * *

Individuals such as Darryl Zanuck, Joe Schenck, Jack Warner, Nate Blumberg, George Schaefer, Al Lichtman, Nick Schenck, Herb Yates, were not nourished to manhood on nursing bottles.

They not only know a problem when they face it, but they have FACED PROBLEMS.

All of us of a certain age have faced the business problems of one war, all of us without a tinge of youthful

pinkishness and forgivable youthful emotions, know that there are captains and pilots on the bridge. So why should an Editor talk?

* * *

There is nothing to talk about. The ships are in good hands.

The exhibitor won't worry, unless someone irritates him. Because he knows the fellow up there with the pilot is a fellow showman.

The producers won't worry—because they have been through the good years and the bad years. And, if they were not capable, they would not be where they are.

This American picture industry can adjust itself to any situation—and that means ANY—at the drop of the hat.

Because our executives came up from the ranks of showmanship and the selling of showmanship—just as every American citizen has the opportunity to come up from an oil field to be a Rockefeller.

And they don't forget the lessons of that climb.

* * *

Calm down, everybody.

There is not going to be any rush to cut salaries.

There will not be any rush to cut production schedules. There may be adjustments, but the showmanship will be left in the pictures. There will not be any rush to make the American exhibitor carry the freight for the entire world.

Too many pretty good citizens are at work on the problem. They know; first of all: THE PRODUCT CANNOT

BE MADE CHEAP; THE WORKERS CANNOT BE CHISELED; THE EXHIBITOR CAN ONLY PAY, FOR THE GOOD OF THE INDUSTRY, WHAT HIS COMMUNITY WILL PAY FOR THE PRODUCT OFFERED.

For the very important reason that there is still an American market—a market that still pays off in CASH.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Distributor Name, and Releases. Lists 12 distributors including United Artists, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO-Radio, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont-British.

HIGHLIGHTER CONGRATULATES PICTURE FOLK ON GETTING PEACE WHILE BIG WAR STARTS

The Highlighter doffs his hat. With the world and its newspapers and air lanes filled with the madness of a war conceived and given birth by a Madman, there is something of pride to be felt in the job that has been done within this industry in the case of our threatened Civil War. . . . The Highlighter is a critical individual, and a bit inclined to carping and barking, but he finds himself unable to say enough of praise for all individuals concerned with the handling of the Screen Actors Guild angle of the near-strike. . . . We say "Screen Actors Guild" because, while the threat was nation-wide, everyone realizes that the screen players were the ones who would take the brunt of the assault if war came. . . . To Kenneth Thompson, and Ralph Morgan, therefore, The Highlighter has removed that chapeau, and in plain language, he thinks they have done a job for which the industry and the players in particular should be grateful. . . . They not only settled a war before it started, but they have also moved closer to a situation where the producers who produce can deal on top of the table with a solid all-for-one organization. . . . Instead of trying to dodge pellets from a shotgun.

There Is A War— So The Town Is Hot

The Highlighter has no desire to encroach on the Editor's privileges or add anything to what he says on Page 3, but he must report that the town of Hollywood has been ultra war conscious this last week and it makes ordinary news items seem a bit unimportant. . . . The big execs just got over their headaches planning possible action in the event of an internal war, when the big news burst. . . . The execs took it in stride, only holding more meetings than usual, but the underlings, emphasis on the writers, took it on the radio. . . . You know there is an old fable to the effect that you can lead a writer to a typewriter but you can't make him write. . . . That's what happened. While ex-newspaper men with a newspaperman's natural desire to know what is happening, argued with the others who itch with ideologies, the world moved on, but the scripts did not. . . . The British player situation was a bit different. . . . They were left somewhat up in the air with an umbrella instead of a parachute by the slow pacing of events. . . . Ready to go back and do their bit, if necessary, they hate likell to quit jobs, buy transportation, and start rushing back to someplace that may be nowhere if the events of the next few weeks change. . . . It's pretty hard seeing anything from under an umbrella.

But The Picture Business Moves On, and On, and On

The Highlighter just got an interesting thought. . . . With the gossipers and the trade

7 Features "Going Up"			
		Was	Now
1. The Old Maid	WAR	126	134
2. Four Feathers	UA	121	127
3. Bachelor Mother	RKO	123	126
4. Each Dawn I Die	WAR	121	124
5. Winter Carnival	UA	80	83
6. The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	76	79
7. Stolen Life	PAR	61	64

papers reporting how this and that company is planning to trim its sails because of foreign market problems, you don't hear anything of that sort from the Zanuck camp, do you, . . . Just as many Technicolor pictures as ever, just as expensive show ideas in the works. . . . It was just a thought, but it is worth considering, isn't it? . . . Maybe Zanuck agrees with The Editor, who says on Page 3, "We Still Have America." . . . Incidentally, American theaters are going to have their greatest break in a month of seasons with the releases crowding houses for the next sixty days. . . . Already out there is "The Star Maker," coming is "Golden Boy," ready is a small surprise package, "The Under-Pup," hot for the subsequents with the war fever, is "Beau Geste," and not so far away for big money are such as "The Rains Came," "The Old Maid," and "Hollywood Cavalcade." . . . So what? Who's got the panic on?

But Let's All Travel Around The Studios

You never saw a company as active as Harry Edington has his co-workers on "Green Hell," his first under the new Universal deal. . . . If effort and showmanship ideas mean what we think the picture business means, Edington will come through with a winner for Universal. . . . He is not only doing it in production values, but he has a pretty effective advance publicity campaign of the teasing variety at work. . . . All of which is selling seats before the picture is made. . . . And that's showmanship. . . . By the way, since The Highlighter used the word "showmanship" he has something to get off his chest. . . . Not a very big, broad chest, just a Highlighter's chest. . . . It is this: After spending most of seventy-two hours listening to the near-war and eventually the real war bulletins over the radio, and in between being forced to listen to what the radio industry must consider entertainment, The Highlighter has come to the conclusion that anybody who ever worried about competition in entertainment values between pictures and radio was

2 Features "Going Down"			
		Was	Now
1. In Name Only	RKO	122	113
2. The Mikado	UNIV	81	77

having a self-induced nightmare. . . . Gosh, what drivell and trivialities we had to listen to. . . . The Missus probably hit the key, after an all night session at the listening post, when she said, "They have just talked to me with serial effects about three different flake soaps, and they all make the same claims. . . . The funny part being that I prefer a different soap than any of those mentioned, while I would never turn on the radio at nine o'clock in the morning to hear such drivell." . . . It seems to The Highlighter that the wisest thing for picture people is to keep their money attractions as far away from the radio as they can, and sell their own goods in their own market.

Seiter To Direct The Next Deanna Durbin

The Highlighter gets quite a bit of personal satisfaction out of the news that William Seiter will direct the next Deanna Durbin picture at Universal. . . . Except for the job that Darryl Zanuck has done in his step by step development of Sonja Henie, we do not believe the industry can come up with a better story of star development than the one that Joe Pasternak has delivered for Universal in the nursing and blooming of Deanna. . . . And we are happy to see Director Seiter get one of those opportunities to go to town. . . . This fellow Seiter is one of those good soldiers whom executives love, because he will take an assignment as a reporter does. . . . It occasionally does not work out entirely to his own advantage. . . . But he is still a good soldier. . . . He takes it in stride. . . . And, gosh, he must be as old as we are, because he and Reginald Denny were making some of the best intelligent farces the screen ever saw back down the years when we were in the production cradle.

The Highlighter Gets Something To Be Happy About

While most of the Hollywood industry was running around in circles trying to find places to drop their tears last week, The Highlighter got happy about a couple of things. . . . First, the statement from Jack Warner about his company's policy, which made The Editor's remarks on page three seem like a prophecy. . . . Second, a little item that told us that Clyde Elliott, who really made "Bring Them Back Alive," is off again fairly soon to the wilds for another wild animal feature. . . . In a desert that offers you only drawing-room dramas—with the broad "A" on the drama, or screwball nuttiness, it is good to know that a fellow who knows his honest-to-goodness adventure, is on the way out again. . . . Let The Highlighter say something that is on his mind: He knows no more than you do about the duration of the war. . . . Maybe Hitler doesn't know, either. . . . But he will give you a bet

(Continued on Page 5)

CHARLES ROGERS' "THE STAR MAKER" OPENS TO HUSKY BUSINESS DESPITE WAR WORRIES

PARAMOUNT—2 New Releases

Paramount Studio tops the week with two new releases, one a box office hit and the other just a fair programmer.

Little over a year ago Charles R. Rogers resigned as Vice President in Charge of Production for Universal. He moved his production staff with him over to the Paramount Studios where he now has his own production unit. His first release is "THE STAR MAKER," based on Gus Edwards' life, and starring Bing Crosby.

"THE STAR MAKER" has opened and is being held over for second weeks in several big key city runs and is averaging very well at around 126%.

Besides Bing Crosby and the featured players there is a big gang of very talented children who appear in "THE STAR MAKER." While Louise Campbell is really Bing's leading lady, still the picture is centered around Charles Rogers' new singing protegee, Linda Ware, who proves to be quite a sensation in this picture. Exhibitors will remember that it was under Mr. Rogers regime at Universal that Deanna Durbin was given her first starring opportunity, with the cooperation of Joe Pasternak. Critics and public alike are predicting a very bright future for Miss Linda Ware, the new sixteen-year-old singer.

Others prominently featured are Ned Sparks, Laura Hope Crews, and Walter Damosch with his Symphony Orchestra. Naturally, Gus Edwards' old time musical numbers are played up for all they are worth with several new numbers added.

Roy Del Ruth, who was borrowed from Twentieth Century-Fox, was responsible for the outstanding direction of "THE STAR MAKER." Arthur Caesar and William A. Pierce wrote this adaptation of Gus Edwards' life and Caesar also collaborated with Frank Butler and Don Hartman on the screenplay.

Crosby is always safe, but exhibitors can expect much better than average Crosby business on this one. Incidentally, Paramount is boosting it with a terrific exploitation campaign.

Paramount's second release this week is a very entertaining programmer, "THE DEATH OF A CHAMPION," 70%, which is not doing very good business because of its lack of marquee names. However, this one will probably do better in the nabes as it is really a family picture catering particularly to dog lovers. "THE DEATH OF A CHAMPION" sounds more like a prize-fighting story, but exhibitors should stress that the "champion" is a dog, not a man. Since there are fifteen million dog owners in the United States, exhibitors should be able to get some value out of this picture.

Lynne Overman, Virginia Dale, Susan Paley, Donald O'Connor are fea-

Of Five New Releases In The Past Week, Only One Rated Over 100%, One One Came Through Okay and Three Very Weak.

... tured, which isn't any too strong. Bill Wright supervised and Robert Florey directed "THE DEATH OF A CHAMPION" for the Harold Hurley unit.

FOX—1 Release

Twentieth Century-Fox has one new release this week, "THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES," 83%, which is stronger than the average B, but hardly strong enough to be considered an A attraction. This one is a follow-up on Fox's "Hound of the Baskervilles," but minus the very popular Richard Greene it is not quite as strong at the box office (Greene rates number 3 in fan mail of all Fox players). Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce are again co-featured as Sherlock and Watson. This time the romantic leads are portrayed by Alan Marshall and Ida Lupino. Other featured players are Terry Kilburn, George Zucco, Henry Stephenson, and E. E. Clive.

In houses where mystery yarns are popular this one may do considerably better although in most cases we would advise double billing it with another fairly strong picture. Needless to say this picture will do considerably better in English theatres (provided the bombs don't come too fast.)

COLUMBIA—Also 1 Release

Columbia Pictures have a new program release this week, "THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS AND HOW THEY GREW," 69%, based on Margaret Sidney's popular novel of the same name, which for years has been popular with the children. This one can not really be considered as a first run attraction but should be fairly well received in the neighborhoods catering to family trade. Naturally it will make an excellent Friday-Saturday booking. Outside of the star, Edith Fellows, there are no players of outstanding importance. Among those featured are Dorothy Peterson, Clarence Kolb, and Ronald Sinclair. Jack Fier supervised and Charles Barton directed for the Irving Briskin program unit.

WARNERS—1 New One

Warner Brothers-First National also have a new program release this week, "EVERYBODY'S HOBBY," 66%, formerly titled the "Hobby Family." This one has no particular box office strength but will make a good filler on the average double bill program, providing, of course, the other feature has sufficient marquee strength.

"THE HOBBY FAMILY" was supposed to be a new series to come out of Warner Brothers; but we now understand that there will be no more pictures produced in this series.

The family is portrayed by Henry O'Neil, Irene Rich, Jackie Moran, and Jean Sharron. This was produced by the Bryan Foy program unit and directed by Bill McGann.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

that if it goes a year or more, they will be re-running pictures like "Stanley and Livingstone," and will be welcoming the sort of native, natural thing that a Clyde Elliott will bring back from an Oriental trip. . . . A word to the wise is sufficient, but it hasn't always worked.

There Is Other News From The Studios

There is news in some of the arrivals in town. . . . Herman Wobber, chieftain of sales for Twentieth Century-Fox, is out here at the studio to talk over futures. . . . Herb Yates, who just planted his Gene Autry solidly in Britain—and he did a great job—is at the Coast to ponder problems. . . . But of more chuckling interest to us is the fact that Marion Nixon is bouncing a dimpled daughter around her hospital bed. . . . The proud daddy is William Seiter. . . . Bet that event will give him help emotionally on handling the Deanna Durbin picture. . . . Local picture big-shots having a tough time getting that dinner for Attorney General Murphy under way, what with war and other troubles. . . . Why do they bother? . . . Murphy has been dined by royalty, including the Philippines, so they are not going to call off any monopoly suits or income tax actions just by feeding him with Hollywood photos and chicken. . . . Besides, the photos won't get printed just now, since a Mad Man started a war. . . . Why not call it all off? . . . Maybe they will before The Highlighter's words get into the mails. . . . Glad to hear that Sidney Skolsky has concluded that rest and will return to column circulation very soon. . . . Sid is not only likeable, but, what is more important, readable. . . . And we have missed him while he has been resting.

5 New Features Not in the Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. The Star Maker	PAR	126	120
2. The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	83	85
3. Death of a Champion	PAR	70	75
4. The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew	COL	69	70
5. Everybody's Hobby	WAR	66	65

FIELD MAN RIDGE STRIKES A HORNET'S NEST WHEN VISITING SENATOR NEELY'S HOME STATE

Backfire in Senator Neely's Own Back Yard

Awakened to the derogatory implications of the Neely Bill, the Senator's neighbors and friends in West Virginia, at the Annual Convention of the Theatre Managers' Association, started a national campaign of education, that the true effects of this proposed measure, might be known to the well meaning Parent Teachers Associations and Women's Clubs, that have unwittingly given it succor.

Had the Senior Senator from West Virginia been present, he would have had a hard time doing all the talking, as is his habit when being interviewed. These determined folks, led by the redoubtable Sol Hyman, their president for the past five years, opened a bombardment from all sides. They not only went on record against it, but plan to organize a national campaign, and carry facts to the Congressmen of the country, at their homes, while they are away from Washington.

They will send speakers to every Parent Teacher's Association and important women's clubs throughout the country, and explain sincerely just how the bill will effect the business of every theatre, in every town and hamlet in this country. They hope to show these women, wherein the bill if it should become a law, cannot and will not, effect the reforms they so earnestly desire in the production of pictures. And all this will come from the Senator's home folks, in West Virginia, where he is esteemed, but where they believe he has been terribly misinformed about this industry.

They Are Sending Resolutions To Congress

A copy of a ten point resolution, unanimously passed at the convention, was ordered sent immediately to every member of Congress. Incorporated in this resolution, were the principal points of the Bill and complete explanation of them, as they would apply to the independent exhibitor.

Abe Hyman, brother and partner of the President of the West Virginia group, in offering the resolution, said, "We have been told that we can control the sort of pictures produced by shifting the responsibility for what is recorded in the films from the manufacturer

or producer to the exhibitor. No exhibitor can remake a film nor produce one."

Continuing, Mr. Hyman said, "The Parent Teachers Associations and Women's Clubs of America have been told by the sponsors of this bill that under this act, films which the exhibitor feels should not be shown will be refused by the theatres, and that only socially desirable ones will reach them.

"There is nothing in this Bill that prevents or prohibits any theatre at any time from showing any films with which the exhibitor thinks he can make money. Both the exhibitor and the producer to be successful, must decide what the public wants to see.

Exhibitor Abe Hyman Gives An Analysis

"These well meaning groups behind the measure have been told that the local theatre, under this act, can avoid showing without obligation any picture, on receiving a complaint or protest. Nothing is farther from the truth. Obligations under a contract are still valid in America.

"They have been told that the present sales policies require the exhibitor, to show all or none of the pictures released or offered by the distributing companies. We all know that this statement, under the Code provisions, is false.

"They have been told that this act will enable the exhibitor, to have a retail selection of pictures he most desires, but at wholesale prices, under penalty of fine and imprisonment of the distributor if he refuses to license his own pictures on such terms.

"On the contrary, the law will force the wholesaler—the distributor—to fix and rigidly maintain retail prices on each film purchased, at the risk of fine and imprisonment, whether they are bought one at a time or in groups of two or more. This will impose a DRASTIC BURDEN on the operation of all small theatres, which now secure pictures under block booking, on a wholesale basis. MANY SMALL EXHIBITORS NOW OPERATE ON A SMALL MARGIN



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

and COULD NOT SURVIVE UNDER THIS PROPOSED LAW.

"They have been told that an exhibitor can continue to buy film in groups and in advance of production, to secure a continuous supply of motion picture entertainment so essential to the theatres that supply mass entertainment to the public at low cost, which requires uninterrupted operation.

"Yet the Bill requires under criminal penalties that a detailed scene by scene description of the picture shall be provided BEFORE the picture can be offered to the exhibitor for licensing. Every experienced producer knows this is impossible to prepare until the picture is fully completed and the release prints are available for screening. Obviously this forces the producer to fully complete each picture before it is offered to ANY exhibitor, and into even the more impossible effort to create and produce a picture to fit exactly an advance description in detail thus INSURING a MEDIOCRE photoplay. Can you imagine the added cost to the EXHIBITOR such methods would incur?

"They have been told that the restrictions, regulations, criminal penalties and obligations of the Act are imposed exclusively on the distributor, none on the exhibitor, that the exhibitor can only benefit from the misfortunes thus visited on the distributor.

And This Chap Hyman Talks Cold Turkey

"But every exhibitor relies entirely on the distributor for his motion pictures. He can not provide his own films. He has no studio facilities or financial resources necessary for motion picture production. He could turn his theatre into a garage, if these restrictions were invoked upon the industry.

"They have been told that this Bill will enable the small producer to successfully compete in the production and distribution of pictures with the established producing companies.

"Fallacies, fallacies, fallacies. By

forcing the completion of each picture before it is offered for exhibition, it is apparent that, to avoid excessive sales costs, each company will have to carry an inventory of several fully completed but unreleased pictures. The huge cash investment required to produce a single modern feature length picture makes it out of the question for any company without the resources of a Maharajah to operate. This would wipe out the small producer and distributor."

Mr. Hyman in conclusion stated that this Bill has been designed by those who know nothing of the methods of the industry's operation. They are inexperienced zealots, seeking notoriety. "Instead of benefiting the public and protecting the independent exhibitor against monopoly, it will concentrate the business in the hands of a few companies of great financial resources, prohibit the operation of small independent studios, increase the chain operated theaters, which can buy wholesale.

Next MPTOA Convention Probably At White Sulphur

As a result of the Theatre Owners of West Virginia becoming affiliated with the MPTOA, it is likely that the next national convocation of the latter group will be held in White Sulphur Springs some time in October. The West Virginia boys extended an invitation to the MPTOA through its president, Ed. Kuykendall, who was present.

Mr. Kuykendall said that he would place the matter before his board when he returns to New York, and was of the opinion that they might look with favor upon it, in view of the many knotty problems that are before the independent exhibitors at the present time.

Ed Kuykendall Also Has Cold Slants On Conditions

In discussing some of the exhibitor problems, Mr. Kuykendall stated that one of the silly things that was causing more trouble than any other operative matter was that of clearances. He made a test case in an average city recently, where the small exhibitor in a town several miles away was penalized sixty days behind the larger city. He induced the city operator, who was

PRESIDENT KUYKENDALL, OF MPTOA; GIVES FORTHRIGHT ANGLES ON CURRENT PROBLEMS

chain controlled, to let him make a test case for thirty days.

During this thirty days, pictures were dated day and date in the big city and the small independent town several miles away. A record was made by the chain operated theatre and the independent one. It was found that 31 people came from the big town to the smaller one, while 125 went from the little town to the city, to see the same pictures. Thus Mr. Kuykendall pointed out that this hullabaloo about protection was a myth, and that it is a silly demand made by the big fellow, from which he does not profit, but only incurs the enmity of the independent.

In discussing the wastes in this industry, Mr. Kuykendall stated to a group of independent exhibitors that a recent survey made by his office revealed that TWENTY PERCENT OF FILM RENTALS RECEIVED BY THE DISTRIBUTORS were dissipated through lawyer fees, court costs and judgments, that should and could be averted, if the warring elements would sit down and work out a sensible Code of fair trade practices. He thundered that even if the independent exhibitors could save ten percent on film rental, through the elimination of this needless cost, they would be far better off. This he is confident can be accomplished if both sides drown their lawyers. Ed Kuykendall knows the lawyers on both sides are milking their clients, without bringing either side a solution to their problems.

Young Charleston Showmen Going Back to First Principles

Charleston, W. Va.—E. R. Custer and Floyd Price will open the new State Theatre near West Virginia's capitol September 13th. This is the sixth theatre these progressive young exhibitors have opened recently. It is a model seven hundred seater. In discussing the possibility of more theatres in a city that already has what appears to be plenty of places for its population, these young showmen expressed the belief that there is a wholesome desire on the part of the public for suburban theatres, with the conveniences of the big down town houses, and that their experience has been that the public will support them. The admission price of

25 cents is another inducement they claim. That this industry was built on a dime and that the sooner the industry recognizes this fact, the sooner box office receipts will come back to normal. Last week these men opened the Lewis theatre, in Lewisburg, W. Va. It is a 600 seat house, modern and up-to-date in every respect.

Kuykendall Says a Kind Word For The Forgotten Man

White Sulphur Springs, W. Va.—“If the distributors would re-establish that ‘entente cordiale’ once existing between branch managers, their salesmen, and the independent exhibitors, by re-investing them with authorities once enjoyed, most of the problems and bitterness between them would be dissipated over night,” was the substance of the statement made by Ed Kuyken-

dal, prexy of the MPTOA.

Referring to this writer's “Forgotten Man” story in June 7 issue of the Digest, Prexy Kuykendall said it was most illuminating, and that this very situation not only existed, but that it was one of the basic causes of the troubles between exhibitors and distributors.

“What does the average Home Office executive know about the problems of “Gene” Custer down in Lewisburg. What does he have to guide him, when it comes time to write and approve contracts, adjust situations that arise during the year, and work out a living basis for him. Only past performances are his yard stick. Changing conditions can never come to his attention. 15,000 situations cannot be known to any General Sales Manager.

Continuing, Prexy Kuykendall opined that more and conclusive

authority should be given the local “Forgotten Man.” It is he, who knows his territory. It is he who has to cope with local situations. It is the “Forgotten Men,” who know how to keep the independent alive; when to adjust prices, playing time and when to ask for more, when local situations warrant it.

“More authority for the local Branch Manager; more confidence in him; more decentralization from Home Office uncton, will help bring about that old relationship once enjoyed, when this was the order of the day,” he thundered. He pounded the table in his room in the Greenbrier Hotel, as he concluded his remarks by asking what great wisdom can suddenly be acquired by executives, just because they are on Broadway in cushioned swivel chairs, that they did not possess when they once lugged a kiester up Cabin Creek.

You Don't Know What Is Happening

- UNLESS you are reading THE FIELD MEN every week in The Box Office Digest.
- THEY are telling you the facts about life . . . picture life . . . and you read them only in . . .

The Box Office

DIGEST

Gregory La Cava

PRODUCER-DIRECTOR

RKO-RADIO PRODUCTION

5th

AVENUE GIRL



Walter Connolly

in

RKO-RADIO PRODUCTION

5th

AVENUE GIRL

"The Rains Came" Powerful Drama With Great Array of Names For the Marquee

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 160%)

ProducerDarryl Zanuck
 Associate Producer.....Harry Joe Brown
 Director Clarence Brown
 OriginalLouis Bromfield
 Screenplay: Philip Dunne, Julien Josephson
 Stars: Myrna Loy, Tyrone Power, George Brent
 Featured: Brenda Joyce, Nigel Bruce, Maria Ouspenskaya, Joseph Schildkraut, Mary Nash, Jane Darwell, Marjorie Rambeau, Henry Travers, H. B. Warner, Laura Hope Crews, William Royle, Montague Shaw, Harry Hayden, Herbert Evans, Abner Biberman, Mara Alexander, Wm. Edmunds.
 PhotographerArthur Miller
 Art Director: William Darling, George Dudley
 Music by.....Alfred Newmann
 Film Editor.....Barbara McLean
 Time103 minutes

The marquee has Myrna Loy and Tyrone Power for its hot shots, and in case there is anything else needed there is also George Brent.

That should be enough to guarantee the money value in the picture.

But the showman Zanuck also presents a novel, "The Rains Came," which is one of those successes which many people have read and which most people have heard about. The box office value will be the sum total of those who have read it and those who will see the picture so that they can talk about it.

And then it should not be necessary to state that Zanuck has backed up his automatic box office elements with all the production values that 20th Century-Fox could give to any subject as important as this.

Having concluded our box office notations, we might turn advisor for a minute and give a tip to the circuit buyer who does his judging and sets his dates in a damp projection room, and advise him not to set the picture on the strength of the first reel or so. At that point he will decide it is a talkie-British subject and he may fool himself. Because the producers use this reel or so to establish their characters and after that they go to town.

They go to town in a physical way with near-earthquakes, rain storms that are practically floods, and other such elemental pictorial attractions. But they also go to town with a very peculiar love story that we believe will fascinate all women. It is not a triangle in the formula sense, but still it is a story of two men and two women straightening out the eternal problem of love.

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. The Rains Came	FOX.....160
2. Blackmail	MGM.....100
3. Five Little Peppers and How They Grew	COL.....75
4. Calling All Marines	REP.....70
5. Everything On Ice	RKO.....65

Myrna Loy is one of those girls who, though she is Lady So-and-So in the picture, has quite a varied past. She lands in an Indian hill town, and one of the first persons she meets is George Brent, who, incidently, is a person out of her past. George, it seems, is also one of those fellows who takes his love where he finds it. And then, there is Tyrone Power as Major Rama Safti, who falls in love with Myrna. Strange to say, Myrna, for the first time in her life of varied companions, falls in love with him.

There is a great set-up. An ideal set-up for a woman's picture. There is nothing "hammy" about the development, and we suppose we should not expect that from Louis Bromfield and the screenplay writers, Philip Dunne and Julien Josephson. It is a situation to intrigue women.

That is the set-up—and then the rains come. They put all these individuals with various ideas and ideals in a closely knit spot where emotions must be worked out emotionally.

The producer goes to town then on the physical effects and they produce an overpowering atmosphere effect of imprisoned individuals, consequent decisions, and eventual unfolding of each character's real emotions. In these sequences Fred Sersen turns in a marvelous special effects job. It keys the action.

To Zanuck's credit it should be registered that he has played fair with the readers of the book by not attempting to wrap the picture up with a serial happy ending. There is a happy ending, but it is intelligent and leaves you with the feeling that you have looked into life in far-off countries portrayed by the same sort of humans whom you meet in your own life. And that everything is ending as it should.

For our money, Myrna Loy takes the acting honors. Her's is not the part that eats up all the screen footage, but when she gets her moments she goes to town in a way that proves she doesn't always have to be a "Thin Woman."

Zanuck pulls a surprise in this girl Brenda Joyce, who does the romantic angle opposite

George Brent. The girl is not only an intriguing type of blonde to look at, but she takes a tough part in stride and has you remembering her after the picture is over. It would appear that the Zanuck courage has given the screen another bet.

Tyrone Power, without being high-lighted, seems more at home in the part of an Indian nabob and his performance is smooth; Brent can be counted upon for a typical Brent performance.

Support is excellent, though subordinate, except for the role given Maria Ouspenskaya, and that veteran wraps her part up in a way that will give an object lesson to the pupils in her New York school of dramatic art. Nigel Bruce should be mentioned and also Mary Nash; both of them standing out for their moments. Joseph Schildkraut is in for a spot that he could just as well forget.

Summing it all up, Associate Producer Harry Joe Brown, and Director Clarence Brown, have been faithful to their medium, and have turned in a production of "The Rains Came" which should have box office and appeal to those who come to see a book they have read or heard about.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: No suggestion is really needed with those marquee names, and with the background of the novel's success. The picture will fulfill all promises. It is an adult subject, though, and should be spotted for those days. Previewed September 6th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Rains Came' bulks on the screen as a magnificently impressive production. It is imposing in every facet. With its eminent marquee of stellar names, it thus gives potent promise of proving a big-money attraction at the box office."

VARIETY: "Its brooding atmospheric quality, a strangely potent mystical impression, sets 'The Rains Came' apart among the important pictures of the season, providing its peculiar, arresting entertainment."



The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

. . . The Box Office **DIGEST**

M-G-M's "Blackmail" Good Lusty Meller

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 100%)

Producer John W. Considine, Jr.
 Associate Producer..... Albert E. Levoy
 Director H. C. Potter
 Original..... Endre Bohem, Dorothy Yost
 Screenplay Dave Hertz, William Ludwig
 Star Edward G. Robinson
 Featured: Ruth Hussey, Gene Lockhart, Bobs
 Watson, Guinn Williams, John Wray, Ar-
 thur Hohl, Esther Dale.
 Photographer Clyde DeVinna
 Musical Score..... Edward Ward, David Snell
 Film Editor..... Howard O'Neil
 Time 79 minutes

It is good to see an honest to goodness red-
 meat melodrama every once in a while, and we
 have more than a suspicion that box offices will
 welcome "Blackmail" with the same enthusi-
 asm that your reviewer does. Your reviewer
 has seen so many artistic hits that he is prob-
 ably ready, as your audiences are, to give open
 arms to a well produced melodrama.

"Blackmail" is that. It has Edward G. Rob-

inson for the marquee, it has a fine script, and
 direction by H. C. Potter, whose last effort
 was a musical that not only shows his versa-
 tility but also, his ability.

The plot could be labelled old-fashioned
 "meller" except for the skill used in its treat-
 ment. Robinson is one of those fellows, sent
 away to prison for a crime which he did not
 commit. This is not a new premise, but it is
 always a safe one. He is going along pretty
 well, establishing himself in a new life after
 escaping, when the snake turns up who starts
 blackmailing him. Meanwhile Robinson, with
 Big Boy Williams as a pal, has become pretty
 well known as a trouble shooter in the Okla-
 homa oil fields, both for his courage and his
 brains. So when the blackmailer appears he has
 his problems. There is Ruth Hussey, his wife;
 there is Bobs Watson, his child. There is the
 feeling of the world against a fellow who
 wants to go right but they will not give him
 a chance.

It is good "theatre," and it is also a good

picture. John W. Considine, Jr. has put to-
 gether a pretty good piece of entertainment for
 mass audiences. Around Edward G. Robinson
 he has placed a very capable supporting staff.
 We have already said what we think about
 Potter's fine job of direction.

*Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: In an oasis
 of smart-alecky draw-room drama, this one is
 going to make considerable of a bit with your
 patrons. It is not an epic but it is a darn good
 piece of mass entertainment. Maybe you are
 lucky and have bought it in the proper bracket.
 Previewed September 6th.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has in 'Blackmail' sock
 entertainment that should register heavily at
 the box office."

VARIETY: "Metro offers in 'Blackmail' a
 picture hard to beat for sheer melodrama, all
 pointed to development of top thrills and sus-
 pense. Because of this there will be some audi-
 ences who find the going too realistic but fans
 of lusty drama, played to the hilt, will be more
 than satisfied."

"Calling All Marines" Misses Connection

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer..... Armand Schaefer
 Director John H. Auer
 Screenplay Earl Felton
 Story Idea Harrison Carter
 Featured: Donald Barry, Helen Mack, Warren
 Hymer, Robert Kent, Cy Kendall, Leon
 Ames, Selmer Jackson, Janet McLeay, Wal-
 ter McGrail, George Chandler, Jay Novello,
 James Flavin.
 Photographer Ernest Miller
 Film Editor..... Ernest Nims
 Time 65 minutes

Republic made a good picture for its own
 market in "Calling All Marines," but not a
 picture that anybody will want to remember
 over night.

The sole value of the picture is in the title.

And that title will have value to most Repub-
 lic exhibitors who have bought for buttons, and
 who have never lost when the grand old Mar-
 ines have been in the title.

The exhibitor will pick his own nights, or
 his particular Saturday matinees, and do well.
 He will dodge placing it on a bill where his
 evening ticket sales have been made to adults.

There is action, action, and action, from
 opening shot to fade out. And there are plenty
 of cash customers who will like that. But the
 story gets so messed up with some sort of plot
 which has a group of gangsters fighting the
 United States Marines that it reaches the point
 of becoming pretty, pretty bad. It doesn't
 quite go overboard, but there were many mo-

ments when it seemed to be teetering on the
 brink.

There is no box office value in the cast, the
 production is on a serial basis, stretched into
 feature length. You can go to town on it on
 a Saturday matinee.

*Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Everything
 has been said above. If they give you a set of
 dishes you can use it for Saturday matinees.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Earl Felton's highly preposter-
 ous screenplay doomed 'Calling All Marines' to
 filler classification even before cameras had
 been unshuttered."

REPORTER: "Republic's 'Calling All Mar-
 ines' is packed with action from the opening
 gun to the final fadeout, but little thought is
 given to the sincerity of the story itself."

"Everything On Ice" Surprise Programmer

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 65%)

Producer Sol Lesser
 Director Erle C. Kenton
 Screenplay..... Adrian Landis, Sherman Lowe
 Star Irene Dare
 Featured: Roscoe Karns, Edgar Kennedy,
 Lynne Roberts, Eric Linden, Mary Hart,
 Bobby Watson, George Meeker, Mary Cur-
 rier, Maxine Stewart, Wade Boteler.
 Photographer Russell Metty
 Film Editor..... Arthur Hilton
 Time 65 minutes

Sol Lesser has turned in a corking piece of
 entertainment in "Everything's On Ice." Ac-
 centuating his sensational six year old skating
 star, Irene Dare, it however, proceeds further
 to present an "average family" yarn that could
 hold its own for audience values.

Aside from the phenomenal talents of the
 little youngster, which are presented with class,
 taste and showmanship, the story emphasizes
 comedy, with the able shoulders of Edgar Ken-
 nedy and Roscoe Karns carrying the burden.
 With a smooth script, and a skillful job of

direction by Erle Kenton, the two comics go
 to town. Kenton's direction milks the laugh
 values, without "reaching" too far.

A well rounded cast supports the trio men-
 tioned, with George Meeker a "slick" menace,
 and the romantic interest well handled by Eric
 Linden and Mary Hart. Lynne Roberts is up
 to the mark of the picture as Kennedy's wife.

Keynote of the story is the character of Ros-
 coe Karns, sponging brother-in-law of Edgar
 Kennedy, who lives with and on the Kennedy
 family. He won't work, but he does continu-
 ally dream of great schemes and promotions.
 One of his schemes comes to fruition when he
 seizes on the genius of little Irene and gets her
 a skating engagement at Miami.

Then he proceeds to mess things up. To put
 up a bluff, he carts the whole family—except-
 ing hard-working Edgar—to the Florida resort
 where he poses as a millionaire. Meeker enters
 the plot as another phoney, also posing, and
 about to bust up the romance. When things
 get all balled up, of course it is Edgar who
 comes to the rescue.

It is the formula of George Kelly's famous
 stage hit, "The Show-Off," streamlined to the
 show purposes for which it was intended. The
 combination will increase the popularity of the
 Dare tyke, and the entertainment values of the
 story will satisfy.

*Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good fam-
 ily entertainment that will help on any bill.
 Previewed August 30th.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Everything's On Ice,' as
 far as Sol Lesser's diminutive little ice skater,
 Irene Dare, is concerned, everything is on ice.
 Lesser has given his little star thoughtful con-
 sideration in the presentation of this unknown
 quantity and has done a job that will draw
 applause from the audiences for her phenom-
 enal figure skating."

VARIETY: "Little Irene Dare's skating
 prowess, paraded through a humorous comedy
 drama backgrounded against bright spots of
 Florida, built 'Everything's On Ice' into an aus-
 picious bid for screen recognition by Sol Les-
 ser's moppet."

Jack Warner Talks Turkey

The Editor has his face very red, because all the thoughts he put into a Remington on Thursday—see Page 3—were just the same thoughts that a more important person, Jack L. Warner, stated as fact and policy on Friday. Jack Warner took his thunder away, but it is still thunder, so we will let you read a solid, strong, and effective statement from the producing member of the Warner group:

Appearing before the newspaper men with the sincerity and approach of a Presidential conference in Washington, Mr. Warner was anxious to set at rest many off-hand rumors concerning future picture producing policies. He sat to hear questions and to answer them, he sat to explain points that the questioners did not happen to bring up.

He told the newspaper men, "There will be no curtailment in our production program. The program, as got out last May will be carried through to the letter. In addition, several important pictures, not listed last May, have been added to the program.

"There will be no cut in salaries."

Jack Warner decided to call in the press after lengthy consideration and discussion with his brother, Harry Warner, over the long distance telephone, and with Gradwell Sears, head of the sales division, and Joseph Bernhard.

"This speeding up program," said Warner, "Has been launched to offset and regain the 25 percent loss caused in the foreign market by the war. This can be recovered by producing better pictures for the United States and the remaining foreign sales possibilities.

"Regardless of the war in Europe," said Warner, "Better pictures are proving that people can be drawn into the theatre. It is a fact in our 540 theatres. The records show for themselves that we did a bigger business throughout the country last week

than we did the week before. This is in the face of the war, the screaming newspaper headlines and the continuous radio blasts of war bulletins. It has proven to us that the public is fed up with war talk and insists on enjoying more pleasant things, such as motion pictures."

"Pictures to start next week are 'Virginia City,' which was not on the original program, to be in Technicolor and which we believe will be greater than 'Dodge City.' It will star Errol Flynn and is to roll within a week. Within the next few days 'The Fighting 69th,' starring Jimmy Cagney and also not on the original program, is to be launched Wednesday. Another is 'Invisible Stripes' with George Raft and Humphrey Bogart.

"'The Sea Hawk,' Warner said, "Positively will be filmed as soon as the new sound stage, now under construction, is completed. Others to be stepped up on the program are 'The Story of Dr. Ehrlich,' 'All This and Heaven Too,' and two additional sea epics, 'John Paul Jones' and 'Captain Horatio Hornblower'."

"Five Little Peppers" Oke Family Bet

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 65%)

Producer Jack Fier
 Director Charles Barton
 Screenplay Natalie Bucknell
 Story Margaret Sidney
 Featured: Edith Fellows, Clarence Kolb, Dorothy Peterson, Ronald Sinclair, Dorothy Ann Seece, James Leek, Charles Peck, Tommy Bond.
 Photographer Henry Freulich
 Time 55 minutes

Columbia has done justice to the perennial childhood classic "Little Peppers" and rounded out a sparkling bit of programme entertainment.

Scripting is sympathetic to the original characterizations, and a cast of youngsters headed by talented Edith Fellows keeps it alive with rarely spontaneous trouping skill. Comedy and heart interest moments are well balanced in the picture.

Your wife or daughter know the story, if you don't. It concerns the widow with five children, and with scarce enough of worldly goods to make ends meet. But it isn't a yarn of poverty, because the widow lives for her

children, and the five Little Peppers live for her. So it is a tale of happiness. Capable scripting retains the spirit of this happy household, while avoiding the over-sugary taste of the original as we would look at it in the light of today's reading.

Plot brings in the wealthy man, a bit stony-hearted at first, with an opportunity to put over a deal that will help the Peppers, and help himself more. Comes the softening of his heart as he watches these youngsters at work and at play.

Charles Barton has turned in a neat job of direction. It could not have been an easy task, but he keeps his youngsters bubbling with life, avoids possible story pitfalls, very well.

Edith Fellows, as the oldest member of the clan, and something of a mother herself in her tasks of handling them, leads the moppet contingent. There is a new youngster, Dorothy Ann Seece, who is something out of Disney for impish appeal. Tommy Bond, Jimmy Leek, Charles Peck, Ronald Sinclair as the rich man's son, contribute one and all to the fine job.

Adult interest is handled with skill by the

sure-fire troupers, Clarence Kolb, as the man of wealth, and Dorothy Peterson, as the widow.

Jack Fier has delivered a capable production job to Columbia.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: There is always an extra value in these productions of the semi-classics of childhood memories. Witness, "Girl of the Limberlost," "Little Women," etc. This one does not make any too great pretensions, but don't overlook its possibilities. The picture will satisfy after you get those audiences in. Previewed September 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is one of the neatest programmers turned out by producer Irving Briskin in many a day. Built on an unpretentious scale without any marquee names to boast of, this dramatization of Margaret Sidney's novel "Five Little Peppers and How They Grew," emerges as fine entertainment that will bring enjoyment to kids between the ages of six to 60."

VARIETY: "'Five Little Peppers and How They Grew' gets the intended series, based on the tales of Margaret Sidney, off to auspicious start in a neat and wholesome piece of family entertainment."

Joe Pasternak

PRODUCED

FOR

THE NEW UNIVERSAL

"THE UNDER-PUP"

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James FOX... 182 %
 Gunga Din RKO... 180
 Dodge City WAR... 158
 Goodbye, Mr. Chips MGM... 156
 Stanley and Livingsstone FOX... 155
 Wizard of Oz MGM... 151
 Union Pacific PAR... 145

Kentucky FOX... 137
 Idiots' Delight MGM... 133
 Beau Geste PAR... 131
 Three Smart Girls Grow Up UNIV... 131

Four Feathers UA... 127
 Spacemach UA... 126
 The Star Maker PAR... 126
 Bachelor Mother RKO... 126
 Each Dawn I Die WAR... 124
 Juarez WAR... 123
 Rose of Washington Square FOX... 123
 Stand Up and Fight MGM... 123
 Man About Town PAR... 122
 When Tomorrow Comes UNIV... 121
 The Man in the Iron Mask UA... 121
 You Can't Cheat An Honest Man UNIV... 121
 Four Feathers UA... 121
 Love Affair RKO... 120

Lady of the Tropics MGM... 119
 Only Angels Have Wings COL... 119
 Story of Vernon and Irene Castle RKO... 116
 Little Princess FOX... 116
 Second Fiddle FOX... 114
 In Name Only RKO... 113
 Made For Each Other UA... 112
 Alexander Graham Bell FOX... 112
 Confessions of a Nazi Spy WAR... 112
 (Nazi Spy foreign average) WAR... 192
 Midnight PAR... 111
 Oklahoma Kid WAR... 110
 East Side of Heaven UNIV... 110
 Honolulu MGM... 107
 Topper Takes A Trip UA... 106
 Invitation To Happiness PAR... 102
 Wuthering Heights UA... 102
 Paris Honeymoon PAR... 102

Captain Fury UA... 98
 Zaza PAR... 98
 Man of Conquest REP... 96

Young Mr. Lincoln FOX... 94
 Wings of the Navy WAR... 94
 Tallspin FOX... 94
 Ice Follies of 1939 MGM... 93

Tarzan Finds A Son MGM... 91

St. Louis Blues PAR... 87
 They Shall Have Music OO... 86

Broadway Serenade MGM... 84

Let Freedom Ring MGM... 83
 Susannah of the Mounties FOX... 83

Three Musketeers FOX... 81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid WAR... 134 %
 Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever MGM... 133
 Pysmalion MGM... 131
 The Hardys Ride High MGM... 130
 Dark Victory WAR... 128

Daughters Courageous WAR... 112
 Huckleberry Finn MGM... 111
 The Beachcomber PAR... 110
 Yes, My Darling Daughter WAR... 106

It's A Wonderful World MGM... 99
 Son of Frankenstein UNIV... 98
 Lucky Night MGM... 98
 Maisie MGM... 97
 Good Girls Go To Paris COL... 95

Hotel For Women FOX... 93
 On Borrowed Time MGM... 92
 Hound of the Baskervilles FOX... 92
 They Made Me A Criminal WAR... 92
 Wife, Husband and Friend FOX... 90
 Calling Dr. Kildare MGM... 90
 Angels Wash Their Faces WAR... 88

Naughty But Nice WAR... 86
 East and West MGM... 86
 Frontier Marshal FOX... 86
 Off The Record WAR... 85
 The Kid From Kokomo WAR... 85
 Five Came Back RKO... 85
 Sergeant Madden MGM... 84
 Four Girls in White MGM... 84
 These Glamour Girls MGM... 83
 The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes FOX... 83
 Winter Carnival UA... 83
 Return of the Cisco Kid FOX... 82
 Cafe Society PAR... 81
 King of the Underworld WAR... 81
 Arizona Wildcat FOX... 80
 Mutiny on the Blackhawk UNIV... 80

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Blondie Meets the Boss COL... 81 %

I Stole A Million UNIV 80
I'm From Missouri PAR 79
The Sun Never Sets UNIV 79
The Girl Downstairs MGM 79
Never Say Die PAR 78
The Lady's From Kentucky PAR 77
Prison Without Bars UA 77
Let Us Live COL 76
Coast Guard COL 76
Charlie Chan in Honolulu FOX 76
The Lady Vanishes FOX 75
The Gorilla FOX 75
The Magnificent Fraud PAR 75
Fisherman's Wharf RKO 74

Our Leading Citizen PAR 72
Bridal Suite MGM 72
The Jones Family in Hollywood FOX 72
Indianapolis Speedway WAR 72
Boy Friend FOX 72

The Lady and the Mob COL 71

Back Door to Heaven PAR 70
King of The Turf UA 70
One Third of a Nation PAR 70
Clouds Over Europe COL 70
Stronger Than Desire MGM 70

Way Down South RKO 68

Hotel Imperial PAR 66
Zenobia UA 66

Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64
Stolen Life PAR 64
Spirit of Culver UNIV 63
The Flying Irishman RKO 63
Smiling Along FOX 63
Climbing High GB 63

Women in the Wind WAR 62

Chicken Wagon Family FOX 79
Devil's Island WAR 78
Blackwell's Island WAR 77
Pardon Our Nerve FOX 77
You Can't Get Away With Murder WAR 76
The Spellbinder RKO 76
Hell's Kitchen WAR 76
Inside Story FOX 75
Pacific Liner RKO 75

Blondie Takes A Vacation COL 73
Mystery of the White Room UNIV 73
Boy Slaves RKO 73
Disbarred PAR 73
Missing Daughters COL 73
It Could Happen To You COL 72
King of Chinatown FOX 72
Society Lawyer MGM 72
Persons in Hiding PAR 72
Society Snugglers UNIV 72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning FOX 72
Twelve Crowded Hours RKO 72
Unexpected Father UNIV 72
Nancy Drew, Reporter WAR 71
Sorority House RKO 71
Mystery of the White Room UNIV 71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter WAR 71
The Girl and the Gambler UNIV 71
Quick Millions RKO 71
Blind Alley COL 71
Island of Lost Men PAR 70
Chasing Danger FOX 70
Unmarried PAR 70
Romance of the Redwoods COL 70
Ex-Champ UNIV 70
Winner Take All FOX 70
Big Town Czar UNIV 70
On Trial WAR 70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown WAR 70
Ambush PAR 70
They Made Her A Spy RKO 70
Torchy For Mayor WAR 70
The Girl From Mexico RKO 70
Within the Law MGM 70
Grand Jury Secrets PAR 70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride PAR 70
Death of a Champion PAR 70

Some Like It Hot PAR 69
The Kid From Texas MGM 69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Policc PAR 69
Everybody's Baby FOX 69

Million Dollar Legs PAR 68
News Is Made At Night FOX 68
The Family Next Door UNIV 68
The Saint Strikes Back RKO 68
Undercover Doctor PAR 68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island FOX 68
Adventures of Jane Arden M ? 68
Almost A Gentleman RKO 68
Fixer Dugan RKO 68
The Saint in London RKO 68
For Love or Money UNIV 68
Miracles For Sale MGM 68
The Man They Couldn't Hang COL 68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt COL 67
Conspiracy RKO 67
A Woman Is A Judge COL 66
Forgotten Woman UNIV 66
Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation FOX 66
Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 66
Code of the Streets UNIV 66
Beauty for the Asking RKO 66
They Asked For It PAR 66
The Ware Case UNIV 66
Cowboy Quarterback WAR 66
Boy Trouble PAR 66
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor MGM 65
Secret Service of the Air MGM 65
Tell No Tales MGM 65
Playing With Dynamite WAR 65
They All Come Out MGM 64
Exile Express UNIV 64
Sweepstakes Winner WAR 64
6-000 Enemies MGM 63
Night Work PAR 61
Inspector Hornleigh FOX 54
Career RKO 53
This Man Is News PAR 52

Homicide Bureau COL 71
Mysterious Mr. Wong MONO 71
Woman Doctor REP 71
North of Shanghai COL 71

She Married A Cop REP 70
Hidden Power COL 70
The Sunset Murder Case GN 70
Pride of the Navy REP 70
Tough Kid MONO 70
Mysterious Miss X REP 70
Trapped in the Sky COL 70
Orphan in the Street COL 70
Parents On Trial PAR 70

I Am A Criminal MONO 69
Fighting Thoroughbreds REP 69
Gambling Ship UNIV 69
Convict's Code MONO 69
The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew COL 69
Streets of New York MONO 68
Inside Information UNIV 68
I Was A Convict REP 68
Navy Secrets MONO 68
Federal Man Hunt REP 68

Behind Prison Gates COL 67
House of Fear UNIV 67
My Wife's Relatives REP 67
Long Shot GN 67
Wolf Call MONO 66
Forged Passport REP 66
First Offenders COL 66
Rookie Cop RKO 66
Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO 66
Waterfront WAR 66
Everybody's Hobby WAR 66

Should Husbands Work REP 65
Mickey The Kid REP 65
The Zero Hour REP 65
Outside These Walls COL 65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave REP 65
Mr. Wong in Chinatown MONO 65
Smuggled Cargo REP 65
Mystery Plane MONO 64
My Son Is A Criminal COL 64
Code of the Secret Service WAR 64
Should A Girl Marry? MONO 64
Street of Missing Men REP 63
Star Reporter MONO 63
Undercover Agent MONO 63
The Man Who Dared WAR 63
Boy's Reformatory MONO 63
Panama Lady RKO 62
The Girl From Rio MONO 61

LOUIS BROMFIELD,

Author of "THE RAINS CAME," says:

☆ This is my story and these are my characters. As a novelist I am grateful for the privilege of seeing this book come completely to life. In my opinion, "The Rains Came" is a great picture. I should like to express my gratitude to Darryl F. Zanuck and all those at Twentieth Century-Fox who helped recreate it with such astounding fidelity.

Louis Bromfield

"THE RAINS CAME"

MYRNA TYRONE GEORGE
LOY * POWER * BRENT

Directed by CLARENCE BROWN

Press Premiere

Grauman's CHINESE THEATRE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14th

PHONE: REpublic 4111

All Seats Reserved

ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE
ARTS AND SCIENCES
HOLLYWOOD, - CALIFORNIA

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, Number 3.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, SEPTEMBER 18, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

**"THE RAINS CAME"
TOPS FOR WEEK;
"THE WOMEN" STRONG**

SEE PAGE 5

**THE EDITOR SAYS:
"WHY SHOULD WE
GET THE PANIC?"**

SEE PAGE 3

**THE FIELD MEN
HAVE SOME REAL
EXHIBITOR DYNAMITE**

SEE PAGES 6 and 7

**The
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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

★ *The Box Office*

"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **20th CENTURY FOX** Wins With

"THE RAINS CAME"—162%



Vice Pres. in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer
HARRY JOE BROWN



Director
CLARENCE BROWN



TYRONE POWER



MYRNA LOY



GEORGE BRENT



BRENDA JOYCE



NIGEL BRUCE



MARY NASH

WHY THE PANIC?

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

The Editor said last week that this was the time when editors should not write. At the risk of being very tiresome, the editor feels he must come back to the subject. The subject is WAR.

In our honest and frank opinion the picture industry is making its greatest mistake in the publicity that is being spread nation-wide about discharging janitors, stenographers, watchmen, and anyone else who is not related to the boss.

The publicity is bad. Out of the United States industries—and that includes steel, mines, cotton, and about everything that the world lives on, the picture industry is the only one that is being blazoned forth over the nation as the one with the panic on.

Why in the name of Good Grief haven't we the leadership that can handle a situation like that? Is the Hays organization just a fifth wheel?

* * *

Anybody with sense would know that better pictures will be made under current conditions than the last few months have seen.

And that is saying quite a lot, because the last few months have seen some pretty good box office subjects. But what will happen now, will be to taper off the million dollar expenditures that were based on the British market, and accentuate the appeal to the American market.

So, what will be the result? Good actors will be working more steadily and making more money than they have for the last two years; good writers, and how few there are in boom days, will be collecting what they deserve; good directors will be turning out pictures as they did five and ten years ago.

* * *

If The Editor's opinion is worth anything, we think that instead of running the

scales on the smaller employees, a few of the studios could do a great job by cutting out some of those \$2,000 a week associate producers whose positions, according to what they say themselves, are merely social.

Maybe by saying that we might save the jobs of a couple of stenographers, but we know we will have the enmity of some fellows who never really did belong.

But, if we have any message to deliver to the exhibitors, we can say it now: The pictures will not be cheap. With all near-attacks against Hollywood there is a pretty good bunch back here making celluloid. There may be some misfits in the group, but the important point is that there are a number of those who have proven showmanship ability.

Your Editor, who is usually very modest, gives this advice at the present moment: There is plenty of showmanship in Hollywood, there will be plenty box office attractions in the coming months, and the only reason anyone should have to complain about the Hollywood situation would be the publicity that is allowed to go out which tells of stringent salary cuts, drastic lay-offs, and rough-shod rearrangement of budgets on coming pictures.

* * *

In other words:

Our creed is a belief in such individuals as Zanuck, Mayer, Joe and Nick Schenck, Jack Warner, Frank Freeman, Nate Blumberg, George Schaefer, Herb Yates, Ray Johnson. We know they are showmen.

So, at the risk of having bored you with the same editorial thought for two weeks, it comes clear from the heart

when we say: THERE SHOULD BE NO PANIC.

Showmen are at the helm, and it has always been our understanding that the helmsman is the one who decides where the boat will go.

Certainly, dead wood will be lopped off. But let's stop telling the nation that we had so much dead wood. It makes the industry's face red.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 2 columns: Distributor Name and Releases. Lists 12 distributors including Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, United Artists, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO-Radio, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont-British.

THE HIGHLIGHTER FINDS MOST INTEREST IN THE SNEAK PREVIEWS OF THE WEEK

The Highlighter is having a bit of trouble keeping his typewriter on picture topics, while all Hollywood is fighting a war. . . . You would be surprised how hard Hollywood is fighting this war. . . . For example: Our business manager talked to a director about an overdue check last week. . . . The director has been drawing a four figure salary for more years than the calendar has pages. . . . He referred the request to a staple business manager. . . . The business manager referred the call to the director's wife. . . . She said: "I am not writing any checks for anything until the war is over." . . . The business manager wasn't quick enough on the trigger to remind her that Chamberlain says it will be a three year war, and Hitler says he is set for ten years. . . . He just swallowed his chewing gum. . . . That may seem a small incident, maybe we should not have mentioned it, but it is illustrative of Hollywood. . . . Lamé ducks are running around with their limping showing, wondering if their options will be taken up. . . . They're fighting a heluva war. . . . You can hear their voices loudest over the rattle of dishes at the Brown Derbies, Al Levy's and at Victor Hugo's. . . . Yessir, it is a great war for a number of them. . . . Their principle point being that America and all the rest of the neutrals should go out and fight to protect options.

Very Important Sneak Previews During The Week

But, despite the Highlighter's ire at certain things he observes, there is news to chronicle within a week. . . . He could talk about two of the sneak previews held recently. . . . Toughest bet was probably "Gone With The Wind," which was three hours and forty-five minutes of celluloid as sneaked at Riverside. . . . That's a tough dose of film to take at one sitting after you have just got your money's worth on a double bill with shorts for dessert. . . . But all the scouts report that the audience stayed—and enjoyed—the spectacle until the end. . . . In fact, that is not justice to the reports of the G-Men. . . . They say the picture is a knockout. . . . Same reports come from another sneak of the week: "Hollywood Cavalcade." . . . Zanuck will probably uncover this one for the general public after he puts the master touch to the final editing. . . . But the scouts report it as possibly the top sensation of the year. . . . Don't say we didn't tell you, to borrow a phrase again from Mark Hellinger. . . . The Highlighter has no other sneak previews to talk about this week, but he desires to tip you off to "The Housekeeper's Daughter." . . . This one was not made for the critics, but it is a honey for audiences. . . . Selah, and soforth.

How Unimportant Strike News Can Seem In These Times

The Highlighter would like to get excited enough about the union negotiations now go-

8 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1. The Old Maid	WAR	134	143
2. Four Feathers	UA	127	130
3. Each Dawn I Die	WAR	124	129
4. Hotel For Women	FOX	93	95
5. They Shall Have Music	UA	86	89
6. Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	83	86
7. Hell's Kitchen	WAR	76	82
8. Stolen Life	PAR	64	67

ing on in Hollywood to kill quite a bit of his space, but he can't do it. . . . With the more important headchases hitting producers these days, it seems too foolish to be worrying about local things. . . . They have imported William Bioff, or, rather, brought him back for a return engagement to settle the union labor problems at the studios. . . . Bill will settle them, at his terms. . . . Meanwhile there is a war on over in Europe. . . . And speaking of that war, your Highlighter has been reading the New York newspapers rather closely for the past week or two, and found some pleasant news. . . . Picture news, he means. . . . And he refers to the raves the Big Town's critics are giving to Michael Whalen for his work in "Death Takes A Holiday." . . . If The Highlighter's memory is correct, he used to review some of those "B" pictures in which Whalen appeared and usually finished up with the trite line, "Whalen deserves better material." . . . He is patting himself on the back when he reads reviews from such critics as the East can give and finds phrases like this: "We came away angry at Hollywood—here's a charming gent with a rich speaking voice, an acting adeptness, and a convincing manner. All he has played recently is one half of a team in something called 'Roving Reporters.' This review should be an open letter to Michael's Hollywood bosses for wasting him on those 'B' pictures." . . . Then The Highlighter read a half dozen other reviews, and he just sat back and smiled with one of those "I told you so" smiles.

Rounding The Corners At All The Studios

Darryl Zanuck and Joe Schenck come out with their emphatic statement that war curtailments will not be allowed to affect the quality of the product. . . . The week brings similar announcements from MGM, Columbia, and Universal. . . . The Highlighter likes to hear them. . . . Because they come from the chaps who spend the money. . . . But he doesn't think

2 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1. Lady of the Tropics	MGM	119	116
2. Spellbinder	RKO	76	72

they are entirely necessary. The quality MUST be kept up. . . . For the simple reason that a great big industry cannot meet its customers—in America—three, four or six months from now—and say: "This would have been a better picture if the war hadn't happened." . . . And it can be put another way: A showman like Zanuck, to take a shining example, would suffer just as much over making a picture to his specifications if he were just taking it home to show to a few friends. . . . He would also be unable to forget the exhibitor in his home town in Nebraska. . . . So what? . . . Zanuck is an example, probably a shining one, but there are still showmen in the job of making motion pictures. . . . Which reminded The Highlighter of something. . . . Just after he had finished his fulsome review of "Babes in Arms"—you will find that he goes overboard—he read a Hollywood Reporter note that the picture had opened in Houston, Texas, to better business than "The Wizard of Oz." . . . The Highlighter is wondering if the Hollywood war cannot be won by avoiding three million dollar negatives and just making good shows. . . . Are you wondering, too?

War Does Things To MGM's British Unit

One of the many thoughts that hits your Highlighter, in the midst of the worry, the frenzy and the destruction that follow on the heels of war, is a regret as to what has happened to that fine British unit handled by Ben Goetz. . . . Here is a unit that took all the supposed hurdles of British production in stride, and came through with a 1000 per cent batting average. . . . Look 'em over: "A Yank At Oxford," "The Citadel," "Good-bye Mr. Chips." . . . Goetz, who is modest about his claims to being a producer, and anxious to pass off all the credit to associates, Victor Saville, and Directors Jack Conway, King Vidor and Sam Wood, certainly was on the way to a producing unit that would make picture history. . . . Then the two Madmen of Europe got busy. . . . We would not be surprised, on the strength of that top batting average, to see Ben step into a choice production berth at the Culver City studios, and continue to prove that he knows stories, and men with whom to work.

Reissues Are A Problem Worthy of Considerable Thought

We hear the stories that this company and that company is rushing reissues to the screen to capitalize upon the war fever. . . . Most of them are subjects that are aimed at a particular enemy. . . . We would like to throw a couple of bricks in his direction, too, but we have a word of caution for exhibitors. . . . Which they may not need, since they are closer to the cash customers than we are. . . . But it is your Highlighter's thought that this is an en-

(Continued on Page 5)

ZANUCK'S "THE RAINS CAME" HITTING HIGH; "THE WOMEN" CLOSE SECOND BET

FOX—1 Release

Close on the heels of "Stanley and Livingstone" Twentieth Century-Fox has come through with another big smash hit in Darryl F. Zanuck's latest effort, "THE RAINS CAME," which on its first key city openings is averaging 162%. If "THE RAINS CAME" keeps up as it has opened in the past week, and every indication points that it will, it will be the third biggest money maker for this current year, only being surpassed by Mr. Zanuck's own "Jesse James" and RKO's "Gunga Din," both of which, incidentally were released the earlier part of this year around January and February when business conditions throughout the country were much better.

Mr. Zanuck has thrown all of his showmanship efforts into "THE RAINS CAME" and he has certainly been well rewarded, judging from the first box office figures. It has tremendous production value based on a popular best seller with plenty of top marquee names. Myrna Loy, Tyrone Power and George Brent are all very strong names and among the very important featured players are Zanuck's new find, Brenda Joyce (who promises to be a real sensation), Nigel Bruce, Maria Ouspenskaya, Joseph Schildkraut, Mary Nash, Jane Darwell, Marjorie Rambeau, H. B. Warner, Laura Hope Crews, and many others too numerous to mention.

Also due for considerable credit are Harry Joe Brown, the associate producer, and Clarence Brown, the director. Charles McCarthy and Harry Brand also deserve unlimited praise for the extensive exploitation, advertising and publicity campaign that they have done on this outstanding epic.

In these days of lean production, exhibitors should certainly be glad to get a fine box office picture of this type and at least double or triple their playing time, as the first run situations are already doing.

MGM—1 Release

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer also has an outstanding boxoffice attraction this week in Hunt Stromberg's production of "THE WOMEN," from the famous stage classic of the same name by Clare Booth. "THE WOMEN" boasts a tremendous "all feminine" cast headed by Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford and Rosalind Russell. Also prominently featured are: Paul-ette Goddard, Joan Fontaine, Virginia Weidler, Florence Nash and Ann Morriss.

It was the opinion of certain critics that this one might not fare so well as it is the first picture ever produced without one male member in the cast. However, this has not proven to be true, judging on the first exhibitor's reports, for while the women are streaming up to the box office in long lines, many male members of the family are also getting an equal kick

Of Five New Releases in the Past Week, Three Ran Considerably Above 100%, One Came Through Okay, and One Was Very Weak.

out of the humor in "THE WOMEN." This picture has opened in quite a number of first run key cities and is averaging 144%, which is even 10% higher than we had estimated.

MGM's ace producer, Hunt Stromberg, is responsible for the making of this fine picture, while George Cukor handled the direction. Anita Loos and Jane Murfin adapted this fine story and wrote the screenplay.

RKO—1 New Release

RKO-Radio Pictures has a new box office triumph in the latest Ginger Rogers picture, "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL," which has opened up very well at a 126% average. This makes three hits in a row for RKO, as "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL" follows closely on the heels of "Bachelor Mother" and "In Name Only."

Miss Rogers has a new leading man this time in Tim Holt with other romantic leads portrayed by James Ellison and Kathryn Adams, but next to Ginger Rogers, that famous character actor, Walter Connolly, really deserves most of the praise as he and Ginger walk away with the picture.

Producer-Director Gregory La Cava, who will be remembered for his big Universal hit, "My Man, Godfrey," is responsible for "FIFTH AVENUE GIRL'S" success as he acted as producer and director for RKO. Exhibitors who scored heavily with "Bachelor Mother" should expect to do equally as good with this one; as a matter of fact, on its first openings at the Radio City Music Hall in New York City it even topped "Bachelor Mother" with the second week even doing more business than the first week, which is certainly something unusual in these days of depression.

UNIVERSAL—1 New One

Joe Pasternak, the fair haired boy out at Universal, who was responsible for the Deanna Durbin pictures, comes through with a pretty good box office winner this week in "THE UNDER-PUP," starring his new singing protege, the eleven year old Gloria Jean.

While this one is only averaging 92% on its first bookings, still that is very strong considering two items in particular: first of all, Gloria

Jean is a newcomer and the public is not familiar with her as yet, and secondly, there are no big box office names in the supporting cast. Furthermore, we expect word-of-mouth advertising to build this one considerably when it hits the subsequent runs catering to family trade. There is a bright future for the talented young Miss Jean. So taking everything into consideration 92% is a very good figure, as there have been many costly productions that did not do nearly as well at the box office as this one is doing on its first openings.

Supporting Miss Jean are: Robert Cummings and Nan Grey in the romantic leads and others prominently featured are: C. Aubrey Smith, Beulah Bondi, Virginia Weidler, Margaret Lindsay and Raymond Walburn, who all together make up a well balanced cast. Richard Wallace directed for Mr. Pasternak and Grover Jones wrote the screenplay from I. A. R. Wylie's original story.

COLUMBIA—1 Programmer

Columbia Pictures only new release this week is a new programmer from the Irving Briskin unit entitled "KONGA, THE WILD STALLION," which is just getting by at a 68% average. Of course this horse-opera is not meant for first run situations and will probably do better in the nabes for which it was originally intended and it could very easily take the place of the usual Fri-Sat western feature. Old time exhibitors will remember that they did fairly good business on Hal Roach's horse epic, "Rex, King of the Wild Horses," and with a little extra advertising and lobby display this one might likewise pull a pretty good box office in houses where this type of entertainment is popular, particularly among the men and children. Fred Stone and Rochelle Hudson are co-featured. Wally MacDonald supervised and Sam Nelson directed.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

tirely different war than the one we knew in 1914, and the one we took part in when 1917 rolled around. . . . Your Highlighter has been watching the newsreels, and audience reactions to help frame his opinions. . . . His thought is that no one is doing any cheering over this war, and the one emotion they may have is a hatred of one person, a single individual, by name, Adolf Hitler. . . . But companies and exhibitors who try to draw war parallels between 1914-17 and the present situation may find their fingers burning when they discover that so much of American womanhood is so determined that their "men"—sons and husbands—are not going off to an appointment with General Mud—that they won't flock to see Hollywood versions of war.

5 New Releases Not in the Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. The Rains Came	FOX	162	160
2. The Women	MGM	144	135
3. Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	126	115
4. The Under-Pup	UNIV	92	95
5. Konga, The Wild Stallion	COL	68	70

FIELD MAN RIDGE FINDS ED KUYKENDALL PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR'S BATTLES



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

White Sulphur Springs, W. Va.—Ed Kuykendall, the Sage of Columbus, Mississippi, although a pacifist at heart, is realizing day by day, that the wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the most grease. He is girding his loins for battle. He has and still is trying to get the exhibitors and distributors across the table for peaceful solution of their problems. If they do not, the industry's Sage from the South, is ready to follow that old adage of General George Washington, who said there was a time to preach, a time to pray and a time to fight. He believes the time to fight has arrived.

With Sol Hyman, who is the latest addition to the Board of the MPTOA, a national campaign against the Neely Bill is to be prosecuted. Contemporaneously with this fight, an effort is to be made to get some sane heads from both sides of the fence, to sit down without aid or hampering from the legal lights of the industry, to work out a simpler Code. One that can be understood by folks who never attended Harvard.

One that is simple and workable. One that conserves the rights of all parties, without being so damnably unilateral, one that exhibitors can really accept, without impoverishing their grand-children.

"Just why exhibitors will continue to send money to support some lawyers, who are keeping this industry in a muddle all the time, is beyond my understanding," quoth Mr. Kuykendall. He named no man, but it sounded awfully like he was directing a dart at Abram Meyers et al.

"One side must not forget the other side has rights," he continued. Any plan that does not respect all the rights is bound to fail. Any

plan will be welcomed by the exhibitors, whether radicals or just plain folks like myself. The distributors dare not refuse such a plan."

Expect October Meet To Present Workable Plan

Out of a fall meeting of the MPTOA which is expected to be held in this resort town in October, will evolve a plan, to be submitted to the country, that will be hard for rational folks to turn their backs on. And if your Field Investigator is any judge of men, the Sage from the South, is looking forward to constructive co-operation from another wise old owl from Dallas, Col. Cole, who leads the Allied. I know them both. They are wise men. They are honest, both of them. Two days together with Bill Rodgers and Herman Wobber and this industry would have a Code that none could turn down, and under which all would prosper. However, the lawyers might yowl, lest there would be little or no cause for their unwanted participation.

Why Do Exchanges Sell Contracts They Can't Fulfill?

Just why the representatives of the major film companies persist in selling exhibitors contracts they must know at the time the deals are consummated are impossible of completion, remains one of the enigmas of this great industry.

This week we have found a number of instances where pictures have been sold by the majors, that call for as high as 65 Sunday openings, for all of them. How such deals can be handled, if the Code ever becomes effective is beyond our comprehension. And in this section of the country, both preferred playing time and guarantees are the order of the day. It's cold turkey with them all except Metro; so far as we have been able to find out.

The inexplicable thing about this crazy buying, is the fear on the part of the small exhibitor, that if he fights too hard for a fair contract, that he will be unable to get product. On September 8th your Field Investigator was in Xenia, Ohio. Here is J. L. Hatcher. He was formerly a Paramount salesman. Fearful that the majors are going to close him up, or force him to second run, he signs for 26 Paramount pictures on percentage, which means 26 Sundays. That

company nor any other one does not make, nor ever has made, one-half that many Sunday percentage pictures in one year. That means Hatcher must take a beating on at least 20 Sundays this year. That is rotten business for everybody.

Here Are One Exhibitor's Specific Problems

Hatcher told the writer he lost United Artists' product to his competitor, and is going to the Department of Justice about it. He says that Universal's Branch Manager, Paul Kreiger of Cincinnati, with the help of the Fox salesman, bought a second run house in Xenia, and immediately turned it over to Phil Chakeres, Warners' partner in Springfield, Ohio. Then they took the Fox contract to Chakeres first run in his Xenia. Hatcher states he is going to Washington with his complaint, if the majors do not let him have product to keep his Ohio operating. He owns but one house. Chakeres has six in partnership with Warners and ten of his own.

Just why the majors do not get wise and keep competition alive in Xenia, and at the same time bestow on Hatcher that American square deal, of splitting the product, is beyond our poor comprehension. Hatcher's house is the largest and finest in Xenia.

Looks like Xenia, a political hot bed for the last decade, may become the center of another fight, on one side the Government; on the other at least three major distributors.

The Field Investigator Checks The War Situation

Will the rain of bullets from the sky over Europe add to or detract from the theatre attendance, was a question on the lips of every exhibitor everywhere we went this week. Some were of the opinion it would injure; the majority felt that after a short spell, it would tend to increase box office revenue. All felt they would gladly forego any profit, if this spectre of death could pass on.

One well known leader in the industry, who has many houses under his jurisdiction, opined that as the conflict waged on in intensity, that he anticipated a big increase at the theatre. First he explained that there would be many shorts depicting the preparation, as well as in some instances, real combats,

that would soon reach the screen. This he believes will soon strengthen the interest in the theatregoer. Some of the theatres saw a revival of the interest in such pictures as the "Nazi Spy" and kindred pictures.

Others saw a big increase in industry, due to the demands of the combatants for raw materials, as well as food stuff, which in some way, regardless of legislation, would find a way to foreign marts, to be redistributed to the warring nations. Every one interviewed was reluctant to allow his name to be used, lest it might be said they were hoping to profit out of the misery of our neighbors across the sea. Yet they all expressed their opinion freely, that they believed the box office would soon reflect favorably, due in almost every instance to different lines of reasoning, but to the same end.

We Knew You Would Be Surprised

- We appreciate the enthusiastic critical approval that has been accorded our unusual selection of imported material. But we must say—we knew you would be surprised.
- No tailor in Los Angeles has the connections—and has put forth the effort—that we have, to get the latest in unusual weaves.
- But also—no tailor in Los Angeles gives you the services of such sincere and long-trained craftsmen to turn those woolens into the latest of style.
- And all at a PRICE.
- You will be just as surprised at the price, as so many were last week at the wealth of material—unusual material—from which to choose.
- Come in and see us—or call for a TAILOR to come see you. You'll save a lot of money, we will make some. And we will make a friend.

JOHN D. PARRAL

237 SOUTH LA BREA

Phone for service:
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NICHOLS UNCOVERS DYNAMITE ANGLES ON BOOKING DEALS IN THE MID-WEST ZONE



HARRY NICHOLS
Field Representative

St. Louis.—There is a mamma who broadcasts most any hour in St. Louis and peddles a lot of publicity blurbs that would even make a Hollywood publicity agent blush. This gal who styles herself Carol Gay and whom we heard over KOMX, a CBS station, is doing more harm to motion pictures in the village of St. Louis than good.

Herewith is a sample that Darryl Zanuck and Joe Schenck will be interested in. The lady was discussing the pro and con of censorship as it applies to "Grapes of Wrath," which is to be produced at 20th Century. She was telling the world about a supposed four or five hundred letters received at the Fox Studios from fans, objecting to this subject being produced as a motion picture.

We now quote Miss Gay: "Self styled censors can go sit on a tack," said the Fox Studios officials. And further, "Fox Studios claim they will not change a line of it, regardless of the Hays organization."

There you have it, Mr. Zanuck and Mr. Schenck, and we know already that you never released any such statement. Figure that ap-

proximately 20,000 people heard that story around the St. Louis area, the time was 8:30 p.m.

Now we don't know anything about this picture as to its censorship possibilities as this Field Man is so busy traveling the mud roads that he would not know the "Grapes of Wrath" from a Hawaiian pineapple, but we know that this so-called "news" should be stopped as the lady placed the Fox officials in the same category as the publicity builders of the peep shows and dope subjects.

Every Territory Has Its Own Tough Problems

We have travelled many weary miles in this business for some hard hearted trade paper publishers, and it is always the same story, "We sell pictures different in this territory." We are speaking of the distributors not the publishers. What a lie and chicanery is tied up in that abused phrase, "Sorry but that is our national sales policy."

Take percentage deals for instance. The favored chain receives the house expense and a cut back in some cases of 10% for double pictures, bank nights, dish, bingo or what have you, no checkers or guarantees and for special groups of theatres an annual settlement day.

We take Chicago as an example. There we find a large chain, that we think is an independent one, of deluxe houses, who play all companies' product on a flat rental basis; there is no exception. One of the partners is a former well known exhibitor leader in national circles, and who now can tell you the latest work out on the bang-tails.

In Detroit we find a cut back for the flat rental second feature, which is a general practice of all

distributors in that area to every one. Indianapolis goes them one better and we find a five per cent reduction of the gross take for double features and racket evenings, as they still have bank nights. We now come to the prize deal of them all: and we hope you won't go out and shoot yourself when you read this one. We who are used to most anything in this screwy business, could hardly believe we understood aright, but friends, believe it or not—St. Louis, Missouri, plays everything flat, of all companies, with one exception and that is MGM. Which speaks very highly of the ability of their St. Louis sales staff. This is the general practice of all exchanges serving St. Louis.

We can picture the faces of Hugh Bruen, Whittier, Calif., V. A. Gillhool, John Rugars, Claude Hawks, Salt Lake; Ralph Falkinburg, Lexington, Neb.; W. H. Creal, Omaha; and hundreds of other independent exhibitors as they read this information.

Now these men, whose faces we speak of, are old time showmen and why should they be made to pay the freight while other territories enjoy special privileges? Brother, I can tell you the answer to that one. New York doesn't cook up half the deals that it gets blamed for, your local and district manager is the nigger in the wood pile.

These Forgotten Men get the glory for putting over these deals in your territory for their New York offices and peanuts for salary. If they received bonuses one could understand their actions.

Why do some territories have only four top pictures in their block contract, while in other territories the same company will have six and eight?

We can answer that one, too. Your local branch manager asks permission of his New York office to raise the ante on you. These facts can be easily proven and we have often wondered why some of these so-called exhibitor associations don't give you the low down on what the setup is in other territories. Maybe they are like a certain exhibitor official of a Chicago group when we were explaining about the recent Supreme Court decision in the Texas case, to one of his members, and he asked us not to do this, as he said, and we quote: "We don't tell certain members everything."

Extra Hot News On The Skouras Booking Deal

We have just learned why the district managers have been living so permanently in New York lately. You guessed it, the Fox theatre deal on this year's product. Our informant tells us that Fox was compelled to make separate deals for each of the different situations they control in the country. No more master agreements?

We wonder if Supreme Court rulings in the Interstate case in Texas had anything to do with the distributors' action in their sales policy as it applies to Fox and other circuits. You know, Chief Justice Stone rendered the opinion of his colleagues in that case and ruled on an important point of law, and that in the phrase: PRESUMPTIVE CONSPIRACY. The phrase that will eventually change every motion picture contract in this business.

My, that session with Jack Sullivan must have been a classic, and made the Code hearings look like a meeting of an old ladies sewing circle.

The Dun and Bradstreet
of the Motion Picture Industry

The Box Office **DIGEST**

THE WHOLE COUNTRY

OPENS THIS WEEK COAST to

DARRYL F. ZANUCK'S producer
LOUIS BROMFIELD'S

"THE RAIN"

Mynna Loy *Tyrone Power*

LOY • POWER

BRENDA JOYCE • NIGEL BRUCE
JOSEPH SCHILDKRAUT • MAR
MARJORIE RAMBEAU • HENRY

Directed by CLAR

NOW

Continuous

performances

GRAUMAN'S CHINESE

ASSOC
Scre

IS WAITING FOR IT!

COAST IN 250 THEATRES

ion of

NS CAME"

RING

George

ER • BRENT

CE • MARIA OUSPENSKAYA

RY NASH • JANE DARWELL

Y TRAVERS • H. B. WARNER

RENCE BROWN

CIATE PRODUCER HARRY JOE BROWN

Play by Philip Dunne and Julien Josephson



NOW

Continuous

performances

LOEW'S STATE

"The Real Glory" Keyed to the Times

UNITED ARTISTS

(The Digest Estimates 145%)

Producer Samuel Goldwyn
 Associate Producer Robert Riskin
 Director Henry Hathaway
 Original Charles L. Clifford
 Screenplay: Jo Swerling, Robert R. Presnell
 Star Gary Cooper
 Featured: Andrea Leeds, David Niven, Reginald Owen, Broderick Crawford, Kay Johnson, Russell Hicks, Vladimar Sokoloff, Benny Inocencio, Charles Waldron, Rudy Robles, Tetsu Komai, Roy Gordon, Henry Kolker.
 Photographer Rudolph Mate
 Film Editor Daniel Mandell
 Time 95 minutes

That fellow with a horse-shoe, Sam Goldwyn, has hit it again. At a time when box offices will be bouncing back to martial themes and martial thoughts, he will hit the market with one of those good, and old, "marines to the rescue" stories, produced as only Sam Goldwyn produces any picture—with cost and aplomb.

"The Real Glory" is lusty melodrama destined, and with emphasis on present conditions, to make plenty of money. The exhibitor has Gary Cooper for the marquee, behind Gary he has a swell direction job by Henry Hathaway, and a scripting job to which a fellow scribbler will doff his hat—considering the handicapping serial theme.

What is there against the picture? Not a darn thing, from a theater viewpoint. Old-timers like Damon Runyon, who fought in the Philippines at the period of the story, may give you a column or two within the next few weeks about its treatment of the Filipinos. Damon, for example, will be tickled to hear that the Filipinos were cowards who ran away from everything until Gary Cooper appeared on the scene. Damon Runyon will like that. He had to fight them.

But, considered strictly from a mass American audience viewpoint, "The Real Glory" is lusty, healthy, two-fisted melodrama, due to make a lot of money. It has the martial spirit that is in tune with the times, it has Gary Cooper for the marquee, it has that intriguing

CURRENT REVIEWS		We Est.
1. The Real Glory	U.A.	145
2. Babes In Arms	MGM	145
3. Thunder Afloat	MGM	140
4. Rulers of the Sea	PARA	135
5. The Housekeeper's Daughter	U.A.	90
6. The Day the Bookies Wept	RKO	80
7. Two Bright Boys	UNIV	80
8. What a Life	PARA	80
9. Sky Patrol	MONO	70

personality Andrea Leeds for help, it has a forthright job of direction by Henry Hathaway, and it has a script.

Put it down for one of those bets for your audiences who have grown tired of drawing rooms. It is a whale of a melodrama.

The story picks up that period in Philippine history when the Spanish-American war had been ended, but there was still the problem of pacifying the islands. The villains are the Moros, outlaw Mohammedans who can't be conquered and who love nothing better than shooting up Filipinos. The heroes are a meagre number of American officers, Gary Cooper, David Niven, Broderick Crawford, Reginald Owen, etc., set down in a forsaken outpost with instructions to train the brown skinned citizens so that they can do their own fighting. The feminine interest is supplied by Andrea Leeds, as the commander's daughter, and Kay Johnson, as a tragedy-stricken widow of one of the Americans.

Premise for the story's suspense is in the plot device that has the Moros picking off the commanding officers one by one, in the hope of luring the town's defenders into the jungle before they are able to fight. And one by one they go. Then the town's water supply is shut off, and after a lone well becomes poisoned, there is a cholera epidemic. Cooper is the medical officer who first fights the battle against disease, and then must later go out and do the real fighting of guns. In the end

he arrives like a lone Texas Ranger to save the fort—and the girl.

It is all hokey, but it is well done hokey. With its bing-bang note added to the marquee values it should hit for big money right now.

Aside from the fine performances of the men, mention should not be omitted of the effective presence of Andrea Leeds, who makes a neutral role stand up, and a cameo cut job by Kay Johnson.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Red blooded stuff, at times a bit too heavy for many women but on the whole pretty safe for almost any day. Previewed September 10th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "For sheer hokum, unadulterated, unabashed and on a gradiose scale, 'The Real Glory' cuts right into the groove. Here it is rolled up in a hefty bundle, labeled with a swell flag-waving title, and decorated with as nice a set of marquee names as any picture could want. The sum total looks unmistakably like big box office."

VARIETY: "'The Real Glory' bids for attention primarily because of its story interest, the novel background of the Philippine Islands scene following the American occupation, rather than for its performances. Deliveries by Gary Cooper, David Niven, Andrea Leeds, together with half a dozen supporting roles of importance, are commendable and reach impressive dramatic peaks in the climactic passages, but the narrative, bristling and shouting with spectacular and fighting action, is the thing which will sell it for mass entertainment at a time when strong melodrama should be greatly in demand."

"Sky Patrol" Standard Air Meller

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Paul Malvern
 Director Howard Bretherton
 Original Story Hal Forrest
 Screenplay: Joseph West, Norton S. Parker
 Star John Trent
 Featured: Milburn Stone, Marjorie Reynolds, Jackie Coogan, Bryant Washburn, Boyd Irwin, Jason Robards, LeRoy Mason, Dickie Jones.
 Photographer Fred Jackson, Jr.
 Film Editor Carl Pierson
 Time 61 minutes

This Trem Carr-Paul Malvern unit delivering pictures to Monogram continues to turn out the sort of fare its customers want. "Sky Patrol" holds its own in the series based upon the newspaper popularity of Tailspin Tommy, and the audiences which have been following

the marvelous hero will not be disappointed.

The producers know their formula, which is: Action, and then more action. So no complaint should be made if the story wobbles a bit now and then, because the action and the thrills keep it moving for that Saturday matinee trade.

On this occasion Tailspin Tommy finds himself combatting smugglers who are getting away with murder in their operations across the Mexican border. Tommy has been busy training a group of youngsters at a government school when the villains present the problem to him. There is a kidnapping of the commandant's son, he is held for ransom; there is—oh, well, there is about everything that makes for action, and who cares if it makes sense?

Producer Malvern has given the picture a

capable cast, and gone the limit in seeing that the thrills are really thrills. Chief value of the picture, and that is a big one, is in the vast youth audience which follows Tailspin Tommy in the papers, and the even wider general interest in things of aviation. Tommy's followers will not be disappointed.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Up to standard for the series, and a safe bet for the Friday-Saturday dates. Previewed September 14th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "As another episode in the 'Tailspin Tommy' series, 'Sky Patrol' is passable entertainment, neither rising nor falling from the level of its predecessors."

VARIETY: "'Sky Patrol' fits in handily for family-trade theatres and will supply aviation-minded youngsters with good quota of thrills, air scenes and other melodramatic incident."

"Rulers of the Sea" Is Lloyd At His Best

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer-Director Frank Lloyd
Associate Producer Lou Smith
Story and Screenplay: Talbot Jennings, Frank Cavett, Richard Collins.
Stars: Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Margaret Lockwood, Will Fyffe.
Featured: George Bancroft, Montague Love, Vaughan Glaser, David Torrence, Lester Matthews, Alan Ladd, David Clyde, Mike Driscoll, Mary Gordon, Lionel Pape, Ivan Simpson, Olaf Hytten, Denis D'Auburn, David Dunbar, Barry Macollum, George Melford, Wilson Bengé, Dave Thursby, John Power, Earl Askam, Charles McAvoy, Napier Rakes, Lawrence Grant, Jane Dewey, Clare Verdera, Neil Fitzgerald, Alec Craig.
Photographer Theodor Sparkuhl
2nd Unit Photographer Archie Stout
Art Director Hans Dreier, John Goodman
Musical Score Richard Hageman
Time 96 minutes

Frank Lloyd, who gave to box offices in those dear old boom days beyond recall, "The Sea Hawk," again goes to the ocean waves for a big production. And again he clicks, with his individual ability to paint broad marine canvasses.

"Rulers of the Sea" must be sold on its "size." Automatic marquee names are missing from the cast, though the performances are one and all, excellent. Heavy advance exploitation on the theme, plus word of mouth, will do the job.

Though Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., would head any marquee billing, and though he does one of the best trouping jobs of his career, the honors go to an actor whom American audiences have just begun to discover—Will Fyffe. This British thespian has been seen in some pictures made in England, and he was brought over especially for this part by Paramount. He justifies the trip, and the expense money. He wraps the picture up, and will wrap your audiences up. Unfortunately, for this market, he won't be properly sold until the key city runs start the word-of-mouth.

The story is that of the battle of oncoming steam, against established sail. The theme gives Lloyd an opportunity to get off to a great pictorial start with sailing vessels' battles against the forces of nature, then to turn to a human interest story in the Scottish engineer, played by Fyffe, who has his stolid faith in the fact that some day ships will cross the ocean propelled by steam.

There is little need to tell the balance of the story, because you know that steam triumphs. But in between the start and the victory there is a wealth of human incident, and the victory is not achieved without a climax of suspense and action.

Aside from the picture-stealing performance by Will Fyffe, and the excellent work by Doug Jr., mention should be made of a new girl, Margaret Lockwood. She has been seen in

America in a British picture, "To The Victor," (also with Will Fyffe) and in "Susannah of the Mounties," with Shirley Temple. She has a refined quality that grows on a spectator. She is particularly at home in the role of a Scottish lassie in "Rulers of the Sea."

George Bancroft is another favorite seen to advantage, while the supporting cast is tried and true, as you can tell from the credit list above.

Producer-director Frank Lloyd, and his associate on the picture, Lou Smith, can feel well satisfied with a chore well done. The grosses on the picture must depend to a considerable extent on the opening of the British market, since it has been made that way, but it will take care of itself in America.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Standard epic, that will pick up values because of present interest in maritime things, but you will have to sell it. Previewed September 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Chronicle a vital chapter in world history, 'Rulers of the Sea' is a studious, frequently moving and stolidly engrossing delineation of the triumph of steam over sail."

VARIETY: "Here is an offering which truly rates the epic label, a worthy offering and a proud credit to Paramount and Frank Lloyd from every production angle, distinguished in its playing, writing, direction, and the most humanly appealing of the world-influencing exploits of science and industry."

"Babes In Arms" Knockout Show

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 145%)

Producer Arthur Freed
Director Busby Berkeley
Screenplay: Jack McGowan, Kay Van Riper
From play by Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart
Stars Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland
Featured: Charles Winninger, Guy Kibbee, Betty Jaynes, Grace Hayes, Doug McPhail, June Prellsner, Rand Brooks, Leni Lynn, John Sheffield, Henry Hull, Barnett Parker, Ann Shoemaker, Margaret Hamilton, Joseph Crehan, George McKay, Henry Roquemore, Lelah Tyler.
Time 94 minutes

Run, don't walk, to your MGM booker for spots on this one—provided they don't ask you for a mortgage on the theater. It's not an epic, but it is one of the surprise entertainment packages of the year.

The way we figure it is something like this: If Mickey Rooney in routine Judge Hardy stories, interspaced with a "Boys' Town," has attained a certain solid big money value in theaters, then Mickey Rooney put on a parade—a Mickey Cavalcade, this could be called—will wrap them up in the aisles, and before the ticket windows.

We haven't seen the name of Arthur Freed on credit sheets in connection with motion pictures. Maybe he is just the guy who had something to do with the stage hit, "Babes In Arms." But if he can continue with the showmanship that is packed in this one, we won't have to wonder what his name is for very long. Busby Berkeley, who is one year a director, and

the next year just ticked off as "a great dance director," also comes into his own in the picture. It is a clever showmanship job, and we take our hats off first to producer and director.

But that brings us back to that upstart, Mickey Rooney. What a job that lad turns in. In the course of the action he does about everything Mickey Rooney can do—from some mugging for laughs to tap dancing, soft shoe dancing, piano playing, and even an essay at the bass fiddle. When he isn't doing those things he is sitting in the background making laughs for scenes in which he is not supposed to appear. Judy Garland trots out all her talents, and it is obvious that box office will be helped by the "Oz" barrage.

Your reviewer saw the picture at a Huntington Park preview, and some of the scenes are so riotous in laugh value that he will be compelled to return to some other theater to hear the dialogue. It was that sort of picture.

There are some trouping adults in the picture, too, who should not be forgotten in the raves about a Rooney circus. Charles Winninger and Henry Hull team up for some great moments; Betty Jaynes and Douglas McPhail, who were seen as the substitutes for Eddy-MacDonald in "Sweethearts," get a real break. And they deliver.

But if we start in on cast mentions, we will be giving the history of vaudeville. Because that is what the story is all about. It goes back to the glorious old days of the Palace Theater

at 47th and Broadway, it goes on to the routines of a Mickey Rooney. It covers everything that might bring a musical moment or a laugh. And when you see Mickey doing his Clark Gable impersonation, or his Lionel Barrymore, or almost anything you can imagine, you'll know what a laugh means.

Incidentally, there are kid orchestras, specialties, all of real quality, crowded into the footage to such an extent that you wonder how much could be packed into one evening of entertainment. But then, if we started to mention all the names of a punch-hitting cast, we would not have room enough on this page. The best description we can give to exhibitors is to say that it is one of the best of the old-time vaudeville shows come to life again. Plus the production qualities that Leo the Lion never fails to provide.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A straight knockout. Worth considering for extra days. Previewed September 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The picture is a solid smack hit; a musical that will make audiences want more musicals but who will stand little chance of getting many, if any, that will give as much entertainment."

VARIETY: "Incited by a script rich in comedy and heart interest, by an excellent musical book and showmanly production, an array of top talented youngsters, supported by veteran troupers, herewith put on a choice and lavish piece of entertainment heading straight for important coin."

"Housekeeper's Daughter" Laugh Hit

ROACH-U. A.

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer-Director Hal Roach
 From novel by Donald Henderson Clarke
 Screenplay Rian James, Gordon Douglas
 Stars: Joan Bennett, Adolphe Menjou, John Hubbard.
 Featured: William Gargan, George E. Stone, Peggy Wood, Donald Meek, Marc Lawrence, Lillian Bond, Victor Mature, John Hyams, Leila McIntyre, Luis Alberni, Rosina Galli.
 Photographer Norman Brodine
 Film Editor William Zeigler
 Time 80 minutes

In these times of strife and strain, we think that audiences will welcome "The Housekeeper's Daughter." At least your reviewer did.

It has a goofy title, it makes no pretensions to epic grandeur. It just seems to have been aimed at making you laugh. It does.

Any attempt to re-tell the story will be just about as useful as an effort to tell one of those "farmer's daughter" stories with the village deacon in the house. But it is a framework on which an hour or more of entertainment has been strung, so we will make the try.

It seems that Joan Bennett is a girl with

some kind of undefined "past" who returns to her mother, for some reason or other. Mother is housekeeper for a wealthy family, the sole member present in the house being a personable son, John Hubbard.

And then, there are Adolphe Menjou and William Gargan. The former is a screen reporter, liquor, women and all, the latter his stooge as a cameraman.

After those characters are set the story gets all balled up with murder, gangsters, and what-not, but always with a delightful tongue in cheek feeling. That neglected actor, George E. Stone, is present for a real part as a demented citizen, there is some fine gangstering from Marc Lawrence and others. Hubbard is trying to be a real reporter and find the murderer, Menjou and Gargan are busy seeking liquor and what-have-you, the gangsters don't know what they are looking for.

A classy script job keeps it moving and supplying its laughs; a direction job by Hal Roach shows that the veteran still can show some of the youngsters how to hold pauses and moments to extract the last possible laugh from a situation.

In addition to the players already mentioned, we would not round up our job if we failed to mention Donald Meek, as sure-fire as ever, and an excellent contribution from Lillian Bond. This newcomer, John Hubbard, in the juvenile lead, will bear watching. He grows on you. And, of course, they will all forgive us for saying that the structure of the story and the ability of the team winds it all up as a frolic for Menjou and Gargan.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Not big, but a great audience bet for all ages when you want to give them a crazy laugh night. Previewed September 10th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Housekeeper's Daughter' has an amusing moment here and there but too few to class it as a good picture."

VARIETY: "Hal Roach knows the design for laughter and here he clicks with a choice offering of broad farce, largely manipulated by his own directorial hand. Just the kind of theatrical fare for a world in the throes of warfare. The elements of easy amusement for the mass are all ingredient, and the players troupe it to the hilt. It should do no stuttering at the box office."

Penner Goes to Town in "Bookies Wept"

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Robert Sisk
 Director Leslie Goodwins
 Original Daniel Fuchs
 Screenplay Bert Granet, George Jeske
 Star Joe Penner
 Featured: Betty Grable, Richard Lane, Tom Kennedy, Thurston Hall, Bernadene Hayes, Carol Hughes, Jack Arnold.
 Photographer Jack MacKenzie
 Film Editor Desmond Marquette
 Time 64 minutes

At last they gave Joe Penner the vehicle that fine comedian is worthy of. "The Day the Bookies Wept" is pretty close to being a continuous laugh from start to finish, and the reason is that Penner is right at home with full opportunity to do all the things he can do in his own way.

The picture serves notice that Producer Bob

Sisk is maintaining his high batting average at the RKO plant, and chalks another good job up on the Les Goodwins directorial score.

As the title tells, it is a story of horses and betting. Penner is one of a group of taxi drivers whose tribulations make up the yarn. All the other drivers are continually broke betting on the nags, while Joe contents himself with a mania for raising homing pigeons. When things get too tough the taxi boys decide that the only way to beat the races is to own a horse of their own.

Joe is sent out to buy the horse, as the most trustworthy of the group. He gets an animal that can only run to his form when inspired by beer. But the trouble is that the boys do not learn this essential fact until they have been through reels of mishaps and laughs.

Chief virtue of the picture is the spotlight

it puts on Penner, and the opportunities it gives him to work in his own style, without the dragging in of hokey gags. Support, headed by Tom Kennedy, is excellent.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Best Joe Penner yet, and a laugh spot that the family audiences will take with relish. Previewed September 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Day the Bookies Wept' is a comedy riot from the opening gun to the final fadeout. Production values throughout are noticeably a shade above the average in this budget class."

VARIETY: "Cut to measure for Joe Penner, 'The Day the Bookies Wept' brings that comic into his full stride as a screen personality and provides customers with 64 minutes of uninterrupted hilarity."

"Two Bright Boys" Okay Programmer

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Burt Kelly
 Director Joseph Santley
 Original: Val Burton, Edmund L. Hartmann
 Stars: Jackie Cooper, Freddie Bartholomew
 Featured: Melville Cooper, Dorothy Peterson, Alan Dinehart, Willard Robertson, J. M. Kerrigan, Eddie Acuff, Hal K. Dawson, Harry Worth, Eddy C. Waller.
 Photographer Elwood Bredell
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Musical Director Charles Previn
 Film Editor Philip Cahn
 Time 69 minutes

"Two Bright Boys" rates aces in the program field. It teams Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew in a story refreshingly different, well scripted, and equally well directed.

As might be expected from the leads, the story has a British-American angle. Melville Cooper is a slick Englishman, with Freddie, his

son, and the pair live by their wits from one precarious moment to the next. J. M. Kerrigan, and his son, Jackie Cooper, are the American end of the plot, as rough and ready oil well workers.

The two elements become involved when Cooper finds himself forced into a situation by villain Alan Dinehart where he must defraud Kerrigan and Cooper of the oil well on which they have staked their all. But Cooper was never a meanie at heart, so as might be expected, he turns softie at the right moment, and helps to outwit the heavy, while doing his share to bring success to Kerrigan and Cooper.

The script offers laughs aplenty, and interesting color of the oil field background, building up to an action climax that is a real punch, in which there is plenty of fighting and other dirty work at the cross-roads.

Director Joseph Santley has turned in a

smooth piece of workmanship. Producer Burt Kelly started the picture off right with the script by Val Burton and Edmund Hartman, then gave it insurance with a cast of sure-fire players.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: An above average program bet, especially good for the kid days.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Two Bright Boys,' Universal has a neat little package that should fare well with the family trade. It has comedy, action and drama plus good performances by the juvenile stars."

VARIETY: "Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew have been provided with a thoroughly suitable vehicle in 'Two Bright Boys,' comedy drama highlighted by both action and laugh moments. It harnesses to fullest the talents of two joves, and comes through as excellent entertainment for general audiences."

"Thunder Afloat" Will Make Money

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 140%)

Producer J. Walter Ruben
Director George B. Seltz
Screenplay: Wells Root, Commander Harvey Haislip.
Based on story by Ralph Wheelwright, Commander Harvey Haislip.
Star Wallace Beery
Featured: Chester Morris, Virginia Grey, Douglas Dumbrille, Carl Esmond, Clem Bevans, John Qualen, Regis Toomey, Henry Victor, Addison Richards, Hans Joby, Henry Hunter, Jonathan Hale.
Photographer John Seitz
Musical Score..... Edward Ward, David Snell
Art Director..... Cedric Gibbons
Film Editor..... Frank E. Hull
Time 94 minutes

"Thunder Afloat" will undoubtedly make a lot of money. Which is a fact to be happy about for the sake of box offices, and to be regretted for a couple of other reasons.

The regrets are twofold: First, it is a pretty anemic bit of story writing; second, it is the type of picture that needs to be repeated only three or four times and the picture industry will have Uncle Sam in the war.

Yes, it concerns the hated Germans and their

submarines. It fights a private version of the World War of 1917 between horny-handed Wallace Beery, tug-boat owner and captain, and the Henie subs off the coast of New England. Chester Morris is on hand to help, but it is really Beery's war as the writers have told it.

If you've seen "Hell Divers" and a few other pictures you really do not need our help in telling the story. Yes, the rough and ready Beery and the slick Morris are the antagonists—before war—and when they land in the service Morris is the officer and Beery the common seaman. You've guessed all the rest.

But one thing still worries us. Every time Morris, in command of a splinter fleet of subchasers, has to call up the Boston Navy Yard for instructions, he goes to a pay telephone. The first time he had to fumble around for a coin, and we are still wondering what would have happened to the war if he hadn't had a nickle handy.

But, as we have said at the opening, the picture will probably make plenty of money. It is keyed to the times, and rings all the changes on the submarine theme. It has its moments of suspense. The picture is pretty

much concentrated on Beery, and gives his followers all the tried and true things they expect. Chester Morris is okay in a somewhat colorless role, while Virginia Grey is not anything to write home about in the alleged romance.

To the direction by George Seitz can be attributed the picture's virtues. This veteran took a thin yarn and then put into the celluloid every trick he knew with the touch of a man who knows his melodrama.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A great title, plenty of thrills and set for money. Previewed September 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Because of this pertinent interesting factor and because it is meatily concocted of excitement, conflict and strong situation comedy, 'Thunder Afloat' is exceptionally ripe marquee material."

VARIETY: "To the extent that the grim matters of military drama have universal fascination, the picture has compelling entertainment. And if it should prove that this type of theatrical fare meets the present temper and mood of the American populace, 'Thunder Afloat' should do hefty business under a barrage of exploitability and the luck of the news breaks."

"What A Life" Good Comedy

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer-Director Jay Theodore Reed
Based on play by Clifford Goldsmith
Screenplay..... Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder
Stars..... Jackie Cooper, Betty Field
Featured: John Howard, Janice Logan, Vaughan Glaser, Lionel Stander, Hedda Hopper, James Corner, Dorothy Stickney, Kathleen Lockhart, Lucien Littlefield, Sidney Miller, Andrew Tombes, George Guhl, Arthur Aylesworth, Wilda Bennet, Bennie Bartlett, Kay Stewart, Leonard Sues, Eddie Brian, Janet Waldo, Betty McLaughlin, Douglas Fahy, Roberta Smith, Nora Cecil.
Photographer Victor Milner
Film Editor..... William Shea
Time 75 minutes

This seems to have been a week equally divided between stirring war themes and a plentitude of good comedy. Your reviewer welcomed the week's offerings, both ways, but got most of his pleasure out of the comedies.

And "What a Life" takes rank with the best of the week's memories. J. Theodore Reed has taken the Broadway stage hit, and with good scripting and casting, made it one of those down to earth tales of human beings that audiences love.

It is a high school story. Jackie Cooper is the center of the action. And, as your parents know, Jackie is at the age where he is into one scrape, and just out of that one, before he is into another. Reed keeps it human all the time, without "reaching" for gags.

It seems that Jackie has been brought up to feel that he must fill the big shoes of his father as a Princeton hero. The truth is, he gets more inspiration drawing caricatures. There is a girl, played by Betty Fields, who starts out as a wall flower, and then discovers herself in time to be in great demand for the school's annual dance. The girl is a new personality worth watching.

Good performances are given by John Howard, as the school's assistant principal, Vaughan Glaser—who comes from the New York stage cast—as the principal of the school. And just such a principal as you would expect your own grandmother to be. Lionel Stander is in for a good spot, and so is Hedda Hopper. In fact, it is a hand-selected cast. We should not forget another player from the New York stage

cast, James Porter, who does a youthful heavy always making trouble for Cooper. The boy will be seen again.

Strength of picture is in the understanding handling of the adolescent age by Director Reed. He had a good play to start with, and then he knew what to do with it. Incidentally, Reed served as both producer and director on this one. He can afford to be happy over the result.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: One of those healthy family pictures that make them forget some of the rusty epics. . . . Not big, but darn good general audience. Spot it right, and you will be well satisfied.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount has a grand show in the screen version of Clifford Goldsmith's 'What A Life.' The prestige of the play plus the fine performances enacted by the whole cast will insure its box office success."

VARIETY: "'What A Life' is probably the most legitimate American school picture yet made, with just enough serious undertow to make the fun all the more appealing. It will enliven and grace any program, will earn enthusiastic word-of-mouth and therefore should prosper, despite its lack of name heft."

THE DIGEST

*Publishes the Only
Authentic Box Office Ratings*

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jeane Jones	FOX	182	%
Gunza Din	REKO	180	
The Rains Came	FOX	162	
Dodge City	WAR	158	
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156	
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156	
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	147	
Union Pacific	PAR	145	
The Women	MGM	144	

Kentucky	FOX	137	
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133	
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131	
Four Feathers	UA	130	
Beau Geste	PAR	129	
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	129	
Stagescoach	UA	126	
The Star Maker	PAR	126	
Bachelor Mother	REKO	126	
Fifth Avenue Girl	REKO	126	
Juarez	WAR	123	
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123	
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123	
Man About Town	PAR	122	
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	122	
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121	
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	120	
Love Affair	REKO	120	

July Angels Have Wings	COL	119	
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	116	
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	REKO	116	
Little Princess	FOX	116	
Second Fiddle	FOX	114	
Made For Each Other	UA	112	
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	112	
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112	
(Nazl Spy foreign average)	WAR	102	
In Name Only	REKO	111	
Midnight	PAR	111	
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110	
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110	
Honolulu	MGM	107	
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106	
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102	
Wuthering Heights	UA	102	
Paris Honey-moon	PAR	102	

Captain Fury	UA	98	
Zaza	PAR	98	
Man of Conquest	REP	96	

Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94	
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94	
Tallspin	FOX	94	
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93	

Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	81	
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They Shall Have Music	UA	89	
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87	

Broadway Serenade	MGM	84	
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B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	143	%
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133	
Evamotion	MGM	131	
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130	
Dark Victory	WAR	128	

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112	
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111	
The Beachcomber	PAR	110	

Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106	
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It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99	
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98	
Lucky Night	MGM	98	
Maisie	MGM	97	

Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95	
Hotel For Women	FOX	95	

On Borrowed Time	MGM	92	
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92	
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92	
The Under-Pup	UNIV	92	
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90	
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90	
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	90	

Naughty But Nice	WAR	86	
Fast and Loose	MGM	86	
Frontier Marshal	FOX	86	
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	86	
Off The Record	WAR	85	
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85	
Five Came Back	WAR	85	
These Glamour Girls	REKO	85	
Sergeant Madden	MGM	85	
Four Girls in White	MGM	84	

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

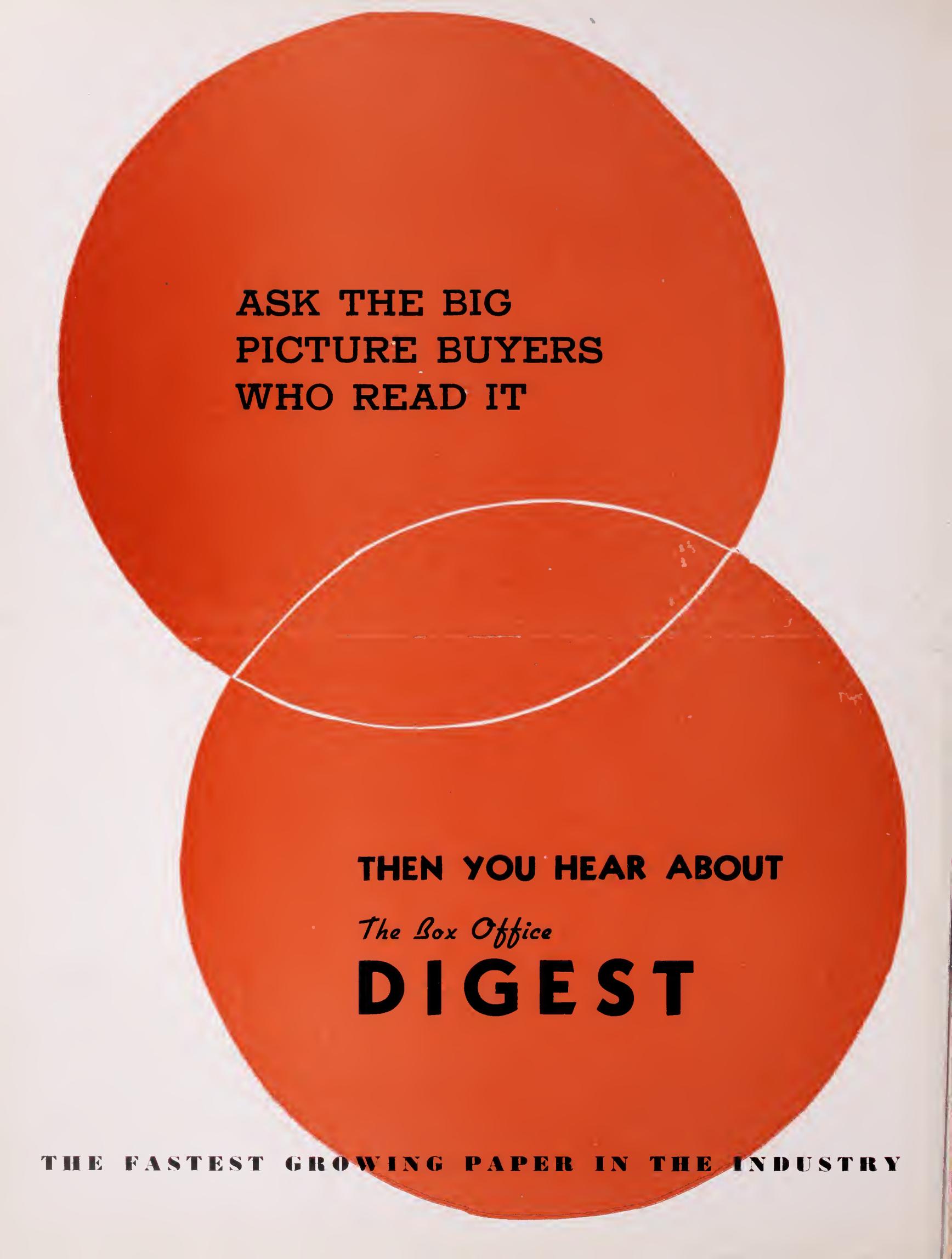
D. BELOW \$100,000

Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81
The Mikado	UNIV	77
Whispering Enemies	COL	75

Winter Carnival	UA	83
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	80
I Stole A Million	UNIV	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Coast Guard	COL	76
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	76
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
The Gorilla	FOX	75
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR	75
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
Bridal Suite	MGM	72
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72
Boy Friend	FOX	72
The Lady and the Mob	COL	71
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	70
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	70
King of The Turf	UA	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Clouds Over Europe	COL	70
Stronger Than Desire	MGM	70
Our Leading Citizen	PAR	70
Way Down South	RKO	68
Stolen Life	PAR	67
Hotel Imperial	PAR	66
Zenobia	UA	66
Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	64
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	63
The Flying Irishman	RKO	63
Smiling Along	FOX	63
Climbing High	GB	63
Women in the Wind	WAR	62

Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	79
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Blondie Takes A Vacation	COL	73
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Missing Daughters	COL	73
The Spellbinder	RKO	72
It Could Happen To You	FOX	72
King of Chinatown	PAR	72
Society Lawyer	MGM	72
Persons in Hiding	PAR	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	72
Unexpected Father	UNIV	72
Nancy Drew Reporter	WAR	71
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Sorority House	RKO	71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR	71
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	71
The Girl and the Gambler	RKO	71
Quick Millions	FOX	71
Blind Alley	COL	71
Island of Lost Men	PAR	70
Chasing Danger	FOX	70
Unmarried	PAR	70
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	70
Ex-Champ	UNIV	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
Big Town Czar	UNIV	70
On Trial	WAR	70
Torchy Blaine in Chinatown	WAR	70
Ambush	PAR	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
Torchy For Mayor	WAR	70
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	70
Within the Law	MGM	70
Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR	70
Death of a Champion	PAR	70
Some Like It Hot	PAR	69
The Kid From Texas	MGM	69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Polic	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
Million Dollar Legs	PAR	68
News Is Made At Night	FOX	68
The Family Next Door	UNIV	68
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
Adventures of Jane A'gen	UNIV	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
Fixer Dugan	RKO	68
The Saint in London	RKO	68
For Love or Money	UNIV	68
Miracles For Sale	MGM	68
The Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
Conspiracy	RKO	67
A Woman Is A Judge	COL	66
Forgotten Woman	UNIV	66
Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation	FOX	66
Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX	66
Code of the Streets	UNIV	66
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
They Asked For It	UNIV	66
The Ware Case	GB	66
Cowboy Quarterback	WAR	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	65
Tell No Tales	MGM	65
Playing With Dynamite	WAR	65
They All Come Out	MGM	64
Exile Express	GN	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR	64
6,000 Enemies	MGM	63
Night Work	PAR	63
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	54
Career	RKO	53
This Man Is News	PAR	52

Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81
The Mikado	UNIV	77
Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71
She Married A Cop	REP	70
Hidden Power	COL	70
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	70
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
Trapped in the Sky	COL	70
Orphan in the Street	REP	70
Parents On Trial	PAR	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
The Five Little Peppers and		
How They Grew	COL	69
Konga, the Wild Stallion	COL	68
Streets of New York	MONO	68
Inside Information	UNIV	68
I Was A Convict	REP	68
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
Behind Prison Gates	COL	67
House of Fear	UNIV	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	GN	67
Wolf Call	MONO	66
Forged Passport	REP	66
First Offenders	COL	66
Rookie Cop	RKO	66
Wanted by Scotland Yard	MONO	66
Waterfront	WAR	66
Everybody's Hobby	WAR	66
Mickey The Kid	REP	65
The Zero Hour	REP	65
Outside These Walls	COL	65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave	REP	65
Mr. Wong in Chinatown	MONO	65
Smuggled Cargo	REP	65
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64
Should A Girl Marry-	MONO	64
Should Husbands Work	REP	63
Street of Missing Men	REP	63
Star Reporter	MONO	63
Undercover Agent	MONO	63
The Man Who Dared	MONO	63
Boy's Reformatory	MONO	63
Panama Lady	RKO	62
The Girl From Rio	MONO	61



**ASK THE BIG
PICTURE BUYERS
WHO READ IT**

THEN YOU HEAR ABOUT

The Box Office

DIGEST

THE FASTEST GROWING PAPER IN THE INDUSTRY

The Box Office
DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 4.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., SEPTEMBER 25, 1939

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First Low-Down On
Great Britain's
Film Selling Problems

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Week's Pictures With
Many Hits Holding Over

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●
THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED
●

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

"DIGEST HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week COLUMBIA Wins With

"GOLDEN BOY"---121%



Vice-President in Charge of Production
HARRY COHN



Producer
WILLIAM PERLBERG



Director
ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

Featured
EDWARD S. BROPHY
JOSEPH CALLEIA

Screenplay
LEWIS MELTZER
DANIEL TARADASH
SARAH Y. MASON
VICTOR HEERMAN

Play by
CLIFFORD ODETS

Photographers
NICK MUSURACA
KARL FREUND



WILLIAM HOLDEN



BARBARA STANWYCK



ADOLPHE MENJOU

The Box Office DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

WAR IS WAR!

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

For two issues The Editor has been decrying the atmosphere of war panic that has hit the picture industry. He had two definite reasons for his words. To-wit:

First of all, the type of propoganda that was going out over the country through trade papers and syndicated lay columns was being written by people who do not know picture making or picture selling.

Second, as a result, both exhibitors and customers were being sold a bill of goods to the effect that pictures would be cheaper next year. And you couldn't blame even a one-eyed calf if he decided that "cheaper" meant "poorer pictures."

So much for what The Editor has said.

He has tried to point out that the necessities of the situation will inevitably make for showmanship demands on the producers which will work for better box office product, while the same necessities will also only enforce those economies which solid experience dictates in an emergency, and which, in themselves, will probably tend for a more stable industry for the future.

* * *

That is the surface picture. Fewer "million dollar gambles,"—more "half million dollar certainties."

But it leaves the big problem still open. Which is:

Do the big shots of Hollywood—and this includes the agents—know that there is a war on?

If not, they had better wake up.

There is little sense in a studio executive spending an eighteen hour session wondering where he can cut the cost of watchman service, secretarial supplies, postage stamps, etc., if he knows that in the morning he is to meet an agent for a \$75,000 a picture star who will point-blank refuse to accept a nickle cut.

The producer's eighteen hours of effort, accompanied by all his sub-managers and auditors, will save the studio \$689.43. The agent—who has never contributed anything creative to the actual making of box office entertainment, will stymie his efforts to the tune of many husky thousands a week.

Or, perhaps, we should not blame the agent.

Maybe it is just the Holly-

wood personality, born yesterday as a result of some producer's nursing, and unaware that THERE IS A WAR.

* * *

Let's come down to cases, boys and girls of Hollywood.

The situation is so serious that fellows like Joe Schenck, Darryl Zanuck, William Goetz, Harry and Jack Cohn, were quick to announce to their bosses—the stockholders—that they had taken stiff salary cuts.

The situation is so cloudy that no one but a gossip on a street corner will attempt to make a guess as to what the next six months—or the next six years—will bring.

Take one crude example, which we have on the best of authority from the serious gentlemen who study the annual statements: Last year Twentieth Century-Fox did a ten million dollar gross in England. Right now, if they knew they could do the same gross, the drop in the pound rate would make that read seven and a half millions.

Do the subtraction. Then add this thought: How can they do one-fifth of that gross if present exhibition conditions continue in Great Britain—and if they spread to the Dominions?

When you are done with that mathematical problem, make a rough guess at how much further the pound may fade, at the difficulty of getting any CASH out of a war-torn country—and it takes CASH in Hollywood to make the pictures—and then catch your breath before you start to kid yourself.

Because you were probably just ready to say that Latin America, and the two dozen assorted other nations still at peace, would make up that loss.

That's a joke.

By the time revenue from those countries is translated

from one coinage or another into dollars and cents it probably amounts on a single picture to less than was paid the head electrician on the making of the picture.

So we say to Hollywood:

"Why not decide to conserve our bread and butter for the duration of the situation, and admit willingness to forego our cake until there is some cake to be had?"

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. Twentieth Century-Fox	39	Releases.....	95
2. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	36	Releases.....	94
3. United Artists	13	Releases.....	94
4. Warner Brothers	38	Releases.....	86
5. Paramount	38	Releases.....	82
6. RKO-Radio	27	Releases.....	82
7. Universal	27	Releases.....	79
8. Columbia	27	Releases.....	75
9. Republic	18	Releases.....	69
10. Monogram	15	Releases.....	66
11. Grand National	4	Releases.....	65
12. Gaumont-British	2	Releases.....	64

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H. J. YATES IMPRESSES PRESS WITH OUTLINE OF REPUBLIC'S POLICY; HIGHLIGHTER HAS BUSY WEEK

H. J. Yates, president of Republic Pictures, held one of his "fire-side chats" last week, and if he keeps up this practice, is set to become one of the picture executives' most popular with the trade press. . . . Because Yates sets himself in the center of a group of the sharp-shooting trade pressers, states his company's position with utter candor, then leans back and says, "Shoot questions at me, boys." . . . The questions come, thick and fast, and the replies are frank and clear. . . . Yates established this "fire-side chat" policy a year ago when stating Republic's policy for the past season. . . . This week's session concerned the problems presented by the war, and took on additional interesting angles because the Republic prexy is so recently back from Europe.

Autry Wowed 'Em From London To Dublin

Before getting to questions of the future, there is interest in reporting the enthusiasm of Yates over the sensational personal appearance tour of Gene Autry—and his horse—in the top key spots of the British Isles and in Eire—Ireland, to you. . . . There must be one hundred and one stories to tell about this trip, as Yates and his star travelled from city to city, meeting all and sundry from Lord Mayors to army privates—and, most importantly, audiences. . . . We'll just tell one. . . . At the Royal Theater, in Dublin, Autry, after finishing all the stage appearance that could be crowded into the evening hours, was compelled to come out on the marquee of the theater and sing for a crowd of two thousand who had been unable to get into the theater. . . . There is a big park across from the theater, and that's why so many could crowd there and wait. . . . The topper: On his final "marquee appearance" before planing for Belfast, after the cowboy had finished his numbers and said his good-byes, the crowd spontaneously burst out in the stirring song, "Come Back to Erin." . . . Yates has big plans for Autry. . . . And don't forget, that wise showman, Darryl Zanuck made a deal with Republic some time ago which will enable him to cash in on the sagebrush tenor. . . . Of interest also: One of the first orders placed by British military officials for films to entertain the Tommies at camp was for eight prints on Autry pictures.

Republic Will Bear Down On What Its Customers Want

As regards Republic's policy in the face of present uncertainties, it sums up about this way: Yates is gearing his machine to deliver everything promised, at the quality promised, up until January, and then frankly states, that no company, even with the aid of an astrologer, can at present set plans any later. . . . Day to day developments must tell the tale. . . . "Wagons Westward," with John Wayne in the lead, will go through at top budget, and with all the additional name value that

7 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. The Rains Came	FOX	162...165
2. The Old Maid	WAR	143...147
3. Beau Geste	PAR	129...134
4. Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	90... 95
5. Man They Could Not Hang	COL	68... 73
6. Behind Prison Gates	COL	67... 69
7. Torchy Plays With Dynamite	WAR	65... 67

can be mustered into it. . . . Incidentally, this one should give Republic dividends on its "Man of Conquest" of last year. . . . The number of Autry pictures to be made between now and January will be at a minimum of six, with any additions depending on his length of absence at Twentieth Century-Fox. . . . The regular releases will be maintained on schedule, and at the budgets originally set. . . . The accent will be on ACTION. . . . Yates says that is what his American customers want, and that he hasn't been able to find that his customers abroad or in Latin America are any different in their tastes. . . . He won't go wild on war themes for two reasons: First because he believes the public is going to be hungry for entertainment and not for worries when they attend theaters; second, because authentic newsreels and topical subjects coming from abroad will outshine any synthetic studio product. . . . "Hit Parade" has been temporarily postponed to allow all resources to be concentrated on sure-fire action themes. . . . Cuts have been made in the selling force that probably would have been made anyway, war or no war. . . . Little likelihood of drastic studio cuts, because Republic has always operated as close to the efficiency point as was possible. . . . That sums up an interesting hour around President Yates' fire-side.

Hollywood Headaches Aplenty Without A War Problem

Hollywood wouldn't need the effects of a war in Europe, to have its headaches these weeks. . . . Just when an aspirin tablet in the form of a peace settlement straightened out the threatened actors strike, we now come up with the danger of an IATSE strike, plus threats that it will become nation wide unless the producers capitulate. . . . The deadline is for Tuesday, and compromises are being worked out as we go to press that may save the situation. . . . But there is another head-

8 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. Each Dawn I Die	WAR	129...127
2. Lady of the Tropics	MGM	116...107
3. In Name Only	MGM	111...107
4. They Shall Have Music	UA	89... 85
5. These Glamour Girls	MGM	85... 82
6. Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	83... 80
7. I Stole A Million	UNIV	77... 71
8. Way Down South	RKO	68... 64

ache. . . . The New Deal's trust busters are in town, and raining subpoenas for appearance before the Federal Grand jury with all the abandon of a British air fleet over Germany. . . . The hearings will principally concern theater matters, but the action is too close to Hollywood for comfort. . . . Incidentally, your Highlighter suggested a few weeks ago that they might just as well call off that howl dinner to Attorney General Frank Murphy, since it wouldn't do any good, anyway. . . . Well, after two postponements, it has been called off. . . . War problems are the alibi.

Special Effects Men Coming Into Their Own

With the necessity, brought on by the war, of avoiding distant and freakish location trips, with all the gambles involved, be prepared to find the Special Effects men come into their own. You know, "Special Effects By So-and-So"—that line you read on the screen but which disappears so quickly that you never quite get the name. . . . Producers will not want to lose "bigness" in pictures, because "bigness" is what makes shows. . . . In the past year it has made many. . . . Which reminds us as we see the healthy figures being run up by "The Rains Came," to express the thought that Clarence Brown must have given at least an orchid to Fred Sersen on that picture. . . . It is a great job, because the very title of the picture suggests that the atmosphere is the story. . . . And Sersen gave it the atmosphere. . . . Remember the job this same fellow did on "Suez?" . . . And we think we recall "In Old Chicago." . . . These Special Effects men are the modern wizards. . . . And, by the way, we should explain to exhibitors, that Special Effects are not cheap. . . . They cost money, plenty of it. . . . Their value, in present situation, is that conceived and executed by the right men—Sersen for a shining example—they can be controlled as to cost, while a gambling location trip to some Utah wild must be dependent on the wind, the sun, and the loco weed that hits location units.

Let's Ramble Around The Studios' Corners

Reports from the sneak previews have it that Charles Rogers has a neat piece of merchandise in "Our Neighbors the Carters." . . . We hope the length of the title doesn't bring him too many letters from exhibitors. . . . But his "Star Maker" gave them both marquee length, and reports are very cheerful on its business. . . . Jean Arthur is suspended for twelve weeks by Columbia for refusing the femme lead in "His Girl Friday." . . . This is the new version of "The Front Page." . . . Despite the fact that Howard Hawks is making the picture, it is our humble belief that Jean probably knew more about the values of the role for her than Columbia did. . . .

(Continued on Page 5)

"GOLDEN BOY" HITTING HIGHEST FOR WEEK WHILE MANY HITS HOLD OVER

COLUMBIA--I New Release

Columbia Studios walked away with top honors this week with a new release, "GOLDEN BOY," adapted from the successful stage play of the same name. "GOLDEN BOY" has been pre-released in some 32 cities' first run situations and is averaging quite well at 121%, considering the terrific heat in many of its opening spots.

When Clifford Odets' "GOLDEN BOY" proved such a smash hit in New York last year all the major studios started bidding for it and it was finally Harry Cohn of Columbia who bid the highest for this play.

Aside from the value in the play's success it is probably Barbara Stanwyck who is drawing them in so that they can discover the newcomer, William Holden. Adolphe Menjou is also prominently featured. Others who turn in grand performances are: Joseph Calleia, Edward S. Brophy and Sam Levene.

This outstanding Columbia release, which incidentally is one of their biggest pictures this year, only being surpassed by "Only Angels Have Wings" and "In Name Only," was produced under William Perlberg's supervision and directed by Rouben Mamoulian. Producer Perlberg is setting up a pretty consistent record for himself at Columbia.

WARNERS--I Release

Warners-First National seem to have a fairly good release this week in the new Priscilla Lane-John Garfield picture, "DUST BE MY DESTINY," which on its first openings is averaging 110%. Evidently this one is a good follow-up for Warner's big hits with the Lane girls, particularly "Four Daughters" and "Daughters Courageous."

Others prominently featured are: Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, Charles Grapewin and Henry Armetta.

Whether or not this one will hold to its present high rate is still undeterminable, yet apparently these two players and this type of prison melodrama seems to meet with popular approval.

MGM--Also I New Release

MGM have quite a satisfactory release in the new Edward G. Robinson picture, "BLACKMAIL," which so far is averaging 97%. Robinson has never failed to be a certain box office draw and this one is no exception, for there are really no important names in the supporting cast. Among the featured players are Gene Lockhart, Bobs Watson, and Big Boy Williams.

This exciting melodrama was produced by John Considine and directed by H. C. Potter.

UNIVERSAL--I New Release

Universal's new co-starring team of Richard Arlen and Andy Devine have completed the second in the series entitled "TROPIC FURY," 80%.

Of Five New Releases In The Past Week, Two Rated Over 100%, Two Came Through Fair, And One Was Rather Weak.

and it has been released to theatres in the past week. Like the first of this new series, "Mutiny of the Black Hawk," this one is also getting by pretty well, although the production values could be built up for first run situations. At present it is the Arlen following that must start the picture off. This

"Uncle Carl" Has Left Us

As we go to press, one of the saddest items of news that we could imagine reaches us. Carl Laemmle, grand old man and grand old vital figure of the picture industry since its infant days, has left us—victim of a heart attack.

Present emotions will not allow us to write all the words that we would like to pour forth. We knew Carl Laemmle as our employer for many years; we knew him as a friend for many more years. And as a friend, we were just a grain of sand among the thousands of friends in all parts of the world who called him "Friend."

Our deepest sympathy goes to Carl Laemmle, Jr., and to Rosabelle Laemmle Bergerman, in an hour that we can well appreciate is so tragic for them.

They have the consolation of knowing that their loss will be shared by all who ever had personal contact with their father; and by thousands whose only contact was through his sturdy character.

The industry has lost one of its glorious pioneers; all of us have lost an "Uncle." Perhaps the best words to express our loss are contained in the loving title he gained by his character—"Uncle Carl."

ROBERT E. WELSH.

series, however, should be very popular in the nabes and particularly in houses where action pictures are preferable.

Beverly Roberts is the new leading lady. "TROPIC FURY" was produced by Ben Pivar and directed by Christy Cabanne, the veteran who made many big pictures and who also gave box offices that surprise hit, "Girl of the Limberlost."

REPUBLIC--I New Release

Republic studios have a much stronger than average release in their new airplane thriller entitled, "FLIGHT AT MIDNIGHT." Major Roscoe Turner, who has been in the limelight for some time and more so recently because of winning the Cleveland Air Races, is starred, with the romantic leads portrayed by Phil Regan and Jean Parker. Robert Armstrong is prominently featured which certainly does make a well balanced cast.

"FLIGHT AT MIDNIGHT" was produced by Armand Schaefer and directed by Sidney Salkow.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

Herman Mankiewicz, MGM producer, back at the studio after being banged up in an auto accident in Arizona, or Arkansas, or some one of those states with which they start off the Quiz radio programs. . . . Smiling as broadly as ever, and with the usual fund of gag comments, this time based on the inside life of a smash-up victim. . . . The Highlighter thinks that Twentieth Century is on the right track with its new plan for the Jones Family. . . . That of bringing in characters outside the family roster in order to broaden the plot field. . . . With all due appreciation of the success of family pictures in the past season, we must react to exhibitor letters that tell us the family plots were running dry. . . . According to their patrons.

And Now Sam Goldwyn Wants To Join The Team

Sam Goldwyn, one of the balkiest individuals anyone ever attempted to hitch up to team play, discovered last week that there was a war problem. . . . Immediately he dispatched letters here, there, and yon—including one addressed to the Hays organization, from which he enjoys resigning. . . . Sam wants an all-industry committee to discuss and evolve plans. . . . Ralph Morgan, of the Actors Guild, said it was a pretty good idea. . . . Joe Schenck said it was premature. . . . Your Highlighter merely suggests that if it ever did come about the committee might just as well make Sam chairman and czar, or accept his resignation in advance of the first meeting. . . . William LeBaron is going on two weeks vacation trip to the East. . . . And there is a war on. . . . Well, maybe it will give Frank Freeman a free hand for the efficiency moves planned to meet the tough new problems created by Heel Hitler. . . . Good news to The Highlighter is the announcement that John Farrow will have John Twist collaborating on the screenplay to be made from his "Father Damien," which Farrow will also direct.

5 New Features Not in Last Issue

		We Est.
1. Golden Boy	COL	121.....105
2. Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	110..... 90
3. Blackmail	MGM	97.....100
4. Tropic Fury	UNIV	80..... 80
5. Flight at Midnight	REP	80..... 80

COOPERATIVE BUYING GROUPS LOOMING STRONG IN OHIO, SAYS FIELD MAN



MAURICE J. RIDGE

Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 18.—While the major distributor's exchanges are burning up the road trying to close the 1939-40 product, with little success so far, as buying is mighty slow in these parts, there is one wise old owl, who is sailing along by leaps and bounds, with his franchise product, Republic. It is Nat Lefton.

Nat has the Republic franchise for both Cleveland and Cincinnati territory. Of the nearly eight hundred accounts, he is selling more than 90 per cent of the possibilities.

"How do you do it?" we inquired. "Well," said Nat. "We will stay in business and get along as we are just so long as we maintain the confidence of the customer. We believe that there should be just as cordial relations between the manufacturer and the consumer in this business, as there is in the grocery line. We do not overcharge for our product. We only ask a fair return. We have no million dollar salaries, no relatives to support. We never let our greed get away with us. We just apply good horse sense to our affairs. We have fair product, get a fair price for it, and when it gets better, our customers will gladly pay us for it in proportion to its increased return. It's simple. In the long run we will be ahead, and I appreciate the imposed confidence, placed in us by the Ohio theatre owners."

Mr. Lefton expressed himself as appreciating The Digest's prognosis of pictures. He said he watches it every week, and finds that we have been both fair and candid and adds "a thing this industry could well adopt throughout."

Cleveland exhibitors tell us that they are not permitted to book pictures over the telephone, and

that after 4 o'clock, the exchanges turn a deaf ear their way, telling them to come back tomorrow. This city is one of the most outstanding in its coldness, as between exhibitor and branch office of the distributor. None of the suburban and subsequent run accounts have bought the 1939-40 product. And some of this product has had its first run and is available for them. They are standing pat, refusing to pay last year's prices. The exchanges are standing pat likewise, asking for increases but willing to take the same deals.

Cooperatives Gathering Strength In Ohio Under Mooney

Milton Mooney, head of the Co-Operative Exhibitors of Ohio, with more than a hundred theatres in his group, has become the nemesis of the exchange branch managers. They are working with him, on the surface, but under cover are trying every conceivable trick they have up their sleeves, to break his co-operative neck.

So far Warner Bros., through the friendly administrations of Grad Sears, the G. S. M. of the Brothers, and his branch managers have whole heartedly worked with the Mooney group, and are getting pretty well lined up with them. It looks now that Mooney has his proposition so well in hand that he will be in a position in 1940 to book for more than 200 of Ohio's seven hundred theatres. Harry Bugie, a former Warner representative in Cincinnati for 11 years, heads up the southern Ohio branch for Mooney. Bugie is as old in this game as the old Mutual days. Shrewd, suave, diplomatic, he is making tremendous gains in that section for Co-Operative.

It would appear the Buckeye State is destined for a big change in distribution in 1940.

Ohio Presents A Balkan War Front These Days

The Schine Circuit with Government problems a plenty, with the producer owned chains in much more friendly relations with the Independents than Schine and Shea Circuits, with Co-Operative making tremendous inroads, and with the Independent Theatre organization, working harmoniously with over 400 members under the leadership of Prexy Martin Smith and Manager Pete Wood, Ohio

bids fair next year, to give a lot of headaches to branch managers. These branch managers in Ohio are about the most cold-blooded group as representatives of their companies, that we have found since leaving the coast. They are close enough to New York Home Offices, to feel the sting of demands emanating therefrom. They sure carry out orders, to sell on a basis as good or better than last year, regardless of the business situations, which through here, elsewhere, are away off of 1938 receipts. Hellsapoppin already, and less selling has actually been done, than any previous year since the war started against independents. The big cities are ready for bookings on pictures like "Stanley and Livingstone" and others, but contracts are still lying on exhibitors' desks unsigned. In another month, the exchanges are going to feel the brunt of it in their collections. Then the independents feel that Home Office sanity will come to their aid, and prices will be adjusted to where they can stay in business.

Pete Wood On The Firing Line In Dangerous Tax Fight

During our stay in Ohio found Pete Wood, the long time leader of the Ohio Independent Exhibitors, again back at his desk after a month's session with the doctors, and into the thick of the fray. Ohio folks not only in the exhibition field, but other industries as well are facing the biggest tax fight of their lives.

Rev. Herbert Bigelow, who is the beneficiary in a way, of funds left by the Henry George Single Tax foundation, is waging a fight to place an old age pension plan in the constitution of Ohio. It provides for a tax on property valued at \$20,000.00 an acre, as well as on incomes and sales. If this proposition were to be passed at the November election, it would hit much of the city owned theatre property, in addition to sales taxes and incomes, in order to secure the \$150,000,000.00 added taxes it would require to pay all the aged above sixty years of age, fifty dollars a month.

At a meeting on Wednesday of this week, a group of business men in Columbus, placed Pete Wood at the head of the publicity campaign, to fight the bill. He is preparing information to be made in-

to short trailers, to be shown on every Ohio picture screen. Pete told us that this proposition was one of the most vicious that has been proposed in Ohio for a long time, and that it has tremendous support. At the present time, the minority party in Ohio, the Democrats, have espoused it, in getting behind Rev. Bigelow, to secure the necessary signatures, and to get it on the ballot as a referendum measure.

Rev. Bigelow is associated with the same group in the east, that fostered the single tax issue in California last year. He is a former Congressman, and a power with the unemployed of the Buckeye State.

The Exhibitors Are Ready If Hollywood Makes The Pictures

In a hysterical world created largely by a madman in Europe, it is refreshing to meet the typical American exhibitor, who is calmly approaching the problems he must help solve, to keep this great industry moving steadily ahead. In three states covered this week, the great majority of them, wholeheartedly endorsed The Digest's editorial, "Make us good product and we will do our share to keep the wheels moving," was the co-operative attitude from the coal fields of Kentucky and West Virginia to the blast furnaces of smoky Pittsburgh.

Fear on the part of some of the more heady exhibitors, lest production costs be trimmed too much, is being dissipated.

Hollywood can count on this section of the country, so far as the exhibitor is concerned, doing his bit. He will do more, and they generally declare, that if the studios do not let them down in production, the foreign market need not engulf this industry.

Once more the man on the firing line—the exhibitor—recognizes his absolute dependence on the man in the studio. This was very evident this week, in early fears about what would happen as a result of Europe's madness. Following a bitter selling season, where acrimony and hard bargaining was everywhere apparent, the war has brought out the oft repeated slogan that every part of the industry must be healthy, and to make it so, a co-operative approach from all sides is needed.

"SHOULD EXCHANGE EMPLOYEES OWN THEATRES?" IS A QUESTION NICHOLS MET IN KANSAS CITY



HARRY E. NICHOLS

Kansas City, Mo.—A very dangerous and highly illegal practice, that is if we interpret the U. S. Supreme Court's decision correctly in the Texas case, is becoming more and more prevalent in this industry. It is fast becoming a serious menace to the very foundation of competitive relations in the motion picture industry.

We refer to the practice of exchange employees owning and operating theatres, in direct opposition to the firms' clients and to the detriment of their own companies, while drawing a salary check from a local exchange.

It is bad enough when a film salesman owns an interest in a theatre and in the case of a manager, unthinkable; but when a district manager is said to own a group of theatres and okays his own contracts for these houses, then it is time somebody focused the full light of publicity on this type of procedure.

Now we want to set you straight on one thing before we tell you one particular story as given to us. We don't for a minute believe that the New York office of this person's company knows anything about his theatre activities and would countenance said acts if they did. Because, in similar circumstances where it applies to this company's old customers, retaining their year to year agreements in the face of competitive bidding, experience proves that they know nothing about such deals. In fact this is the only sour note we have found about this company's sales policy, on our trip over half the country this Summer; other than the usual squawks one hears from exhibitors, about high film rentals charged and about which we don't always get excited.

The Field Man Gets Down To Theater Cases

The Giles and the Strand theaters of Kansas City, Mo., are owned in whole or part by Harris P. Wolfberg, district manager of MGM and operated by his young son, John, and Mr. H. Wolfberg owns in whole or part the Broadway in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Common rumor has it that he also is interested in the Tarkio Theatres, Tarkio, Mo. These theatres are located in highly competitive zones, with the exception of the Tarkio. The Giles is direct opposition to the Westport, among others; and the Strand is direct opposition to the Lindbergh, among others. The Broadway is competitive with the Liberty and Strand, the last named, a Fox partnership from a booking angle.

We have the setting. Now as to the tales of a major company district manager's policy in the operation of his own theatres. Independent theatre owners know how to fight distributor owned chains and can meet the ordinary type of this class of competition, but when the district manager hides behind his official position of authority, with its intrigues and closed door sessions, no doubt taking into its confidence, the local branch manager and head booker; there you have all the earmarks of stifling competition with a vengeance.

A case in point to prove our argument is silently attested to by the files of the local K. C. dailies. The Strand plays day and date with Fox's Rockhill theatre on many of its bookings, at the same admission price, and they are within five minutes car ride of each other. We would like to see the color of the hair of any independent exhibitor, that was ever able to do that against Fox any place in the country.

MGM's Standard Policy To Protect Old Customers

MGM has a well known policy, and that is the protection of its old customers' rights to play its product year after year, and in a great many cases producer-owned chains have not been able to take MGM away from its independent accounts. We refer you to Vosco Call of Brigham, Utah. In the case of the Lindbergh Theatre, K. C., this policy was grossly vio-

lated. Mrs. A. Baier who owns this theatre, which is situated only a few blocks from the Strand, had purchased MGM for nine years, the Strand was only a 15 cent house then. She contracted for the 37-38 product of MGM and received her clearance over the Strand; but in the midst of her season, the Strand was taken over by Mr. Wolfberg, who went to 25 cents, to seek clearance over the Lindbergh. His own firm's good customer, who had purchased her contract and clearance in good faith. Mrs. Baier wisely cancelled her unplayed contract including news reels and nothing was ever said about it by the home office of MGM or the local K. C. branch. No threatening suits as is the usual procedure for unplayed time. Above all, this is the only cancellation of a news reel without penalties, that we have ever run across.

Now let's see how well the MGM exchequer is being remembered by its employees' operation of the Strand. Special privilege is brought to the fore when we examine the film deal at the Strand. One would think that with MGM demanding percentage deals all over the country that the Strand would not be exempt. Here are a few prices chosen at random: "Maisie," 21.50; "Tarzan Finds A Son," 31.50; "Dr. Kildare," 17.50. Remember, please, that the Strand often runs on a weekly change policy. These same pictures were contracted for at the Westport at 35%, although in another zone.

The Situation Becomes Involved When Considering Clearances

Now we'll go across town and visit the Westport, which is opposition to Mr. Wolfberg's Giles theatre. The Giles is the old Mogan, and has been remodeled and is now a very fine and up-to-date suburban house. Here the picture changes. The Giles is now the 20 cent house with the Westport 25 cents. We next examine the work sheet of the Westport new deal for the MGM 1939-40 product. There are ten percentage pictures listed as follows: 4 at 35% preferred time, Sat., Sun., Mon., Tues. 6 at 35% in groups of three, Sun., Mon., Tues., and 6 pictures from the bottom group, one day, at 17.50 flat. Which you will admit is a very fair deal for MGM, but

if the Giles enjoys the same flat rental deals as Strand, the Westport won't be with us long.

The Westport can't buy the MGM features unless he pays a premium by contracting for the shorts. Which brings to mind Mr. Rogers on the rostrum at the Allied convention, extolling the virtues of the code, and that he would not tolerate any member of his sales force jamming shorts down the exhibitors' throats, so as to sell his features.

Field Man Says They Must Still Buy The Shorts

The clause reads: "Exhibitor agrees to play and pay for one short per feature commencing November 15, 1939. If and as available, \$3.50 per reel." We understand that Mr. Rogers spoke at a time when he thought the code would save the industry, but now there is no code, and maybe he has retreated from his Minneapolis position.

We next examine the clearance provisions. Here we find the fine hand of a contract expert and one which is highly desirable where the author owns one of the houses in the competitive zone and has the power to negotiate his firm's contracts against his own competitor. It reads: "Second run, at 25 cents adult admission in competitive area, comprised of Warick, Madrid, Westport, Giles, Vogue, Roanoke theatres." There is nothing in this clause to prevent the Giles from going to 25 cents at any time. Now if this happens, who do you think would receive the benefit of the availability? The MGM booker works for Mr. Wolfberg. Try to change an admission price in the middle of a contract in the L. A. area and see what happens to you. You retain the same clearance under which you bought your contract.

Now we come to the final condition clause of the Westport deal which we do not hesitate to tell you is a classic. "It is mutually agreed that clause 27 on reverse side of this contract is to be augmented with agreement that representative of the distributor shall act as doorman and take tickets during all percentage engagements." The only thing missing in this clause is the right of the distributor to use his own office cashier to sell tickets and the branch manager to greet guests.

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

WILLIAM
PERLBERG



ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

A
Columbia
Picture

"Golden Boy"

THE HONOR BOX WINNER



"Golden Boy"

A
Columbia
Picture

Warners 'Espionage Agent' Hot War Theme

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Associate Producer.....Lou Edelman
 Director.....Lloyd Bacon
 From a story by.....Robert Henry Buckner
 Screenplay: Warren Duff, Michael Fessier,
 Frank Donohue.
 Stars.....Joel McCrea, Brenda Marshall
 Featured: Jeffrey Lynn, George Bancroft,
 Stanley Ridges, James Stephenson, How-
 ard Hickman, Martin Kosleck, Nana Bry-
 ant, Robert O. Davis, Hans von Tward-
 owsky, Lucien Prival, Addison Richards,
 Edwin Stanley, Granville Bates, Grace
 Hayle, Egon Brecher, Emmet Vogan.
 Photographer.....Charles Rosher
 Musical Director.....Leo F. Forbstein
 Film Editor.....Ralph Dawson
 Time.....80 minutes

It would appear, if one can judge from the results on the screen, that Warner Brothers merely set out to beat Hitler to the war guns in "Espionage Agent." The picture, properly exploited, will probably do business because of its title and timeliness, but it should not offer any encouragement to other producers to follow in its footsteps on a cycle of half-baked war ideas.

If we could erase the calendar, "Espionage Agent" would be reviewed as just another program picture helped by the marquee presence of Joel McCrea. If we do not erase the calendar, we will probably have to say it is

CURRENT REVIEWS

1. Espionage Agent	WAR	95
2. Here I Am Stranger.....	FOX	90
3. Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	90
4. \$1,000 A Touchdown	PAR	80
5. Dancing Co-Ed	MGM	80
6. Rio	UNIV	75

another one of those Warner pictures that probably should not have been made. By that we mean, it is not good enough as picture to stand up as picture, and it is moronic enough as propaganda to fall down—boom.

It seems, according to the History of the United States as written by Warner Brothers, that we have been engaged in considerable war for quite a time on the spy front. Brenda Marshall, the new Warner discovery, is married to Joel McCrea, and the naughty girl gets him in bad because she has been an agent for unnamed foreign plotters, as a result of which Joel loses his job.

You know the story after that, without us telling it to you. The poor little girl didn't mean what she did, and both she and Joel set out on the old regeneration battle to lick the world.

If it seems that the story and picture are

concocted of left-overs from "Nazi Spy" and a few left-overs more aged, don't blame us for our method of telling it. Ask the fellows who made the picture.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: If you are in a hot spot for pictures playing up war hatreds and war angles, it's a great bet. But it is not a picture. Previewed September 20.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Warners plucked this one right out of the headlines of the press and from the Government archives. It's up to the minute and the latest thrill stuff, extremely interesting in its unraveling and every foot of it is real—too real."

VARIETY: "'Espionage Agent' is acceptable program stuff, although by no means out of the ordinary rut of melodrama, which will rely for its bid as entertainment upon its war-time timeliness."

Paramount's 'Honeymoon in Bali' Okay Show

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer.....Jeff Lazarus
 Director.....Edward H. Griffith
 Screenplay.....Virginia Van Upp
 Original: Grace Sartwell Mason and Katharine
 Brush.
 Stars.....Fred MacMurray, Madeleine Carroll
 Featured: Allan Jones, Akim Tamiroff, Helen
 Broderick, Osa Massen, Carolyn Lee, As-
 trid Allwyn, Georgia Caine, John Qualen,
 Fritzi Brunette, William B. Davidson,
 Bennie Bartlett.
 Photography.....Ted Tetzlaff
 Art Direction.....Hans Dreier, Ernst Fegte
 Time.....95 minutes

"Honeymoon In Bali" should be a happy honeymoon at the box offices. Particularly in these times. And it will do plenty to step Madeleine Carroll along the popularity road.

The picture is just one of those breezy bits of entertainment that seem to have been born of spontaneous happiness and to have carried out that promise in its execution. Apparently all concerned, from Producer Jeff Lazarus, Director Edward H. Griffith and Scenarist Virginia Van Upp and right through the cast were just saying: "Let us have a good time

making a picture that will give audiences a good time. Maybe they are tired of epics."

There is a straight "boy meets girl" yarn but accomplished with freshness that dresses up the formula and with occasional twists that really do more than that. Fred MacMurray, is the 'boy,' Madeleine Carroll the 'girl.' He is from Bali with his own ideas of romance and love, while she is a hard boiled citizen of Fifth Avenue. There is a youngster in the picture, Carolyn Lee, who does what most youngsters are expected to do in this sort of picture but the important note to record is that she does it so very well.

Allan Jones, in his first production since his divorce with MGM, gets several songs to sing—and you do not need our word to say that he does them very well—and acquits himself adequately as MacMurray's rival. The other virtues of the picture must be divided between the work of the stars, particularly Miss Carroll, and the all around craftsmanship in the trio that consists of: producer—director—scenarist. Jeff Lazarus was not satisfied with what must have looked like a pretty safe bet under any circumstances.

but he piled in a cast of sure-fire performers in every part. The combination of Virginia Van Upp's sophisticated script, and it is very frequently ultra-sophisticated, with direction by Edward Griffith who knows how to get the most out of this sort of material without stepping over the line, resulted in a very happy picture for Paramount and Paramount exhibitors.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: "Best for adults because of the number of sophisticated angles in the dialogue and situations. Previewed September 8.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Honeymoon in Bali' is box office tonic. It breezes in with an incessant bombardment of delicious fun, bright relief from bills laden with 'heavy' stuff and a world stifling with morbidity. Its timeliness, smartness, brightness and its marquee name strength combine to predict it as a sure thing."

VARIETY: "Here is a pungent and luscious piece of adult entertainment, headed for praise and coin and redounding to the credit of its players, director, writers and producer. Paramount hasn't turned out a smarter offering in some time."

The Fastest Growing Paper in the Industry

The Box Office DIGEST

The Digest's Correspondents Paint Gloomy Picture of English Selling

By ROBERT E. WELSH

There is a lot of wishful thinking being done in Hollywood.

There was the blackout period, when we heard that theaters in Great Britain had been closed down entirely. Then came the false dawn as this headline and that one said that theaters were being allowed to open in certain zones as usual, that in other spots they could show pictures for designated afternoon hours.

Quite a section of Hollywood heaved a sigh and said: "See, I told you they couldn't get along without us."

This fat-headed impression is apt to get us into a lot of trouble. By "us" I mean my fellows of Hollywood.

And we will tell you why:

* * *

At the daybreak of the Sunday that Chamberlain said it was "War," we cabled three friends in England, holding responsible positions in the distribution of American pictures and requested that, if the harrassments of the moment did not prevent, they would send us an occasional word about what was happening to the picture industry, and, particularly, to American pictures.

(Because, you know, it is American pictures that pay us off here in Hollywood.)

Two of the friends have been able to get letters through in time for this issue.

They paint a tough picture.

We will not quote from any of their letters directly, but will give you the picture as we get it, with an occasional direct paragraph from them to explain our reaction.

*Yes, Theaters Are Open—
But Where and When?*

In the first place, what does the opening of metropolitan theaters for restricted hours mean to Hollywood payrolls?

That's easy to answer. Just imagine that the twenty key cities of the United States whose grosses bring in a picture's cost were suddenly to go on a one o'clock to six o'clock schedule. What consolation is there to say that the theaters are open? They are open for the hours of the day when most theaters starve for patrons. What, then, has happened to the percentage return that the producer and distributor should get for his product?

In the second place, certain suburban theaters are open at all hours. Well, who decides what is a suburban theater? The military. We will let you read a paragraph from the report given us, dated as of September 15:

"The choice of these open locations is in the hands of the local police authorities, and 'helped' by hints from the Home Office. Thus, we understand that the police authorities, in Manchester, on their own decision, are definitely opposed to the opening of the cinemas in any section that they define as a 'down-town area.' And, naturally, you know that the authorities of London must define the impor-

tant money-making West End as a dangerous area."

*What Constitutes A
Suburban House?*

Our correspondent continues:

"But it gets worse than that. There are many suburban sections that one would ordinarily consider as places for cinemas to be allowed to open, but the presence of a factory producing any sort of product helpful to war—or whose structure might tempt air raiders—automatically makes that community a closed area."

Our other correspondent took up the point of discussing what had happened to theater attendance in those sections where theaters have been allowed to open.

He said:

"Imagine yourself in Los Angeles, and the nearest open theaters are a choice between Ventura, Pasadena, San Berdoo, and Calipatria. Then, when you decide to go to a theater, remind yourself that you will drive in your car without lights, and so does the other fellow who approaches you on the road. Top that off with the fact that petrol is being rationed, and then decide whether there was any picture ever made that would draw you on a blackout night to Ventura, with all the possibilities in that trip, plus the fact that you will be using up petrol you might need very badly in your business before the month is over."

This paragraph concluded with: "No—war is no joke."

The mention of petrol reminds us of a section in our other friend's letter. He told of what the companies are up against to actually get the pictures to the theaters which were open and anxious to play them. We will let you hear him:

*And Then We Come
To The Petrol Question*

"The rations on petrol are apparently not so much because of fear of scarcity, as they are intended to discourage road traffic, when roads are so much needed for military purposes. But they are working out as a pretty tough problem for the picture industry. The picture industry has not been declared an essential industry, so managers and salesmen are down to the minimum on petrol supplies, far below their lowest figure in normal times. How can pictures be sold thus, even if there were places to sell them?"

"That is not the half of it. Due to traffic and petrol restrictions there is also a new set-up on the delivery of the prints to theaters. All pictures must be delivered to Langley Park, which is near the Pinewood Studios, to a Professional Despatch Department, which will sort them, after which Road Transport will pick them up and deliver them

to the cinemas or to railroad stations, if they are out of motor range. As you know the intricacies of print distribution in the average American exchange territory, I do not need to tell you what this sort of control will mean to produce headaches and miss-outs over here.

"So—there won't be very much playing time to sell anyway, unless some radical change happens in the Home Office attitude; there won't be many customers willing to risk the motor rides to attend the theaters you might sell; and the odds are even that you might not have got the print there in time for the showing."

*What About The Big
Pictures Already Made?*

One of the letter writers presented a problem that we of Hollywood might easily ignore—six thousand miles is an awful lot of distance. He brought up the shock that American financial statements will have to take this year regardless of how they trim their sails.

"Some of the biggest hit pictures your studios have turned out have been pre-ballyhooed, and apparently all set for great openings in the latter part of September. These are the pictures that represent investments of a million or maybe twice that.

"Frankly, no one of the executives with whom I have talked, has been able to reach a decision on what to do with them. Supposing he decides to go through with the release of an epic that would ordinarily gather two hundred thousand pounds, and present conditions remove most of the ciphers? If the war lasts less than a year, he will have made a bad decision. If he does not release the picture, he will receive no revenue. There's a dilemma for you."

Our letter writers sent us many interesting angles on war conditions as they affect the average man, but we will leave those matters to the metropolitan dailies. However, there is a most important business point brought up in the concluding lines of one of the letters:

"The industry's chief problem—as if anything could be more important than any of these other problems—will be the question of limitations on the import and export of foreign exchange. The Government is under a terrific financial strain planning for a war that may last longer than we live. It must be realistic. It remains to be seen whether it will agree that motion pictures are an essential commodity—worthy of allowing currency to leave the country in a time of war. There is the nub of the entire problem of American pictures and American grosses in Britain."

Hollywood: We give you these reports, straight from the commercial front. We hope to have more from week to week. Time, weather, and war permitting.

'\$1,000 A Touchdown' Hilarious Laff Hit

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Associate Producer.....William Thomas
 Director.....James Hogan
 Original Screenplay.....Delmer Daves
 Stars.....Joe E. Brown, Martha Raye
 Featured: Eric Blore, Susan Hayward, John
 Hartley, Syd Saylor, Joyce Mathews,
 George McKay, Tom Dugan, Matt Mc-
 Hugh.
 Photographer.....William Mellor
 Song.....Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin
 Film Editor.....Chandler House
 Time.....71 minutes

"A Thousand Dollars A Touchdown" is so screwy that it never attempts to make sense, but so hilariously enjoyable that it is certain to make plenty of dollars. It is a combination of the good showmanship idea of putting the two big-mouths of the picture business—Joe E. Brown and Martha Raye—in a single picture, plus a great job of direction by James Hogan.

Original story and script should not be forgotten, of course, although the story bears considerable resemblance to a picture made by Paramount in the stuttering days of talkies, with Stanley Smith as the star. But Del-

mer Daves has streamlined the theme, James Hogan has put on his touches—or rather, he has let the touches run wild for the sake of laughs—and the result is something to cause everyone concerned to feel proud.

Exhibitors will of course be compelled to figure the picture on their opinion of the value in the combined draw of Joe E. Brown and Martha Raye. We can report that it is the best Joe E. Brown picture in a month of Sundays, and that it does not do Martha Raye's standing—whatever that is this season—any harm.

The story is based on one of those burlesques so screwy that you just sit back in your seat and decide to enjoy the laughs and not worry about the logic. It seems that Martha Raye owns a college, which is very shy of students, and the thought occurs that an all-star football team would be the best advertising slogan. Martha gets a set of players, but then she can't get any games until she makes a deal for an All American pro team to pay them \$1,000 for each touchdown they will allow her team to make if they will condescend to come and play on her field. You can imagine the rest. It just becomes

a football game in burlesque, climaxed when Brown is actually tossed over the goal post for the winning points.

The picture is a romp for Brown and Raye. Its conception and production are a tribute to Associate Producer William Thomas and Director James Hogan.

Support is excellent, with George McKay prominent to advantage in the heavy role.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Not a top-liner in these days of stiff competition but timely and so high, wide and handsome on its laughs that it will be a great booking for almost all spots. Previewed September 22.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In '\$1000 A Touchdown,' Paramount has an amusing hokey comedy that will ably hold up its end of a dual program. Picture picks up speed as the story unfolds and winds up with an amusing pigskin battle that garners plenty of laughs."

VARIETY: "As clever as it is screwballish, '\$1000 A Touchdown' is by far and wide the best vehicle supplied either Joe E. Brown or Martha Raye in many a moon. It is something considerably more than a fast-moving comedy punctuated by well-timed guffaws. Instead, it is an outright laugh riot."

'Dancing Co-Ed' Lively Entertainment

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer.....Edgar Selwyn
 Director.....S. Sylvan Simon
 Story.....Albert Treyner
 Screenplay.....Albert Manheimer
 Featured: Lana Turner, Richard Carlson, Ann
 Rutherford, Lee Bowman, Thurston Hall,
 Leon Errol, Roscoe Karns, Mary Field,
 Walter Kingsford, Mary Beth Hughes,
 June Preisser, Monty Wooley, Chester
 Clute, Artie Shaw and his band.
 Photographer.....Alfred Gilks
 Film Editor.....W. Donn Hayes
 Time.....81 minutes

"Dancing Co-Ed" was not made for buttons but neither was it made for millions. But the big news is that without being a "preferred playing time" picture it is going to provide a healthy share of entertainment.

The success of the picture is a tribute to the judgment of Edgar Selwyn in accepting the picture assignment, and to the adept direction of S. Sylvan Simon in handling his part of the job. If our memory is correct, MGM originally planned "Dancing Co-Ed" as an Eleanor Powell starring vehicle. What may have happened between then and here we do not know, but we can tell what will

happen from now on. MGM has a new star, Lana Turner.

The best we can do to describe the picture to exhibitors would be to ask them to imagine a picture that had been planned for the very fine Eleanor Powell, retaining all its entertainment elements in the handling, then skillfully slipping you a surprise package.

There is box office value in the presence of Artie Shaw and his jitter orchestra, and Shaw's gang delivers some of its most effective TNT. Your reviewer, and the preview audience, did not seem to have been overly impressed, but who are we in Hollywood to argue with 50,000,000 Jitterbugs? Maybe it was just the heat that calmed the preview audience.

No, the real values of the picture are in the story, direction, and this Turner gal, plus Ann Rutherford, who gets a real break lifting her above her series chores. Richard Carlson is likeable in the juvenile lead. The comedy is handled by the veterans: Leon Errol and Roscoe Karns. And you know what they can do when they get material.

To tell the story quickly, there is a blend of Hollywood, radio and college. Press

Agent Roscoe Karns is faced with the problem of creating a new star for a Hollywood boss and attempts to meet it by a dance contest among co-eds. But he wants to frame Lana Turner into the job, which makes it necessary to have Ann Rutherford pass the examination that will give Miss Turner scholastic standing. Carlson is the college editor who smells a rat and who gets involved both journalistically and romantically. Errol is present as Miss Turner's father, always putting his foot in it. Or should we have said feet?

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Has a lot of values—including show and college angles for this time of the year, plus an entertaining picture that rates above average in its production class. Okay for all ages but extra hot for college towns. Previewed September 19.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The picture is a certain hit in the groove for which it has been aimed."

VARIETY: "Youth and beauty, romance and a sprinkling of rug-cutting to tooting of Artie Shaw and his ork, the whole laid against a college background, builds 'Dancing Co-ed' into nifty package of screen fare."

The Dun and Bradstreet
 of the Motion Picture Industry

The Box Office DIGEST

'Here I Am A Stranger' Unusual Picture

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

ProducerDarryl Zanuck
 Associate Producer.....Harry Joe Brown
 DirectorRoy Del Ruth
 Screenplay.....Milton Sperling, Sam Hellman
 Based on Story by....Gordon Malherbe Hillman
 StarRichard Greene
 Featured: Richard Dix, Brenda Joyce, Roland Young, Gladys George, Katharine Aldridge, Russell Gleason, George Zucco, Edward Norris, Henry Kolker, Richard Bond, Robert Shaw, Robert Kellard, Charles Wilson, Jan Duggan, Harry Hayden and Minor Watson.
 PhotographerArthur Miller
 Song.....Mack Gordon, Harry Revel
 Film Editor.....Louis Loeffler
 Time82 minutes

We say that "Here I Am A Stranger" is unusual, for a variety of reasons. First of all, it is a college yarn written and produced for adult minds, without cluttering jitterbugs and the usual idiocies of college yarns.

But then, it is not entirely a college story. There is a powerful strain of the "father and son" theme. To top that off, and to appeal to the women, there is a great "mother-sacrifice" angle. All in all, it should add up to general mass audience satisfaction, without making any attempt to be an epic.

Some other things the picture does. It gives opportunity for three grand performances, with emphasis on its development of Richard Greene along the trail to stardom. Greene, Richard Dix, and Gladys George are the troupers who carry the burden, and they have never been seen to better advantage from a thespian viewpoint. The new Zanuck discovery, Brenda Joyce, who hit her high spot in "The Rains Came," is also seen to advantage.

The story goes this way: Richard Greene has been brought up in England, where his mother lives with a second husband whose wealth gave her the opportunities she craved for her son. Richard Dix is the rather aimless first husband, back in America. Comes the time when Greene returns to the States to attend the college at which his father had been a campus hero.

Father and son become acquainted, the acquaintanc ripens into a real father and son relationship. Mother resents it, because she has planned and lived her life to assure security for her son, and there is no security in the amiable father, Richard Dix. Events move dramatically when Green gets into a jam as a result of a hit-and-run accident, and there is a tense situation where he can do the right thing about it, or the cheating thing. All ends happily.

Director Roy Del Ruth has handled his elements with his customary skill. It was not an easy job, because the story is a blend of "drammer" elements that must pull on the heart strings one moment, and a safe proportion of collegiate lightness and comedy.

Support is up to the standard one would expect from Darryl Zanuck and Associate Producer, Harry Joe Brown. Entire production is on an "A" scale.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A good family drama, when you are playing to the mothers and fathers. Should also get a welcome in those college towns where they razz the usual Hollywood version of collegiate life. Previewed September 20.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'Here I Am Stranger' has a strong infusion of those ingredients appealing to a generous cross-section of film audiences. Thus, while it scarcely assumes impressive importance, it will prove a gratifying top-of-the-bill fixture and can be counted on to bring in satisfying grosses."

VARIETY: " 'Here I Am A Stranger' lacks proven box office names to assure first position in all the large situations, but soundly delivered entertainment values and word-of-mouth possibilities are of quality that justifies top playing time."

'Rio' Gets Tangled in the Writers' Feet

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

DirectorJohn Brahm
 Original Story.....Jean Negulesco
 Screenplay: Aben Kandel, Edwin Justus Mayer, Frank Partos, Stephen Morehouse Avery.
 Stars.....Basil Rathbone, Victor McLaglen
 Featured: Sigrid Gurie, Robert Cummings, Leo Carrillo, Billy Gilbert, Maurice Moscovich, Irving Bacon, Samuel S. Hinds, Irving Pichel, Ferike Boros.
 PhotographerHal Mohr
 Art Director.....Jack Otterson
 Songs: Jimmie McHugh, Frank Skinner, Ralph Freed.
 Musical Director.....Charles Previn
 Film Editor.....Phillip Cahn
 Time75 minutes

It took five writers—according to the credits, and maybe a half-dozen more who were not on the credits—to put "Rio" together.

The only trouble seems to have been that the five or more writers were not aiming in the same direction. To put it bluntly, Universal made a picture, but the writers did not write a story.

Director John Brahm has directed some work for Columbia within the past year or so which The Box Office Digest was happy to pick up with those phrases that say "This director shows promise." At his right hand on this picture he had that artist of photography, Hal Mohr. Jack Otterson pops up with a very effective job of art direction.

But they forgot the story, and they did not give it a cast of any help to the exhibitor. Sigrid Gurie is featured, and the girl appeared to be alright if a reviewer could decide where the story stops and where her work begins. Robert Cummings must be satisfied with the word "adequate."

Troupers like Leo Carrillo and Billy Gilbert are in for such short scenes that they must have been engaged on Poverty Row. The exhibitors know by this time that they cannot count on Basil Rathbone and Victor McLaglen to carry a top picture.

Telling the story is going to be a little bit difficult. If five writers with many weeks to work could not tell it clearly, we do not believe anyone will expect a reviewer just fresh from the theatre to do the job.

But it seems that Rathbone is a sleeky French capitalist whose evil deeds land him in a French penal colony for ten years. There is a wife who promises to wait. She waits in Rio because it is near to the absent hubby, and then there is a real love affair with an American which is timed as close as the film editor could make it to time with Rathbone's escape from the colony. A lot of things happen, including a couple of songs very well delivered, but the songs were just as conspicuous by their presence as the story was conspicuous by its absence.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Just to fill in for the bottom of the bill. Previewed September 20.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Even with a strong cast, 'Rio' misses its mark, solely due to an unbelievable story and a poor screen treatment."

VARIETY: "Predicated on real promise in way of player names, and aimed high by its makers, 'Rio' falls short of mark for which it was pointed, and ends up as average entertainment."

ASK THE IMPORTANT PICTURE BUYERS-----

AND YOU LEARN ABOUT

The Box Office

DIGEST

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
The Rains Came	FOX	165
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156

Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	145
Union Pacific	PAR	145
The Women	MGM	140
Kentucky	FOX	134
Bean Geste	PAR	134
Editor's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130

Each Dawn I Die	WAR	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
The Star Maker	PAR	126
Bachelor Mother	RKO	126
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	126
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Love Affair	RKO	120

Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Little Princess	FOX	116
Second Fiddle	FOX	114
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	112
Midnight	WAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
In Name Only	RKO	107
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	107
Honolulu	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102

Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	96
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ballspin	FOX	91
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93

Farzan Finds A Son	MGM	91
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St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
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They Shall Have Music	UA	85
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
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Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
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Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
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Three Musketeers	FOX	81
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B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	147
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Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dunk Victory	WAR	128

Golden Boy	COL	121
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Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
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Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	110

Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
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It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Music	MGM	97
Blackmail	MGM	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hotel For Women	FOX	95
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	95
On Borrowed Time	MGM	92
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
The Under-Pup	UNIV	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Frontier Marshal	FOX	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	81
Four Girls in White	MGM	81
Winter Carnival	UA	83
These Glamour Girls	MGM	82
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
Muttiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	80

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Flight At Midnight	REP	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	80

Fun From Missouri PAR 79
 The Sun Never Sets UNIV 79
 Never Say Die MGM 76
 The Girl Downstairs PAR 77
 The Lady's From Kentucky UA 77
 Prison Without Bars COL 77
 Let Us Live COL 76
 Ghost Guard COL 76
 The Lady Vanishes FOX 75
 The Gorilla FOX 75
 The Magificent Fraud PAR 75
 Charlie Chan in Honolulu FOX 74
 Fisherman's Wharf RKO 74

Bridal Suite MGM 72
 The Jones Family in Hollywood FOX 72

I Stole A Million UNIV 71
 The Lady and the Mob COL 71

Boy Friend FOX 70
 Indianapolis WAR 70
 Back Door to Heaven PAR 70
 King of the Turf UA 70
 One Third of a Nation PAR 70
 Clouds Over Europe COL 70
 Stronger Than Desire MGM 70
 Our Leading Citizen PAR 70

Stolen Life PAR 67
 Hotel Imperial PAR 66
 Zenobia UA 66

Way Down South RKO 64
 Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64

Spirit of Calver UNIV 63
 The Flying Irishman RKO 63
 Smiling Along FOX 63
 Women in the Wind WAR 62
 Climbing High GB 61

Devil's Island WAR 78
 Blackwell's Island WAR 77
 Pardon Our Nerve FOX 77
 You Can't Get Away With Murder WAR 76
 Inside Story FOX 75
 Pacific Liner RKO 75

Mystery of the White Room UNIV 73
 Boy Slaves RKO 73
 Disbarred PAR 73
 Missing Daughters COL 73
 The Man They Couldn't Hang RKO 72
 It Could Happen To You FOX 72
 King of Chinatown PAR 72
 Society Lawyer MGM 72
 Persons in Hiding UNIV 72
 Society Smugglers UNIV 72
 Mr. Moto's Last Warning FOX 72
 Twelve Crowded Hours RKO 72
 Blondie Takes A Vacation COL 71
 Nancy Drew, Reporter WAR 71
 Pirates of the Skies UNIV 71
 Stordily House RKO 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter WAR 71
 Mystery of the White Room UNIV 71
 The Girl and the Gambler RKO 71
 Quick Millions FOX 71
 Blind Alley COL 71
 Unsuspected Father UNIV 70
 Island of Lost Men PAR 70
 Chasing Danger FOX 70
 Unmarried PAR 70
 Romance of the Redwoods COL 70
 Ex-Champ UNIV 70
 Winner Take All FOX 70
 Big Town Czar UNIV 70
 On Trial WAR 70
 Torchy Blame in Chinatown WAR 70
 Ambush PAR 70
 They Made Her A Spy RKO 70
 Torchy For Mayor WAR 70
 The Girl From Mexico RKO 70
 Within the Law MGM 70
 Grand Jury Secrets PAR 70
 Building Drummond's Bride PAR 70
 Death of a Champion PAR 70

Some Like It Hot PAR 69
 The Kid From Texas MGM 69
 Building Drummond's Secret Police PAR 69
 Everybody's Baby FOX 69
 Million Dollar Legs PAR 68
 News Is Made At Night FOX 68
 The Family Next Door UNIV 68
 The Saint Strikes Back RKO 68
 Undercover Doctor PAR 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger Island FOX 68
 Adventures of Jane Alden WAR 68
 Almost A Gentleman RKO 68
 Fiver Dugan RKO 68
 The Saint in London RKO 68
 For Love or Money UNIV 68
 Miracles For Sale MGM 68
 The Man They Couldn't Hang COL 68
 Lone Wolf Spy Hunt UNIV 67
 Conspiracy COL 67
 Playing With Dynamite RKO 67
 A Woman Is A Judge WAR 67
 Forgotten Woman UNIV 66
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation FOX 66
 Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 66
 Code of the Streets UNIV 66
 Beauty for the Asking RKO 66
 Sudden Money PAR 66
 They Asked For It UNIV 66
 The Ware Case GB 66
 Cowboy Quarterback WAR 66
 Boy Trouble PAR 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'Gonnor MGM 65
 Secret Service of the Air WAR 65
 Tell No Tales MGM 65
 Conspiracy RKO 65
 They All Came Out MGM 64
 Exile Express UNIV 64
 Sweepstakes Winner GB 64
 6,000 Enemies MGM 63
 Night Work PAR 61
 Inspector Hurnleigh FOX 54
 Career RKO 53
 This Man Is News PAR 52

Whispering Enemies COL 75
 Hamside Bureau COL 71
 Mysterious Mr. Wong MGM 71
 Woman Doctor REP 71
 North of Shanghai COL 71

She Married A Cop REP 70
 Hidden Power COL 70
 The Sunset Murder Case UN 70
 Pride of the Navy UN 70
 Tough Kid MONO 70
 Mysterious Miss X REP 70
 Trapped in the Sky COL 70
 Orphan in the Street REP 70
 Parents On Trial PAR 70

I Am A Criminal MONO 69
 Fighting Thoroughbreds REP 69
 Gambling Ship UNIV 69
 Convict's Code MONO 69
 The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew COL 68
 Konga, The Wild Stallion COL 68
 Streets of New York MONO 68
 Inside Information UNIV 68
 I Was A Convict REP 68
 Navy Secrets MONO 68
 Federal Man Hunt REP 68
 Behind Prison Gates COL 68
 House of Fear UNIV 67
 My Wife's Relatives REP 67
 Long Shot UN 67
 Wolf Call MONO 66
 Forged Passport REP 66
 First Offenders COL 66
 Rookie Cop RKO 66
 Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO 66
 Waterfront WAR 66
 Everybody's Hobby WAR 66
 Micky The Kid REP 65
 The Zero Hour REP 65
 Outside These Walls COL 65
 S. O. S. Tidal Wave MONO 65
 Mr. Wong in Chinatown REP 65
 Smuggled Cargo REP 65
 Mystery Plane MONO 64
 My Son Is A Criminal COL 64
 Code of the Secret Service WAR 64
 Should A Girl Marry? MONO 64
 Shouldn't Husbands Work? REP 63
 Street of Missing Men REP 63
 Star Reporter MONO 63
 Undercover Agent MONO 63
 The Man Who Dared WAR 63
 Boy's Reformatory MONO 63
 Panama Lady RKO 62
 Panama Patrol UN 62
 The Girl From Rio MONO 61

HOT?

SURE! But a GREAT Picture needs no alibi!

FOX WEST COAST THEATRES CORPORATION AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

EXECUTIVE OFFICES
1609 WEST WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

September 19, 1939

OFFICE OF
CHARLES P. SKOURAS

Mr. Darryl F. Zanuck
Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation
Beverly Hills, California

Dear Darryl:

In spite of the hottest weather Los Angeles has had in the past twenty-two years we are enjoying record-breaking business in Loew's State and Grauman's Chinese Theatres with **THE RAINS CAME**. Although this is a day and date engagement, and it is not our policy to hold over pictures for a second week, the grosses are so outstanding that an exception in the case of **THE RAINS CAME** is fully justified, and we are holding the picture for a second week in both houses.

I know that it might strike you as being "unusual" when an exhibitor advises a producer that a picture should be given the maximum in extended playing time. However it is in times like these that we must do the "unusual" for the good of the industry, and I hereby strongly advocate extended playing time on **THE RAINS CAME**, because our entire organization has a full realization of the problem confronting the production end of our industry through the loss of substantial European revenue. I am sure that every intelligent and far-sighted exhibitor appreciates this problem, and it behooves all of us to lend cooperation to the studios upon whom we in turn depend for success.

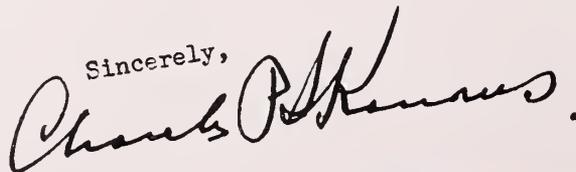
The result of **THE RAINS CAME** in Los Angeles is not at all unique since its performance in San Francisco and every other key situation of our circuit is just as outstanding. Such pictures are the very backbone of our business, and through the proper treatment of them - whether yours or any other producer's - we are automatically helping the studios to offset the loss of their European business by obtaining additional revenue in this country.

Our good common sense tells us that these "big pictures" can only be produced if we exhibitors return sufficient revenue to the studios to make them possible. In fact the future welfare of you and ourselves is absolutely dependent upon this, and I therefore urge you, Darryl, to impress upon every exhibitor his bounden duty which is to give **THE RAINS CAME**, and similar outstanding attractions, the maximum preferred and extended playing time to insure their continuance.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate you and everyone within your organization who had anything to do with the production of **THE RAINS CAME**.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,



C. P. C.

"THE RAINS CAME" HELD OVER for a 2nd WEEK * NOW! Loew's STATE · Grauman's CHINESE

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 5.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF, OCTOBER 2, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

20th Century Shows
Constructive Way to
Handle Present Crisis

SEE PAGE 3

Field Investigator Has
Live Exhibitor News
From the South

SEE PAGE 12

Hold-Over Hits Dominate
Box Offices For Week;
"Real Glory" Top New One

SEE PAGE 5

•

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

•

* *The Box Office*
DIGEST "HONOR BOX"
THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **SAMUEL GOLDWYN** Wins With
"THE REAL GLORY"---138%



Producer
SAM GOLDWYN



Associate Producer
ROBERT RISKIN



Director
HENRY HATHAWAY

Original Story:
CHARLES CLIFFORD

Screenplay:
JO SWERLING and ROBERT PRESNELL

Featured:
**REGINALD OWEN
BRODERICK CRAWFORD
KAY JOHNSON**



GARY COOPER



DAVID NIVEN



ANDREA LEEDS

The Box Office

DIGEST

*The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly*

KEEPING A LEVEL HEAD

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

We can think of no better use for this page of twelve point type this week than to print in full a statement that is outstandingly constructive in these days of Hollywood panic.

It is the statement issued by the EMPLOYEES of Twentieth Century-Fox over signatures that represent all departments. It followed a remarkable "open forum" meeting, conceived by Darryl Zanuck, at which all the fifty-two cards in the deck were laid on the table.

We give it to you as an example of intelligence in the handling of an organization's internal affairs:

* * *

TO ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX STUDIO:

"The undersigned are members of the special representative committee which was called together by Mr. Zanuck for the purpose of discussing the current economic crisis in the motion picture industry and mapping a course of action for our studio to follow in this emergency.

"It would be idle to deny that an emergency exists, though its gravity cannot be accurately determined. Some foreign markets have definitely been lost, others are extremely dubious. On the other hand it is possible that a business boom in America will help build up domestic revenue to replace a portion of that which has been lost abroad. In the meantime, however, it behooves us all to make an intelligent study of the facts, thus preparing ourselves to meet every contingency as it arises. Above all, we must avoid the extremes of blind panic and equally blind optimism.

"We are fortunate in that Twentieth Century-Fox is in an extremely sound financial position. Mr. Zanuck made it very clear that no drastic action is contemplated at this time. He feels with us that a general salary cut is the poorest sort of economy, and should only be undertaken as a last resort. But savings must be accomplished and drastic new economies put into effect.

"It is to plan these savings and economies that this committee has been formed. Mr. Zanuck has offered to put the facts and figures at our disposal. Department heads have

been instructed to throw open the records of their departments to our investigation.

"We urge every individual in the studio to cooperate with us in ascertaining the true facts about conditions in our studio and in recommending the steps that should be taken to conserve our business as we know it.

"We further urge that the spirit of cooperation in which this committee was formed be extended to include all who make their living at our studio.

"The success of the studio affects us all in the most real and personal sense. It we can work together in this crisis we have a better than good chance of coming through without damage either to the studio or to ourselves."

* * *

This statement—"from employees to employees"—bore the following signatures: Tyrone Power, Binnie Barnes, Cesar Romero, Henry King, Walter Lang, Allan Dwan, Harry Tugend, Phillip Dunne, Sam Hellman, Ralph Dietrich, Buddy Erikson, Robert Webb, Leon Shamroy, Frank Beetsen, Bill Ihnen, Harry Joe Brown, Raymond Griffith, Gene Markey.

* * *

The "open house" spirit of cooperation between employers and employees evidenced in the above statement is, of course, its most important feature. But there is a real milestone for the picture industry in the flat and frank declaration that: "Mr. Zanuck will place the FACTS at our disposal; the books of all departments will be open to your committee."

How much cleaner and more effective such an attitude will be than a series of panicky statements, decisions made and unmade in a haze of indecision, such as we are hearing from so many quarters.

It has always been easy for an editor to take out the harpoon and find vulnerable points in this industry's organization activities, in its relations with the public. Because its leaders can—and do—so often make mistakes of omission and commission.

It is welcome to see—and print—the record of an intelligently constructive move in the direction of sanity.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	13 Releases	98
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	37 Releases	94
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	37 Releases	94
4. Warner Brothers	37 Releases	84
5. Paramount	38 Releases	81
6. RKO-Radio	28 Releases	81
7. Universal	28 Releases	79
8. Columbia	27 Releases	75
9. Republic	18 Releases	68
10. Monogram	15 Releases	66
11. Grand National	4 Releases	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases	65

RETURNING AUTHOR REPORTS POSSIBLE RELIEF IN BRITISH SITUATION; OTHER HIGHLIGHT ITEMS

The Highlighter could burden you with items about what this and that company has done in the past week in the way of salary cuts, postponed pictures, etcetera, and it might sound like news. . . . But we don't think it is news any longer. . . . There won't be any real news on this section of the battle front until the next six days, six weeks, or six months bring war developments that allow the executives to PLAN. . . . So far it is a war of words, except for the fact that a couple of Capones swallowed Poland. . . . But the foreign correspondence we have received, and the reports from responsible British and French executives which we have been privileged to read, just make it plain that our production and distribution chiefs must walk with their fingers crossed. . . . For six days, six weeks, or six months. . . . There is a bit of cheer in the returning home interview of W. P. Lipscomb, in which he seems very well satisfied—after talks with British theater tops—that regardless of the way the war goes, the Government will decide that screen entertainment is a necessity for a harrassed populace, and things may loosen up within a reasonable time. . . . There is a dour note in figuring how much of the pounds sterling the American operator will be able to get back here where the payrolls chirp, especially if Congress doesn't do what England and France believe to be the right thing in their action on the Embargo bill. . . . It looks as though there is some symbolism in that goatee whisker which Uncle Sam wears in all his portraits. . . . He is a goat if he does, and a goat if he doesn't, and when all the alley quarrels are over, he is the prize Academy GOAT. . . . Every time.

The Unions Have Their Own Hitler in Action

We don't know whether to criticize the producers for their lack of courage and decision, or to sympathize with their plight, or to compliment Willie Bioff on his ability as a union head to play Hitler in present day America. . . . The Highlighter ventured the remark a few weeks ago that whatever settlement was made in the current union demands on the studios would be dictated by Bioff. . . . It was. . . . But it doesn't seem to be ended. . . . More and more groups are calling upon the Bioff throne for aid. . . . At a time when the big shots are not quite certain whether they are going or coming. . . . It is our private and very humble opinion that the industry will never have a better opportunity than a WORLD WAR to call for a showdown before the bar of public opinion. . . . They muffed it. . . . With equal humility we venture the thought that there will be more unemployed union technicians in the next year than will counter-balance the wage increases for those fortunate enough to have jobs. . . . Whether or not there is any truth in the allegations that Willie Bioff once handled a hundred thousand dollar payment in connection with

6 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. The Rains Came	FOX	165...169
2. In Name Only	RKO	107...110
3. These Glamour Girls	MGM	82... 84
4. I Stole A Million	UNIV	71... 73
5. Ex-Champ	UNIV	70... 72
6. Million Dollar Legs	PAR	68... 70

throwing oil upon union waters, we will put it on the record right here that he is worth it—not once, but a couple of times a year. . . . He has the producers' number.

Traveling Around The Studio Corners

Some big pictures are coming up, some big studios are closing down. . . . This week will see the preview of "Hollywood Cavalcade" and if your Highlighter retains his audience judgment this will prove just the type of gala show that the cash customers want these days. . . . Life, and bubble, and even slapstick. . . . "Drums Along the Mohawk" is not far away, and they tell us—those friends who report to us on the sneaks—that this is red hot. . . . "Northwest Passage" is getting good pipeline discussion. . . . Let's think about things like that, instead of the war worries. . . . If distribution departments will play ball with exhibitors, and exhibitors will play ball with distributors, big attractions of the sort that are coming up can be stretched in playing time and fired with old-time exploitation to the point where we will be able to catch up on quite a bit of that lost revenue, and save many jobs. . . . Maybe we can even save some sinecures, but we hope not. . . . The shutdowns so far forecast are Selznick-International and Walter Wanger.

Newsreel Producers Are In A Very Tough Spot

It is bad enough not to be able to find any real news of a real war in your daily newspaper, but consider the spot in which the newsreel producers have been placed. . . . In the first place they haven't any authentic shots of anything happening, and have been forced to alternate scenes of Downing Street crowds with shots of training maneuvers taken before the war, while the narrator vainly

7 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. Each Dawn I Die	WAR	127...124
3. On Borrowed Time	MGM	92... 90
2. Blackmail	MGM	97... 91
4. Winter Carnival	U.A.	83... 80
5. They Shall Have Music	U.A.	85... 76
6. Magnificent Fraud	PAR	75... 71
7. Our Leading Citizen	PAR	70... 67

tries to get "vim and vigor" into his chore. . . . In the second place, since most of their stock is from British sources, they are on the edge of propaganda charge with every scene. . . . It seems so different from 1914 when the foreign governments were so quick to get cameramen to the front, and the companies so speedy in getting the film back here. . . . That's where the war boom in theaters started. . . . A boom that a number are counting on repeating now. . . . But they will have to begin to get some newsreels that have news to spark it up.

Carl Laemmle Rites Tell of Industry's Maturity

One of the biggest emotional impacts to The Highlighter in his attendance at the Carl Laemmle funeral rites was the sight of the number of "old-timers" present, and the realization that this industry has reached maturity. . . . Most of us in this industry entered very young, many of us seem to feel always that our entry was "just a few years ago." . . . As contrasted with steel, railroads, and other industries where top executives confess to fifty years of service up from the ranks. . . . Your Highlighter is interested in the news, as he goes to press, of the impending preview of "The Great Commandment." . . . This is a picture with a religious basis, produced with the utmost of facilities at the Selznick-International studios, conceived and financed by an Episcopalian minister who let his budget run well into six figures. . . . It is The Highlighter's hunch that the picture will find a healthy spot in these days, and particularly in communities where the exhibitor can use the good will created by cooperation with influential elements of his patronage. . . . It used to be poison to suggest that a picture was ideal for tie-ups with this and that civic organization, principally because the picture was usually a poorly made one that had no other reason for selling than the tie-up angle. . . . But you can't spend a quarter million with capable production aides and come out with an apology. . . . We'll let you know more after previewing the picture this week.

West Coast Indies Gather Round The Table

There is interest in the formation of the "Pacific Coast Conference of Independent Theater Owners," which brings into a cohesive organization three indie exhibitor units in this territory. . . . California and Arizona, Nevada, and the Pacific Northwest are represented in the group. . . . The capable Bob Poole, an organization executive of skill and personality, will handle the reins. . . . He will function with a governing board representing all territories concerned. From Southern California there will be Hugh Bruen and Jack Berman, with Mrs. Jennie Dodge, of Ventura as alternate. . . . From the Northwest the board will have L. O. Lukan and William

(Continued on Page 5)

HOLDOVERS GETTING THE PLAY WITH NEW PICS SCARCE; GARY COOPER HITS IN "REAL GLORY"

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the past year or two, as a rule there has been an average of from eight to ten new releases each week. However, in last week's issue and again this week we only have five new releases. Our figures from exchange centers and exhibitors are coming through as usual; but the reason for so few new releases in the last fortnight is because of so many holdovers due to the war and a possible shortage of future big productions, many big "A" attractions that have run two weeks are being held over for third, fourth, and fifth weeks, and these holdovers are justified at the box office. But their success makes one wonder what the next six months will bring.

The main holdover pictures are "The Rains Came," "The Wizard of Oz," "Stanley and Livingstone," "The Women," and "The Old Maid."

UNITED ARTISTS--I RELEASE

Sam Goldwyn's new Gary Cooper production, "THE REAL GLORY," 138%, is by far the top box office picture of the week, and its first figures prove this one to be a definite holdover picture. Following the successful "Cowboy and the Lady," this definitely proves Gary Cooper to be Goldwyn's ace in the hole. Accordingly, Goldwyn is now rushing two new Gary Cooper stories, one of which will probably go into production in the next couple of weeks.

Supporting Cooper in "THE REAL GLORY" is a well balanced cast of featured players headed by the very popular David Niven (who scored so heavily in "Bachelor Mother" and "Dawn Patrol") and the glamorous Andrea Leeds, who is now co-starred with Don Ameche in 20th Century-Fox's "Swanee River." Other important players in the supporting cast are Reginald Owen, Broderick Crawford, and Kay Johnson. The last mentioned player does a top trouping job.

This romantic tale involving the history of the Philippines in the early 1900's was directed by Cooper's favorite director, Henry Hathaway, who was borrowed from the Paramount studios. Exhibitors will remember that Hathaway directed Cooper's big hit of a few years ago, "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer," which was recently re-issued and did very well.

Bob Riskin, who for years was associated with Frank Capra at Columbia, acted as associate producer to Mr. Goldwyn on this historical epic. Charles Clifford wrote the original, with Jo Swerling and Robert Presnell receiving screenplay credit.

Exhibitors should go the limit on this one and give it extended playing time. At the present time, the New York Rivoli run looks to be set for at least four weeks; so that should be a pretty good hint for what to expect on this one.

Of Five New Releases in the Past Week, Two Ran Over 100%, and Three Came Through Fair.

MGM--Also 1 New Release

Last year two MGM writers, Harvey Haislip and Ralph Wheelwright, concocted an idea to write a story about the American Splinterfleet and coast guard fighting the German U-Boats in the last world war. Mr. Mayer purchased their script but did not start production until this year; and now when "THUNDER AFLOAT" is being released nationally, we find the world at war again. Consequently this one is based on a very timely subject and is bound to be a box office clean-up, regardless of where it is exhibited.

Exhibitors who ran MGM's "Hell Divers" cleaned up in a big way and should expect to do the same with this one. On its first openings "THUNDER AFLOAT" is averaging 131%.

The always popular Wally Beery is starred in this fine action melodrama with the romantic leads portrayed by Chester Morris and Virginia Grey. Others prominently featured are Regis Toomey, Henry Victor, Douglas Dumbrille, and Carl Esmond.

The always-safe George B. Seitz, who is famous as the director of the "Andy Hardy" series, directed this one.

RKO--I Good Programmer

RKO has a fine laugh riot in their new Joe Penner comedy, "THE DAY THE BOOKIES WEPT," which is doing well at an 82% average. Supporting Joe Penner are Betty Grable, Richard Lane, and Tom Kennedy. Bob Sisk produced for the Lee Marcus unit and Les Goodwins directed. Exhibitors will do well to spot this ultra-funny comedy with one of the heavier type melodramas now being released. In neighborhoods where Joe Penner has a strong radio following, this one will pull extra business.

UNIVERSAL--I New Release

Universal has a very pleasing little programmer this week in their new musical comedy production, "HAWAIIAN NIGHTS," which despite the lack of marquee names, is holding quite well on its own at a 78% average. Hawaiian and tropical pictures have always been box office to a certain extent and this one should prove no exception.

Johnny Downs and Mary Carlisle, both for-

merly of Paramount, are co-starred, with Constance Moore, Eddie Quillan, and Thurston Hall featured. Matty Malneck's band also adds considerable towards the musical side, along with Sol Hoopi's native Hawaiian string orchestra.

Max Golden produced and Al Rogell, a newcomer to Universal, directed. Incidentally, on the strength of this picture Universal has made Al Rogell a producer-director.

20th-FOX--I Programmer

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release this week is just another programmer, "STOP LOOK AND LOVE," which is just getting by at a 72% average. While this one is an amusing family comedy, it is entirely lacking in marquee names and thus will have to be double billed with a much stronger attraction or run on a bank night. The featured cast includes Jean Rogers, William Frawley, Eddie Collins, and Minna Gombell.

This one was produced by the Sol Wurtzel program unit and directed by Otto Brower. "STOP, LOOK AND LOVE" will probably draw better in the nabes, where such pictures as "The Jones Family" series are so popular.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

Ripley. . . . Announcements are still to come regarding the Northern California representatives. . . . There are so many exhibitor-distributor problems these days, complicated by government moves and counter-moves, that The Highlighter enjoys seeing a constructive effort such as this which cannot help but result in a more intelligent relationship between seller and buyer—with profit in money and security to both sides.

Odds And Ends From Here And Thereabouts

Looks as though Universal beat the gun in the Reissue Stakes with its release of "All Quiet on the Western Front." . . . Early reports from the box office front are extremely healthy. . . . There are some happy memories in reading that Eddie Brandstatter has opened a new dining rendezvous—the Bohemia Grill—on Caluenga. . . . Remember when you could meet the entire Hollywood picture colony in a single evening at Eddie's Montmartre? . . . Interesting box office news to hear that Radio has a hot deal on for an annual Rogers-Astaire picture. . . . Two box office figures who can feed a lot of money to palpitating distributor and exhibitor bank accounts. . . . The indies have a good argument on their side in asking actors to consider wage and working conditions adjustments.

5 New Features Not in Last Issue

		We Est.
1. The Real Glory	U.A.	138.....145
2. Thunder Afloat	MGM	130.....140
3. The Day The Bookies Wept	RKO	82..... 80
4. Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	78..... 75
5. Stop, Look and Love	FOX	72..... 70

YOU CAN'T

FLASH!

St. Louis, Sept. 14—Crowds choke 4600-seat St. Louis Theatre here trying to see new uncensored version of "All Quiet on the Western Front" in test engagement! Business five times normal gross!



The guns spew again! Men are mad again! The world faces a crimson hell again! Millions want to know—*what does it all mean?*



And the answer is here!

AN ANSWER—uncensored, showing what had to be hidden before!

AN ANSWER—up-to-date, penetrating behind the screaming headlines of today!

AN ANSWER—more vital, echoing the thoughts that fill the minds of men now!

**THE GREATEST WAR PICTURE OF ALL TIME
—MORE TIMELY NOW THAN EVER BEFORE!**



UNIVERSAL HAS PRINTS READY NOW!

BLACKOUT TRUTH!

At Last!
The UNCENSORED* Version

**ALL QUIET
ON THE
WESTERN
FRONT**

*Uncensored by war or military authorities!

Universal's presentation of Erich Maria Remarque's Greatest Novel
Directed by Lewis Milestone • A New Universal Picture

NEW ADS, TRAILER, ACCESSORIES, READY NOW!

'Elizabeth and Essex' Sumptuous Color Spectacle

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 150%)

Executive Producer.....Hal B. Wallis
Director.....Michael Curtiz
From the play by.....Maxwell Anderson
Screenplay: Norman Reilly Raine, Aeneas MacKenzie

Stars.....Bette Davis, Erroll Flynn
Featured: Olivia DeHavilland, Donald Crisp, Alan Hale, Vincent Price, Henry Stephenson, James Stephenson, Ralph Forbes, Robert Warwick.

Photographer.....Sol Polito
Technicolor Associate.....W. Howard Greene
Time.....100 minutes

It is doubtful if there has ever been a greater exhibition of courage on the part of a screen actress than is shown by Bette Davis in her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth in this sumptuous costume drama. It is also pretty certain at this early date that Miss Davis has already won the Academy award for the best performance of the year.

Whether or not that vast portion of audiences known as "the masses" will enthuse over the sight of one of their favorites making herself as ugly as the "Wizard of Oz" witch is a debatable point that only time can answer.

But by all the signs, Warner's have a hit picture here. There is the big loyal following of Miss Davis and Errol Flynn, there is an eye-feasting riot of spectacular Technicolor, there is the impressive solidity of near-history. It isn't a picture for the jitterbugs, and for those of their elders seeking an evening of relaxation from the cares of life. In fact, it is ponderously slow-moving. But there is a profitable audience for this sort of thing when the marquee presents safe magnets.

"The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex"

Selznick's 'Intermezzo' For the Carriage Trade

UNITED ARTISTS

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Producer.....David O. Selznick
Director.....Gregory Ratoff
Screenplay.....George O'Neill
Star.....Leslie Howard
Featured: Ingrid Bergman, Edna Best, John Halliday, Enid Bennett, Cecil Kellaway, Ann Todd.

Photographer.....Gregg Toland
Time.....66 minutes

"Intermezzo" has been so competently produced, so well directed, scripted and played, that it is going to be one of those "critics' half-holidays." But it will be a problem for the exhibitor. In New York it may step off with a fanfare accompaniment; beyond the Hudson River it has its worries.

The title is one of those things. We tried it on our stenographic force—all cash picture customers—and they all asked us "What does 'Intermezzo' mean?" We tried to explain, in our own dumb way, then we fell back on the idea that the producer will sell the picture as "Intermezzo—A Love Story."

And somebody said: "So what?" Maybe we should take all pictures and after giving the title add the phrases: "A Drama," "A Comedy," "A Thriller," and finally, when there is no other resource: "A Love Story." Because ninety per cent of pictures made must be "love stories."

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex.....	WAR.....150
2. Jamaica Inn.....	PAR.....105
3. Intermezzo.....	U.A.....95
4. Heaven With A Barbed Wire Fence.....	FOX.....70
5. Three Sons.....	RKO.....70

—try that on your marquee—portrays England's queen as the domineering dictator of her time, torn emotionally between love of country, and womanly desire to be loved for her own sake. Errol Flynn, as Lord Essex, is the particular object of her feminine desires. But Essex is a stubborn, independent soul, contrasted with the fawning lackeys of her court.

So Elizabeth leads a tempestuous life, one minute happy in the love of Essex, the next jealously fearing that his popularity with her subjects will jeopardize her throne. In the end she sends him to the executioner's axe.

The picture is a thespian holiday for Miss Davis and a fine supporting cast. Director Michael Curtiz extracts all possible from the material given him, exhibiting that safe and sure hand with which he always seems to get the last possible bit of value from any scene. It is not one of Flynn's best characterizations, because there is not the opportunity for the swashbuckling heroics that his fans will expect. In other words, his heroics are all in the dialogue, and not in action.

The supporting players are necessarily backgrounded against the stars, but Olivia

DeHavilland, Alan Hale, Donald Crisp, Vincent Price are among those who register effectively.

And no review could conclude without a word for the photography. In the hands of Sol Polito, of the Warner staff, and W. Howard Greene, the Technicolor veteran, it is a treat. Greene has a long and shining record on the screen's best remembered Technicolor features, and he takes full advantage of the pomp and magnificence presented by this tale of the private life of a Queen.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: It is all in the marquee names, and the spectacular elements of the picture. They won't go away chuckling, but they will be impressed. Previewed September 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In short, 'Elizabeth and Essex' is a rave picture by all odds, and is due to put new and vital lifeblood into the exhibiting business."

VARIETY: "The picture ranks with the finest historical dramas the screen has attempted stands in the van of the season's most impressive offerings and again certifies Bette Davis as a superlative actress. That the film will do smash business is no difficult prediction. On the score of merit it will richly deserve its prosperous runs."

That would be enough for box office talk, except for the fact that a conscientious reporter must report that the picture was very evidently aimed at a British market that no longer exists. All the eggs were put in a West End basket. Leslie Howard, an anaemic star to the hinterlands of America, is starred: Edna Best and a brand new foreign importation, Ingrid Bergman, share the feminine honors. Try those in your sales campaign, Mr. Exhibitor.

Now, as to the picture. It is a darned sight better entertainment than its box office possibilities. Starting slowly, it picks up a triangle situation with such solid thespians as the above credit sheet shows, to the point where it packs a real punch before it ends. But it is a synthetic punch—it is the player who is making the scene. If the picture had been made with any less able cast than the one presented by David Selznick, it would have been dismissed with a shrug. If it did not have the money-money-money background that Selznick gives any of his pictures, nor the fine finessed touches of Gregory Ratoff as director, it would be just "another triangle yarn."

The story? It concerns Leslie Howard as a top flight violinist, with a staid wife, and children. Ingrid Bergman, teaching his

daughter piano playing, enters his life and captivates him—either because of her sympathetic musical knowledge, or something else about her. It goes through all the travail of a supposedly regular husband who is involved with "another woman";—this stuff always makes for good scenes—and it ends with Ingrid disappearing from the screen, while Leslie is apparently happy at home again.

You have heard the story before, you say? Don't kid us—you have heard it since your high school days when the pupils in English set out to write terrifically important dramas, and when they couldn't unwind the "terrifics" just allowed the pencil to say "The End."

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Probably a good bet for the carriage trade. But nothing to count on for regular runs if you hope to put some money in the bank after the run. Previewed September 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "David Selznick's 'Intermezzo' should be given the finest production rating of any picture made in many a day. Its detail, the direction, photography, sets, musical scoring and cutting, were jointly the most perfect job this reviewer has ever seen."

VARIETY: "It will probably far satisfactorily in the top situations, but further down the line fail to excite because of lack of vigor and mass interest. Fate will likely be only fair grosses."

'Jamaica Inn' Field Day For Charles Laughton

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 105%)

ProducerErich Pommer
 DirectorAlfred Hitchcock
 From the novel by.....Daphne DuMaurier
 ContinuityAlma Reville
 DialogueSidney Gilliat
 StarCharles Laughton
 Featured: Leslie Banks, Marie Ney, Maureen O'Hara, Emyln Williams, Wylie Watson, Horace Hodges.
 Photography: Harry Stradling, Bernard Knowles.
 Film Editor.....Robert Hamer
 Time86 minutes

Team Charles Laughton and Director Alfred Hitchcock in a picturization of one of the most successful "horror" novels of recent years, and the result on the screen should be a foregone conclusion. In the case of "Jamaica Inn" it is.

The picture, British-made, will glut the appetite of those of your patrons who revelled in "Dracula" and others of the shudder hits.

Hitchcock, master of the macabre, toys with the fingers of genius with the elements provided him in story, star, supporting cast and production. "There is never a dull moment" could well be the slogan for the advertising.

Laughton is seen as the Jekyll-Hyde English squire, whose bland exterior hides the fact that he is secretly the head of a ruthless gang of cutthroats plying their trade of luring ships to wreckage off the Cornish coast, gathering in the loot, and disposing in mysterious ways of the victims. It is the role of a man growing more and more insane and sadistic, and Laughton plays it with a gripping intensity that scene by scene takes on horror right before your eyes.

Surrounding the star is one of these super-excellent British casts in which every role is played by an individual seemingly horn for the part. Leslie Banks, the "monster" leader of the gang's actual operations, is blood-and-

thunder at its best. There is a corking performance from Emyln Williams, Maureen O'Hara, as the young girl who has sought refuge with the kindly squire, only to slowly learn that she is in the midst of terror, is a refreshingly new personality for the American screen. But then, it is almost unfair to single out names in so well-rounded a cast.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Raw, red meat for the horror fans, and should be dated and advertised accordingly. Previewed September 29th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Realistic movie drama bound to make the shekels click in the box-office."

VARIETY: "Story is hustled along with pace. Playing and direction hold the quality above the nature of the material, giving it a sinister dignity which places it somewhere between the legitimate horror drama, such as 'Night Must Fall,' and the conventionalized American screen murder mystery."

'Barbed Wire Fence' Better Than Its Title

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

ProducerSol Wurtzel
 DirectorRicardo Cortez
 Original Story.....Dalton Trumbo
 Screenplay: Dalton Trumbo, Leonard Hoffman, Ben Grauman Kohn.
 Featured: Jean Rogers, Raymond Walburn, Marjorie Rambeau, Glenn Ford, Eddie Collins, Nicholas Conte.
 PhotographyEdward Cronjager
 Film Editor.....Norman Colbert
 Time61 minutes

How the exhibitor is ever going to get the title. "Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence" on the marquee is a problem to us. He might just put the word "Heaven" on the marquee and we feel certain that exhibitor experience would indicate that this is not a box office title. Or he might put "Barbed Wire Fence" on the marquee and they will think it is the local hardware store instead of the theatre.

But these questions aside, the picture itself is a very satisfactory piece of dualler entertainment. The story had a basis, the script has pace and surprise twists to keep it moving, and the direction by Ricardo Cortez is

fully in step with those elements supplied to him.

Add to that summary that the cast is made up of one of those solid and sure-fire groups of troupers who can be counted on for dependable performances. None is marquee strength, but all are players.

Raymond Walburn walks off with the honors against stiff competition. Jean Rogers shows improvement over previous pictures, and it is probably because she got a better opportunity this time. Marjorie Rambeau is just as effective as anyone would expect Marjorie Rambeau to be.

The story concerns the very human situation of a young man, Glenn Ford, who becomes fed up with life in offices amidst skyscrapers and yearns for the wide open spaces. Heading west to an Arizona ranch which he has bought sight unseen, he picks up three companions, two of them colorful hoboes, and the third the girl of the plot. All have a reason to get west, and what happens in the story is adventurous and interesting. The girl, it seems, is a fugitive from Spain and thus due for arrest as an undesirable alien.

This gives the melodrama; director, writer, and players the bubble of entertainment.

The picture is a happy event for Ricardo Cortez who has always shown evidence since he started his directing career that all he needs is continual improvement in the material given him to come along in the megaphone ranks.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A handy little feature to have around for the bottom end of the bills. They will like it. Previewed September 29th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "... a fine example of a well made low budget picture. Its story is wholesome and leaves one with the kind of feeling you have after a cold shower bath on a hot day. Although the picture is lacking in marquee names, it will more than hold up its end of the program and give ample satisfaction to all types of audiences."

VARIETY: "Made for supporting bracket, 'Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence' will brighten as well as strengthen dualers. Intriguing story, firm, well-paced direction and excellent performances, the whole enclosed in worthy production wrappings, make it entertainment for the whole family."

Radio's 'Three Sons' Welcome Program Package

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
 Associate Producer.....Robert Sisk
 DirectorJack Hively
 Original Novel.....Lester Cohen
 ScreenplayJohn Twist
 StarEdward Ellis
 Featured: Kent Taylor, William Gargan, J. Edward Bromberg, Katherine Alexander, Virginia Vale, Barbara Pepper, Alexander D'Arcy.
 Film Editor.....Theron Warth
 Time70 minutes

"Three Sons" is another sincere effort by the RKO "B" unit to make pictures that have a reason for existence. It cannot be expected to be considered marquee fare, but then, you won't be paying marquee money for it. However, it is a good definition of what is meant by those words "family picture."

Edward Ellis, the character actor who set himself in the "Man To Remember" opus,

again carries the burden. The story is homespun. Producer Robert Sisk and Director Jack Hively have stayed down to kitchen earth in their development of the picture efficiently.

There is seldom any money in pictures presenting elderly stars. But there is frequently satisfying entertainment. That is the case in "Three Sons," which many years ago gave both satisfaction and money when it was "Sweepings," with Lionel Barrymore in the top spot.

As might be expected, when you mention the names of Lionel Barrymore and Edward Ellis, it is a tear terker. John Twist has modernized the original story effectively, and Edward Ellis is every bit a Lionel Barrymore in the lead.

The story concerns the Chicago tycoon—a fictional Marshall Field—whose hunger is for plans to have his children carry on his dy-

nasty. The youngsters are just youngsters, with all the diversified ideas a group of children might have, counter to the parent's will. That rings in the complications of 1939 youth against 1900 success. It is a meaty subject, well handled and well played.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: One of those programmers that will give satisfaction on many bills if properly spotted. Should be good neighborhood fare. Previewed September 25th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Sentimental and heavy handed, often to maudlin degree, and dealing with matters calculated to get little sympathetic response from the younger element of audiences, 'Three Sons' lacks the force and treatment to lift it above the ordinary dual levels."

REPORTER: "Fortified with a good screenplay, fine direction, careful production and some excellent performances, 'Three Sons' emerges as a gripping melodrama that will give ample satisfaction on any bill."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
The Rabbits Come	FOX	169
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Stanley and Livestock	FOX	151
Union Pacific	PAR	145
The Women	MGM	140
Kentucky	FOX	138
The Real Glory	UA	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Beau Geste	PAR	131
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Thunder Afloat	MGM	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	124
Inarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
The Sun Shiner	PAR	120
Which Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120

Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	118
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander's Great Escape	FOX	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	102
Midnight	WAR	111
OKlahoma Kid	WAR	111
East Side of Heaven	WAR	110
In Name Only	UNIV	110
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	107
Honolulu	MGM	107
Lopper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honey-moon	PAR	102

Tu-Is-pin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wines of the South	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93

Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91
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St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83

Three Musketeers	FOX	81
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B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	115
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128
Golden Boy	COL	121

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110

Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
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Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	100
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It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Masie	MGM	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hotel For Women	FOX	95
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	95
Thousand of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Blackmail	MGM	91
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Naughty But Nice	WAR	85
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Frontier Marshal	FOX	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
The Under-Pop	UNIV	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
These Glamour Girls	MGM	84
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Winter Carnival	UA	80
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
The Gorilla	FOX	80

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C.

FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D.

BELOW \$100,000

Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blonde Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Flight At Midnight	REP	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	80

I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	77
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Coast Guard	COL	76
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	75
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
Boy Friend	FOX	75
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	74
Fisherman's Warf	RKO	74
I Stole A Million	UNIV	73
Bridal Suite	MGM	72
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	72
The Lady and the Mob	COL	71
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR	71
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	70
King of the Turf	UA	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Clouds Over Europe	COL	70
Stronger Than Desire	MGM	70

The Mikado	UNIV	77
They Shall Have Music	UA	76

Devil's Island	WAR	78
The Day The Bookies Wopt	RKO	78
Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Parade Our Nerve	FOX	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Inside Story	FOX	75
Mystery of the White Room	RKO	75
Boy Slaves	UNIV	75
Disbarred	RKO	73
Missing Daughters	COL	73
The Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	73
The Spellbinder	RKO	72
It Could Happen To You	FOX	72
King of Chinatown	PAR	72
Society Lawyer	MGM	72
Persons in Hiding	PAR	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	72
Stop, Look and Love	FOX	72
Ex-Champ	UNIV	72
Blondie Takes A Vacation	COL	71
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	71
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Society House	RKO	71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR	71
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	71
The Girl and the Gambler	RKO	71
Quick Millions	FOX	71
Blind Alley	COL	71
Million Dollar Legs	PAR	71
Unexpected Father	UNIV	70
Island of Lost Men	PAR	70
Chasing Danger	FOX	70
Unmarried	PAR	70
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
Big Town Czar	UNIV	70
On Trial	WAR	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	70
Ambush	PAR	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
Torchy For Mayor	WAR	70
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	70
Within the Law	MGM	70
Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR	70
Death of a Champion	PAR	70

Some Like It Hot	PAR	69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
News Is Made At Night	FOX	68
The Family Next Door	UNIV	68
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
Fixer Dugan	RKO	68
The Saint in London	RKO	68
For Love or Money	UNIV	68
The Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	68
Love, Wolf, Spy Hunt	COL	67
Conspirator	RKO	67
Playing With Dynamite	WAR	67
A Woman Is A Judge	COL	66
Forgotten Woman	UNIV	66
Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation	FOX	66
Code of the Streets	FOX	66
Charlie Chan in Reno	UNIV	66
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
They Asked For It	UNIV	66
The Ware Case	GB	66
Cowboy Quarterback	WAR	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	65
Tell No Tales	MGM	65
Conspiracy	RKO	65
They All Come Out	MGM	64
Exile Express	GN	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR	64
6,000 Enemies	MGM	63
Night Work	PAR	63
The Kid From Texas	MGM	60
Miracles For Sale	MGM	56
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	54
Career	RKO	53
This Man Is News	PAR	52

Our Leading Citizen	PAR	67
Stolen Life	PAR	67
Hotel Imperial	PAR	66
Zenobia	UA	66
Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	64
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	63
The Flying Irishman	RKO	63
Smiling Along	FOX	63
Climbing High	GB	63
Way Down South	RKO	62
Women in the Wind	WAR	62

Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71
She Married A Cop	REP	70
Hidden Power	COL	70
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	70
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
Trapped in the Sky	COL	70
Orphan in the Street	REP	70

I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Parents On Trial	COL	68
The Five Little Peppers and Kong, The Wild Stallion	COL	68
Streets of New York	COL	68
Inside Information	UNIV	68
I Was A Convict	REP	68
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
Behind Prison Gates	COL	68
House of Fear	UNIV	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	GN	67
Wolf Call	MONO	66
Forged Passport	REP	66
First Offenders	COL	66
Rookie Cop	RKO	66
Wanted by Scotland Yard	MONO	66
Waterfront	WAR	66
Everybody's Hobby	WAR	66
Mickey The Kid	REP	65
The Zero Hour Walls	COL	65
Outside These Walls	REP	65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave	COL	65
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64
Should A Girl Marry?	MONO	64
Smuggled Cargo	REP	63
Should Husbands Work?	REP	63
Street of Missing Men	REP	63
Star Reporter	MONO	63
Undercover Agent	MONO	63
The Man Who Dared	WAR	63
Boy's Reformatory	MONO	63
Panama Lady	RKO	62
Panama Patrol	GN	62
The Girl From Rio	MONO	62

M. A. LIGHTMAN URGES EXHIBITORS TO PLAY HITS FOR LONGER TIME IN CURRENT CRISIS

Memphis, Tenn., Sept. 22.—“Believe it or not,” M. A. Lightman, partner of Publix, chain operator of eighty theatres, and one of the big showmen of the South, is one of the two most popular men in these parts with all independent theatre operators. He enjoys their respect, is followed in his operation, and generally looked up to for guidance, by his competitors in cities adjacent to his towns. He never built a theatre against an independent, and never in any manner contributed to the loss of a town by an independent, and yet he is Publix partner throughout this section of the country.

“Lack of foresightedness on the part of our national leaders five years ago, is the cause of most of our troubles today,” he opined in discussing the evils that beset this industry now. He suggested that if the distribution departments would only make reasonable concessions even now, much of the acrimony would cease, and a more united front be possible, among the warring elements.

Lightman A Big Shot But Retains Friendships

Mr. Lightman was formerly president of the Tri-State M.P.T.O.A. Later the national president. Today at their convention in Memphis, although Publix partner, he still occupies the spot of leadership. To him these folks look for guidance. In addressing the convention on Monday Mr. Lightman talked at length about the effect of the European war upon the industry.

First M. A. said that he believes that with the Congress solving the neutrality situation, that business in the theatres will boom.

Secondly he stated that he did not believe the producer and distributor would suffer as greatly from loss of foreign revenue, as was at first glance anticipated. With the stoppage of production abroad in England and France, he is of the opinion that the foreign market will pick up materially, even though distributors may not be able to get their cash out of those countries immediately, but will have to invest it there.

Advising exhibitors here, he suggested that they should conserve their good product, book it very discreetly, and play good pictures longer. His reason was

that the producer will make fewer big money makers, in the next few months, and those that are already made should be played with the thought in mind of getting the very last dime out of them, that the local community had to give. In this manner, he believes that the shortage of good product coming this season, can be made to span the gap of playing time between pictures already available and those to be promised.



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Nashville, Tenn., September 23.—If laymen ever get sainted when they reach Paradise, then Johnny Harris, of Pittsburgh and America, certainly will be one of those to receive this benefaction. Last week he started another Variety Club in Memphis, Tennessee. This particular Club is to sponsor a milk fund for prematurely born babies, a charity that is in great need of funds. He installed M. A. Lightman of Malco Theatres as president. And M. A. already had a check for \$5,000 raised, from selling chances on an automobile, to start off this Club's charity. John Harris has given of his time and money for many years to this work. All over the east it is producing untold good. He nor the Clubs boast or publicize these benefactions. Johnny Harris is giving more of his time to this work, than to gathering in the dimes in his Pennsylvania theatres.

Tri-State Convention Meets In Cooperative Spirit

Memphis, Tenn., Sept. 24.—Exhibitors from Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee—members of the Tri-State Independent Exhibitors Association—met in this city today, in their annual convention. It was an unusual meeting, for this tempestuous era. There were no fireworks. No distributor effigies were offered for hanging on the old cottonwoods along the bluffs of the Mississippi. No long winded exhortations of means and methods of reducing the producer, star or distributor to impotence, come from orators of their group. Just a meeting for routine business, to meet the newly instituted

Variety Club officials, including its organizer Johnny Harris of Pittsburgh, and “Bob” O'Donnell of Dallas, who came in to induct M. A. Lightman as head of the Memphis Club.

Ed Kuykendall of Columbus, Miss., was present. This is his home organization. From its presidency he went to the prexy of the M.P.T.O.A. He delivered a lengthy address upon the efforts of the national organization to work out a new Code with the distributors.

Some discussion took place about the Neely Bill, after which the Southerners went on record against its passage. They take the position that there are a lot of beneficial things to be gained under this bill, but these they believe are far offset, by opening the door to Government intervention. The Tri-State folks themselves, want to work out with the distributors, the evils that exist.

D. X. Williams presided at the sessions. He is from Oxford, Mississippi, and was re-elected president. About the most important problem before the convention was the repeal of the old ten per cent admission tax, which still haunts the Mississippi exhibitors. Hope was expressed that this could be killed at the next session of the legislature.

“Bob” O'Donnell, of Texas Interstate, was present greeting his many friends. At the banquet he addressed them, speaking generally about the progress of this industry, and the prospects for the future.

After two days, banqueting, playing golf, and attending to routine business the boys left for home Monday night.

Tony Sudekum Believes His Skirts Are Clean in Govt. Suit

Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 21.—Whether the Government in its quest to clean up the film industry is one hundred per cent right, in where it strikes, remains to be seen. However, it is hard to believe that Tony Sudekum, one of the South's first citizens, has purposely violated either the letter or spirit of the Sherman Anti-Trust law. One only has to spend a day

in Nashville to discover a lot of things about this distinguished gentleman.

In the first place Mr. Tony as he is called, refused to discuss the case that has been filed against him. About all he seems to know is what he sees in the papers. He did say, however, that he was very certain his organization had never done the things that are alleged against the Schine Circuit, in its operations up North.

Hanging on the walls of his office, are scores of silent testimonials, as to the esteem in which he is held by his fellow Tennesseans. One of these is a resolution passed by a Tennessee Senate, thanking him for his activities as a private citizen in bringing the theater in the South to its present standard. Others from Governors, high state and national officials, bearing their office's great seals attesting to his citizenry. One from the Presbyterian Church of the South, and signed by 77 prelates; a memorial even a king might well covet.

“Buck” Buchanan States His Case Against The Chain

Only one exhibitor who filed affidavits against the Crescent Amusement Company was interviewed. He was M. M. Buchanan of Athens, Georgia. “Buck,” as he is affectionately known throughout the South, told this Field Man, that he went into Athens, Georgia, and put up a small second run house against the Crescent Amusement Company, and opened up at 25 cents admission, against the bigger company's 35 cents first run. Soon the Crescent Amusement Company built another theatre, and the price of admission was cut to 15 cents.

Mr. Buchanan has filed suit against all the major companies except Universal and RKO, whose pictures he is playing. He said that United Artists sold him, took his contract, and later rejected it, and sold Mr. Sudekum. Buchanan claims that Sudekum had not been playing United Artists in Athens, until he came in.

Mr. Buchanan was formerly an exhibitor in Tupolo, Miss., and more recently District Manager for Erpi in the South. He is planning a chain of small second run houses in county seat towns in the south. Many of these towns are controlled by the various chains.

The Box Office
DIGEST

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The Editor Says:
“It’s Time to Buy
Season’s Pictures”

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“Rulers of the Sea”
Tops New Releases at
Nation’s Box Offices

SEE PAGE 5

“Hollywood Cavalcade”
and “Mr. Smith”
Cheer the Previewers

SEE PAGE 6 and 7

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
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FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING PICTURE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With
"RULERS OF THE SEA"---124%



Executive Producer
WILLIAM LeBARON



Producer-Director
FRANK LLOYD

Story and Screenplay

TALBOT JENNINGS
FRANK CAVETT
RICHARD COLLINS



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, Jr.

Photographer
THEODOR SPARKUHL

Musical Score
RICHARD HAGEMAN



Associate Producer
LOU SMITH



MARGARET LOCKWOOD



WILL FYFFE

The Box Office

DIGEST

*The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly*

IT'S TIME TO BUY!

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

Some months ago, when The Digest warned distribution executives that pre-season buying was proceeding so slowly as to approach the proportions of an "exhibitor sit-down strike" we were pooh-poohed by some of the most high and mighty pooh-poohers.

"It's the same old stall," we were told. "Just give the exhibitors a week to make their bluff, then when they begin to read about all our big new attractions they will be falling all over each other to sign on the dotted line."

To date, we have heard of no territory where any exhibitor has been trodden underfoot in the stampede.

Here it is the middle of October and there are many situations where the biggest of circuits are still working on the details of important deals. Business that should have been on the books early in September.

And if this applies to the big fellows, what about the subsequent runs, which must frequently await the circuit's decision before being in a position to make any sort of intelligent deal?

* * *

That's the present situation.

The distribution executives must take a large portion of the blame, though not all. Considerable time was lost in awaiting the completion of a Code—two years in the making by our finest attorneys, and thrown out in two hours by our Attorney General.

That wrangling created considerable uncertainty in the exhibitor mind; it was fast bringing an air of arrogance to film sellers who murmured, "Once we get this Code established we'll make 'em buy the product—or else."

That was an unfortunate situation—a mess of muddy water that has already gone over a weed-grown dam.

A second unfortunate attitude was the apparent unanimity with which distributors had decided that national economic conditions made the times ripe to demand the utmost in price raises, and the last ounce of entangling conditions on preferred play dates.

"B" pictures were going to be reduced in number, but the exhibitor suddenly discovered that this merely meant shifting some previous "B's" over to the "A" side; short subjects would not be forced down his throat, but the exhibitor learned that if

he didn't take the shorts, the price of his features was being raised to make it just six of one and a half dozen of the other; cancellation privileges were generously offered, but somehow or other the total GROSS of his yearly contract was likely to work out at the same figure whether he took a ten or twenty percent cancellation privilege.

Those faults delaying selling have been DISTRIBUTOR faults.

* * *

And now:

At the risk of being misinterpreted by many exhibitors, we are going to say flatly:

THIS IS THE TIME TO BUY!

And pictures must be bought soon, deals set soon, if this industry is not to face a precarious domestic condition that will merely double the war problems.

There are big attractions available now, for which subsequent run box offices are thirsting. In too many situations these pictures are reposing on shelves because supposedly adult business men, with intertwined interest in their industry, can't get together around a table.

That is serious, in so far as these attractions already produced are concerned, but think what it will mean to the FUTURE.

There will be no conscious cutting of quality in Hollywood solely because of the European situation; there will be a "pulling in of the belt," a greater concentration on subjects aimed directly at AMERICAN box offices.

But quality will suffer if the production executive can get no assurance from distribution as to the future revenue and future health of AMERICAN selling.

We ask no exhibitor to run, walk, or swim to his nearest exchange and sign on the dotted line for the first deal offered him; we ask no exchange man to accept peanuts for pearls.

But unless this industry wishes to face the damndest production mess it has ever seen along about January planning-time, we say:

It's time to call off the "sit-down," and try a man to man session of the "sit-together."

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	13 Releases	98
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	37 Releases	94
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	37 Releases	94
4. Warner Brothers	38 Releases	87
5. Paramount	42 Releases	83
6. RKO-Radio	29 Releases	82
7. Universal	29 Releases	79
8. Columbia	27 Releases	75
9. Republic	18 Releases	68
10. Monogram	16 Releases	65
11. Grand National	4 Releases	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases	65

THE HIGHLIGHTER PROJECTS HIS CHIN AND TALKS ABOUT SALARY CUTS; OTHER LIVE ITEMS

7 Features "Going Up"

	Was Now
1. <i>The Women</i> .....MGM....140...149	
2. <i>The Star Maker</i> .....PAR....120...122	
3. <i>Hotel For Women</i> .....FOX....95...97	
4. <i>Frontier Marshal</i> .....FOX....86...88	
5. <i>Man They Couldn't Hang</i> .....COL....73...75	
6. <i>Playing With Dynamite</i> WAR....67...70	
7. <i>The Man Who Dared</i>.....WAR....63...65	

From all angles of consideration, the Highlight of the week is, of course, the instructions to all members of the Screen Actors Guild to resist any attempt at wide and ruthless salary-cutting propaganda. . . . For the rank and file of the Guild membership the warning was timely, well taken, and will serve to stiffen the courage of some who might be befuddled by day to day headlines. . . . But there is another protruberant point sticking out in this problem.

What About The Stars Who Were Paid For Their Grosses?

Over the years of our experience, the so-called "rank and file" of troupers have been seldom overpaid for their efforts. . . . A particular player might receive the sum of a thousand dollars a week, with a four week guarantee for a certain picture, and you might off-hand say, "That's a lot of money for that particular role." . . . But the fact is that the producer wanted that particular player for that particular part, and his supposedly extravagant thousand dollar a week buy was the cheapest insurance the part and the picture could have. . . . Secondly, this ideal player for a particular part may be waiting six months or longer before another screenplay writer creates a characterization that meets the same specifications. . . . And all the right and wrong of the rank and file situation is not confined to the thousand dollar class. . . . There are experienced troupers way down in lower brackets who have never received any more than they are worth. . . . For the simple reason that they were never hired unless the producer and the director WANTED them. . . . But there is another side to this "salary cutting" question. . . . What about the blue-bloods whose agents have not sold "skill and labor" for years but have insisted that they were entitled to the golden apples on the strength of definite BOX OFFICE VALUE?

They Sold A Piece of Pie— And Now Two Slices Are Missing

Agents for top personalities began to take the producers down the road a few years ago with the attitude that big shots were not to be considered in terms of weekly salaries, but in a lump sum as the price of their value in world markets. . . . They sold it. . . . And how! . . . So now we come to a day when,

through no fault of producer, distributor, or player—solely through the quirk of a Madman—a good part of that market is lost. . . . That sort of kicks the boot back to the clever chap who evolved the selling of "market value." . . . If the market has been cut one-third, or one-quarter, it is just that much less a market, isn't it? . . . The star may be the same star, with the same inimitable personality and qualities, but he—or she—has been sold for the past five years not as an individual, but as a saleable commodity with certain values in the world market. . . . There ain't no world market any more. What is the answer?

There Are Salary Cuts— And Salary Mayhem

While on the subject of salary cuts, there is another thought that may as well remove itself from our over-burdened chest. . . . It is a sad commentary on this industry that at the first sign of trouble it must break the headlines with news of salary cuts in such unintelligent phrases: "One Hundred and Fifty Cut From Bul-Bul Payroll Yesterday"; "Seventy-five From Whatz-Is Roster," etc. . . . We have no quarrel with the top executive who faces a problem and decides where to trim his sails on future production plans. . . . If we were making Rolls-Royce cars, and it became evident that a third of the type of people who buy Rolls-Royce cars might be in the trenches by Christmas, we think we might find a way to make our Rolls-Royces at a price the remaining two-thirds would pay. . . . But we would hate to admit that there must have been so much inefficiency in our organization that at one fell swoop we could fire hundreds by right and left. . . . And we would bow our head low if we had to admit that of all those we fired, there were no designers, engineers, research workers, but that we had found a half dozen stenographers here, a few odd publicity men there, a gateman sitting in a corner, and a stray relative who had lost his contact. . . . It is a heluva confession of inefficiency. . . . Because either the small salaried employee was worth his money yesterday, or he shouldn't have been on the payroll at all. . . . Or, he will be missed tomorrow.

Jogging Around The Studio Corners In Search of News

It's a tough time to look for news. . . . Of course, papers must be filled, but of what interest is it when the real news is behind the scenes, and the papers can only pick up the blues or the mimeographed hash? . . . It is The Highlighter's humble opinion that one of the trade publications pulled a boner with the flat declaration that a survey showed film business would only be off eight per cent because of foreign conditions. . . . If there is any one, Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier, or Roosevelt who can—short of a friendly inti-

macy with a crystal ball—tell what the business is apt to suffer in coming months we will nominate him for Totalitarian Ruler of the Universe. . . . And we can get him a job with several harrassed producers with millions to worry about. . . . Here's a sign of showmanship: The Paramount in downtown Los Angeles has them standing out this week with a bill that includes "What A Life," that fine Ted Reed high school yarn, Count Basi, the current mania of the adolescents, and the Dead End Kids. . . . Add up those factors and see what you get. . . . Just what the box office is showing. . . . Yessir, these are days for showmanship, not for checking the can of film in and out of the projection room.

Things That Happen In The Night of Worries

We may have a strange sense of humor, or maybe it isn't humor. . . . Somehow we are puzzled about our own reaction. . . . But it seems haywire to us that MGM has an expensive negative on the shelf because all the money and all the efforts of Leo's horses and all Leo's men couldn't put it together in the first place—for the simple reason that Hedy LaMarr cannot act—that the La Hedy, after one nursed-through job, should immediately go run to the lawyer to break the contract and ask the king's ransom. . . . Evidently that fellow was right who told us twenty years ago that there is something screwy about this business. . . . Signs are hot for Charles Rogers to close his new Paramount deal this week. . . . Rogers not only has a current hit in "The Star Maker," but there seems to be a good one coming up in "The Carters," and he is already lining up new yarns that sound lively. . . . Reports from the studio front are that Harry Edington has something coming up in "Green Hell," which will topline Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and John Howard. . . . If that combination of William Wyler and Gary Cooper goes through for Sam Goldwyn in "The Outlaw," it should be a picture. . . . Title is hot, and Cooper and Wyler should make a great team. . . . Jules Levy has resigned as general sales manager of Universal. . . . After twelve years in one spot—ever since Universal and First National days—that's news. . . . Reports are coming to us that Hugo Quist has a red hot new ice skating star coming up in his new show which will burst on the cash customers soon. . . . Wouldn't it be funny if Quist, developer of Sonja Henie, rang the bell twice?

8 Features "Going Down"

	Was Now
1. <i>Thunder Afloat</i> .....MGM....131...119	
2. <i>Fifth Avenue Girl</i>.....RKO....118...114	
3. <i>In Name Only</i> .....RKO....110...108	
4. <i>Lady of the Tropics</i>.....MGM....107...102	
5. <i>Angels Wash Their Faces</i>.....WAR....95...93	
6. <i>Winter Carnival</i> .....UA....80...77	
7. <i>Flight at Midnight</i> .....REP....80...75	
8. <i>They Shall Have Music</i>.....UA....76...72	

LLOYD'S "RULERS OF THE SEA" HITTING ON HIGH; "HONEYMOON IN BALI" ALSO STRONG FOR PARA

Paramount--4 New Releases

Paramount takes the cake this week with four new releases, two of which are doing considerably above average business, while the second two are weaker attractions.

Frank Lloyd's first big sea epic since his famous "Mutiny on the Bounty" is his new Paramount special, "RULERS OF THE SEA," which on its first pre-run engagements is doing very well at an average of 124%. Due to the fact that this picture boasts of an English cast, not so well known on this side, it hasn't opened quite as strong as we had anticipated, but unquestionably word of mouth advertising will continue to build it on its future bookings.

Because of the present European war and the fact that much of the warfare today is on the high seas, this should be a potent picture at American box offices.

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., who has recently been seen in several fine box office attractions, plays the romantic lead, with the English star, Margaret Lockwood, playing opposite. Exhibitors will remember Miss Lockwood from 20th-Fox's "Susannah of the Mounties," and previously in Gaumont-British's "The Lady Vanishes."

Paramount's second release this week is a new Fred MacMurray-Madeleine Carroll co-starring picture, "HONEYMOON IN BALI," which at its present box office value of 111% is considerably better than their last picture, "Cafe Society," which only averaged 81%. Exhibitor reports on "Cafe Society" were that their patrons liked the MacMurray-Carroll team very much and thoroughly enjoyed the picture, but that the title was against it, as it didn't have mass appeal.

"HONEYMOON IN BALI" was produced by Jeff Lazarus and directed by E. H. Griffith. Virginia Van Upp should also come in for considerable praise for her excellent screenplay filled with sparkling dialogue.

Paramount's third release this week co-stars the two big mouths of Hollywood, Martha Raye and Joe E. Brown. Several producers had the idea of co-starring Raye and Brown for sometime, but it was finally Paramount who got the two together on the dotted line, to play in "\$1,000 A TOUCHDOWN."

However, it is sad to say that in the past year or so, both Joe E. Brown and Martha Raye's followings have dropped off considerably; as a matter of fact, so much that both of their contract options were not picked up, and thus this one is only getting by fairly well at an 81% average.

Paramount's fourth and last release this week, "WHAT A LIFE," 77%, has so far proven to be the weakest of their new attractions. Incidentally this one stars Jackie Cooper, who also has a new Universal release this week. As long as Jackie Cooper is free lancing between Para-

Of Eight New Releases in the Past Week, Three Rated Over 100%; Two Came Through Okay and Three Were Very Weak.

mount, Universal and Monogram, it is too bad for the exhibitors that his releases cannot be kept at least a couple of months apart, as too many releases simultaneously will weaken the box office value of any star or featured player.

"WHAT A LIFE," adapted from Clifford Goldsmith's successful play of the same name, is really a very amusing comedy of high school life and should pull better houses than it has been doing so far; but since this one is lacking in big marquee names, it will be necessary to give it a special advertising campaign and hope that word of mouth will build it on its future runs.

Opposite Jackie Cooper is Betty Field, with John Howard prominent in the support that includes Lionel Stander, Hedda Hopper, and many others in the supporting cast. In "nabes" where the Henry Aldrich radio program is followed closely it should add considerably to the prestige of this picture. In several instances in the past certain radio programs and radio stars have been very popular with the sit-at-homers, but have not proven of any particular value at the average box office.

Old time Paramount director, Ted Reed, megaphoned this one very successfully from the screenplay by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder.

RKO--1 Release

For some time, RKO-Radio Pictures have been distributing in the U.S.A. the Herbert Wilcox English made productions, directed by Mr. Wilcox and starring his wife, Anne Neagle. On Mr. Wilcox's latest effort, "NURSE EDITH CAVELL," they reversed the order with Mr. Wilcox producing this picture at the RKO Studios in Hollywood, and the results have been very successful, for on its first bookings, "NURSE CAVELL" is running quite well at a 109% average, even holding over for a second week at the world's largest theater, the Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

American exhibitors will undoubtedly recall running several of the Herbert Wilcox-

Anne Neagle pictures in the past two or three years, the most successful to date having been "Queen Victoria."

Shortly after the release of "NURSE EDITH CAVELL," RKO will release "60 Glorious Years," which Miss Neagle made in England about a year and a half ago, but which has been held up, pending the release of "NURSE CAVELL," figuring by then Miss Neagle's reputation as a dramatic box office favorite will be better established.

Supporting Miss Neagle is a big cast of American screen favorites headed by Edna May Oliver, George Sanders, May Robson, Zasu Pitts, H. B. Warner, and many others.

When we reviewed this picture and originally estimated its box office value at 90%, England had not declared war on Germany, but now that the situation is as it is, this production is as timely as today's headlines, and thus exhibitors should expect good box office results.

Warners--1 Release

Warner Brothers-First National have a much better than average programmer this week in their new release, "ESPIONAGE AGENT," 91% (formerly entitled "Career Man."). In this one, Warners are trying to sell the title over the weak cast, due to the great amount of space recently given to the activities of the Fritz Kuhn's German-American Bund. They are also trying to sell this one as a follow-up on "Confessions of a Nazi Spy."

Joel McCrea is co-starred with Warners' new find, Brenda Marshall.

Universal--1 New Release

A few months ago Universal united Jackie Cooper with Freddie Bartholomew as a co-starring team, and their first picture was the ill-fated "Spirit of Culver," which only averaged 63%. This was due more or less to the fact that it was a weak production with a poorly hashed out screenplay. However, such is not the case with the new Cooper-Bartholomew picture, "TWO BRIGHT BOYS," which has much more vim and vigor. This one opened up a great deal stronger, at a 74% average, with possibilities of building even higher when it hits the "nabes."

The Cooper-Bartholomew team is not exactly a first-run idea, but more meant as a strong filler for the suburban theatres, and as such this one should prove quite acceptable.

Monogram--1 Programmer

Monogram's new release this week is another in the Frankie Darro series, "IRISH LUCK," 67%. Exhibitors who have been running this Monogram series will know what to expect from this one. It will make a fair filler on the bottom half of a feature dual bill.

8 New Features Not in Last Issue

		We Est.
1. Rulers of the Sea	PAR	128.....135
2. Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	111.....100
3. Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	109.....90
4. Espionage Agent	WAR	91.....95
5. \$1,000 A Touchdown	PAR	81.....80
6. What A Life	PAR	77.....80
7. Two Bright Boys	UNIV	74.....80
8. Irish Luck	MONO	67.....70

Twentieth Century Hits Box Offices With Great Show in 'Hollywood Cavalcade'

Don Ameche and Alice Faye at Their Best; Irving Cummings' Direction Top Note; Technicolor Adds to Class

Darryl Zanuck's "Hollywood Cavalcade" is a three ring circus of showmanship. Its theme is robust and pregnant with exploitation possibilities; its marquee value is a sure-fire magnet: Don Ameche and Alice Faye; its presentation is in glorious Technicolor; and its story and pictorial elements are luscious in audience values. All around, a tribute to all concerned in story, cast, and technical crew, and particularly to Zanuck, Associate Producer Harry Joe Brown, and Director Irving Cummings.

The Digest very rarely includes in its reviews one of those pat phrases: "This picture should be properly exploited." Having been on both sides of the fence we appreciate the fact that too many exhibitors that phrase is a red flag.

But we wish to use the solid word "exploitation" in connection with "Hollywood Cavalcade." Because the picture is going to make just as much money for you as you go after.

The producer has supplied the solid elements of marquee, story interest, and spectacle. Charles McCarthy and Harry Brand between them will undoubtedly supply the background fire to be built under box offices. After that the exhibitor can still supply his own fireworks.

We know key city spots where the picture can ride on its own just as it stands; we know other spots where we would sell it to the budding Cinderella and their swains as "the secret of getting into the movies"; we know other spots where we would take all the real values offered, and then add a freak one: "Come and see, for the first time, the REAL inside of star-making and picture-making."

We may be groping, but we feel fairly confident that showmen will get our meaning. Which is, here is a show—and shows are going to be few and far between—so wrinkle up the brow and take advantage of a picture that has so many angles sticking out that there is a hot one for any selling situation.

So now we get to the picture. It is a sweet job of combining a single line thread of romance and human emotions, a very slender thread, with factual moments that provide highlights for individual topper scenes.

The story starts somewhere along about 1913, and gets its plot off to movement with Don Ameche, a director in the then-despised movies, discovering Alice Faye on the New York stage.

Shifting to Hollywood, the plot then offers opportunity, as we see things really through the eyes of neophyte Alice, to view the crudities and get the laughs, cut of early picture making. These establishing scenes are good in themselves, but then — BINGO — the picture goes into a couple of reels of black and white reproducing an honest to goodness hey-day Mack Sennett Keystone comedy.

It is a long time since your blase reviewer has employed the phrase "rolled 'em in the aisles" —but that is actually what this reincarnation of the good old slapstick days did to a preview audience, and will do to any audience. What an opportunity to release inhibitions, stretch the corsets, and just laugh. Out loud. Old time laughs.

From there on, as it unfolds the history of the industry, the story becomes the drama of Ameche and Faye, the former tied to his directorial ambitions, the latter

succumbing to a healthy romance with Alan Curtis. The story parallels history until the advent of those freak "talking pictures." And incidentally, one of the high spots of the evening is the singing of "Kol Nidre" by Al Jolson, just as he did in the original "Jazz Singer."

It is definitely the best acting job that Don Ameche has turned in, probably due in part, to the fact that it is one of the best opportunities he has had. He and Miss Faye must carry on their shoulders the burden of holding together the yarn in a piece necessarily episodic to cover so broad a subject. Aside from telling you that Miss Faye handles her assignment with skill, we wish to go on record that for our money she is the most "real" leading lady we have yet seen in Technicolor. You will appreciate what we mean when you view the cream-colored humanness of her flesh tints.

J. Edward Bromberg is most prominently present in support. That safe and certain trouper takes the role of financial backer to Ameche in stride and with assurance, after which he enters a couple of meaty scenes with all guns on the starboard side. Young Alan Curtis measures up neatly in personality and ability to his opportunity.

Irving Cummings has contributed so much to the years that make up screen history that he deserved the opportunity to make its first "entertainment-history." He has done a grand job: he knew his theme and his people.

Eddie Collins highlights the group of oldtimers, and just look at that list above, in the hilarious slapstick interlude directed by Mal St. Clair.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Get the trailer well in advance; then pick out the angle you can sell best in your situation: movie history, the stars, the comedy, or the all around three ring circus effect. Start the talk early and prepare for extra days. Preview-ed October 2nd.

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 145%)

Executive Producer	Darryl F. Zanuck
Associate Producer	Harry Joe Brown
Director	Irving Cummings
Original Idea by	Lou Breslow
Based on Story by	Hilary Lynn and Brown Holmes
Stars	Don Ameche, Alice Faye
Featured: J. Edward Bromberg, Alan Curtis, Stuart Erwin, Buster Keaton, Donald Meek, Eddie Collins, Ben Welden, Jed Prouty, Mary Forbes, Willie Fung, Chick Chandler, Ben Turpin.	
Photography	Ernest Palmer
Technicolor Photographer	Allen M. Davey
Film Editor	Walter Thompson
Time	95 minutes

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID.

REPORTER: "Twentieth Century-Fox has a definite hit in 'Hollywood Cavalcade' and one that should fit into the top bracket of ticket sellers in any part of the world, whether in war-torn Europe, in the farthest reaches of South America, or here in the American theatres. 'Hollywood Cavalcade' is a picture that exhibitors should nurse. It should be heavily exploited and played for as long as it will stand up."

VARIETY: "In 'Hollywood Cavalcade,' a grandiose and nostalgic reminiscence of successive phases of the motion picture industry, woven around a compelling heart interest story, Darryl F. Zanuck and his aides have a hit show about film show business which is both monumental and commercial. It carries a note of encouragement to picture production and exhibition personnel in these days when the industry faces, as it has faced before, a seemingly crucial period."

**ASK THE IMPORTANT
PICTURE BUYERS-----**

**AND YOU LEARN ABOUT
The Box Office
DIGEST**

'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington' Another In List of Frank Capra's Triumphs

James Stewart and Jean Arthur Register Strongly in Timely Document of Washington Didoes

"Mr. Smith Goes To Washington" is a shining example of Frank Capra skill and Harry Cohn luck. The Capra skill produces one of the best achievements of his career; the Cohn luck receives it when it is more timely than your latest newspaper headline. The combination of skill, luck, timeliness of theme, and a couple of great performances by Jimmy Stewart and Jean Arthur, and a half dozen grand performances by a star-studded supporting cast, makes for money.

Aside from its solid qualities of picture production, "Mr. Smith" will arouse some controversy. There will be those who will say that this is not the moment for baring the human frailties of our high and mighty Washington legislators. But controversy makes box office, and Capra makes entertainment. That's a combination pretty hard to beat.

"Mr. Smith Goes To Washington" is just what its title implies. It is the struggling saga of a "Mr. Smith" — Jimmy Stewart — who finds himself propelled into the hectic national political scene, butting his honest head against a stone wall, not knowing his off-hand career has been set by smooth Edward Arnold and other connivers. There is a girl, Jean Arthur, world-wise, and politically-wise, and starting her observation of Stewart with a fair air of contempt for this naive guy

which is Capra's forte—and they do not tell it for the simple reason that no one yet has put down a re-telling of a Capra picture that captured the things that really made it a Capra picture.

The story is typically Capra in that it is "male Cinderella"—it answers to the inhibitions and secret dreams of young and old American males, from hash slingers to pompous executives. In "It Happened One Night" the problem was simple in its emotions, the capture of an elusive Claudette Colbert; in "You Can't Take It With You" it was a poor little rich boy problem; in "Mr. Smith" it is the common, every day, garden American bucking up against the machinations of Washington life.

Capra's usual canny skill is evident in every role portrayed in the picture. Claude Rains and Edward Arnold are in their element, as contrasting elements to the naive Stewart. Their performances are effective, yet repressed; in other words they are polished. Guy Kibbee, a figure-head governor, turns in a well etched job.

Thomas Mitchell, who has made a knack of picture stealing, is at his best in cooperation with Capra. His performance is a standout. That grand old-timer, Harry Carey, playing the presiding officer of the Senate, is exceptionally effective. But glance over the rest of the names in that credit sheet above and you know that it is a Capra-studded cast of sure-fires.

Production values are exceptionally good in their effect of transforming one to the heart and atmosphere of Washington. Some of the best process atmosphere of the year is used, and all the top pictorial spots of the Capitol play their background part.

Lewis R. Foster provided the fine original story background for the successful result, with Sidney Buchman's script showing that he is in tune with the Capra technique, and registering a solid achievement.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: One of Capra's best. That's all need be said. Previewed October 3rd.

who thinks in straight lines, but ending with love.

What's an outline of the story? It does not tell the background, the atmosphere, the toying with apparently minor situations so that they take on major values—

COLUMBIA	
(The Digest Estimates 155%)	
Producer-Director	Frank Capra
Story	Lewis R. Foster
Screenplay	Sidney Buchman
Stars	Jean Arthur, James Stewart
Featured: Claude Rains, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbee, Thomas Mitchell, Porter Hall, Baby Dumpling, Beulah Bondi, Eugene Palette, Ruth Donnelly, Astrid Allwyn, Watson Boys.	
Photographer	Joseph Walker
Film Editor	Gene Havlick, Al Clark
Time	125 minutes
WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:	
REPORTER: "Frank Capra has another smash hit in 'Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.' It is an accomplishment for which Capra and his aides may well take unstinted pride. . . There is flag waving, but no too much of it."	
VARIETY: "With the Capra name, and the stellar marquee strength, its exact political timeliness and its obvious exploitation angles, the picture is a certain smash hit and will compete in grosses with Columbia's best of all time, discounting only for prevailing world market conditions."	

'Television Spy' Timely Paramount Programmer

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer Edward T. Lowe
 Director Edward Dmytryk
 Story Endre Bohem
 Screenplay: Horace McCoy, William R. Lipman, Lillie Hayward.
 Featured: William Henry, Judith Barrett, William Collier, Sr., Anthony Quinn, Dorothy Tree, Richard Denning, John Eldridge.
 Photographer Harry Fischbeck
 Film Editor..... Anne Bauchens
 Time 58 minutes

With a catchy title and a spy theme for these days of war and near-war, "Television Spy" rounds up as a satisfactory programmer in the "meller" class. It is cops and robbers, dressed up with the novelty of important television

secrets being the object of the sleek and crafty villains.

Director Dmytryk keeps his action well paced, and suspense elements interesting from a workmanlike script in the melodramatic school contributed by Horace McCoy, William R. Lipman and Lillie Hayward. The cast has been well selected, with the veteran William Collier Sr. giving balance to a group of promising younger players on the Paramount roster.

It seems that young William Henry, working for a radio manufacturer, William Collier, Sr., evolves the answer to his employer's prayers—practical long distance television. Collier's plan is to turn the sensation over to the government for Army and Navy use, but he is surrounded by a

group of international spies who have ideas of their own.

You can tell the story yourself from there on, clear through to the foiling of the dastardly plot.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory filler material where they go for the mellers. Previewed October 5th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Paramount's 'Television Spy' is a fast melodrama that packs plenty of action

from the opening gun to the final fadeout. Story is routine cops and robbers stuff, with a bit of international spying thrown in, but is given novelty and freshness by the injection of television. The picture will give general satisfaction to all types of audiences."

VARIETY: "Equipped with story material that should have built it into strong supporting feature, 'Television Spy' slumps into filler division because of inability of Director Edward Dmytryk to draw convincing characterizations from his players."

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX.....160
2. Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.....	COL.....155
3. Ninotchka	MGM.....100
4. Fast and Furious	MGM..... 90
5. Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX..... 85
6. Flying Ducees	RKO..... 80
7. Television Spy	PAR..... 70
8. The Great Commandment	IND..... ??

DARRYL F. ZANUCK'S PRODUCTION

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Now Playing

POPULAR PRICE ENGAGEMENT

at

4 STAR THEATRE

Los Angeles



In Technicolor

ON OF

ALCANTARA

The Brilliant
NEW
Note in
ENTERTAINMENT

starring

Alice

Don

FAYE ★ AMECHE

J. Edward Bromberg • Alan Curtis • Stuart Erwin • Jed Prouty • Buster Keaton
Donald Meek • George Givot • Eddie Collins ★ Directed by Irving Cummings
Associate Producer Harry Joe Brown ★ Screen Play by Ernest Pascal ★ Story
by Hilary Lynn and Brown Holmes ★ Based on an original idea by Lou Breslow



Lubitsch Skill Presents New Greta Garbo

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 100%)

Producer-Director, Ernest Lubitsch
Original Story.....Melchior Lengyel
Screenplay: Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Walter Reisch.

Stars: Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas.

Featured: Ina Claire, Bela Lugosi, Sig Rumann, Felix Bressart, Alexander Granach, Rolfe Sedan, Edwin Maxwell, Richard Carle.

PhotographyWilliam Daniels
Film Editor.....Gene Ruggiero
Time110 minutes

Greta Garbo's domestic box office value has not been anything too healthy in recent years, and with the luscious foreign market where she reigned as queen now lost, at least temporarily, Metro is fortunate in the vehicle marking her return to the screen.

"Ninotchka" is more likely to have appeal to American audiences than any of her offerings seen for some time. It is comedy—Lubitsch comedy, to say the highest praise—and it is up to the minute in theme and sparkling treatment.

Ernst Lubitsch has rarely in his career had so free hand an opportunity to display his adroit skill at creating an atmosphere of bubble and lusty froth as in this tale of a colorful group of Soviet emissaries at work and at play in Paris. And he has not relied entirely on the hope that audiences may flock to hear "Garbo Laugh," but employs a hand-picked cast of delightfully able farceurs.

It is an exceptional critic's picture; public reactions at the turnstiles must await word-of-mouth to break down resistance caused by Garbo's previous costume pieces.

Three Soviet agents are in Paris on a mission to dispose of the fabulous jewels of a former Grand Duchess. They are Sig Rumann, Felix Bressart, and Alexander Granach. An hilarious trio. The gentlemen are unable to resist the many lures of Paris, and their official errand is getting off-hand attention.

In Paris, also, is Ina Claire, the former Duchess who believes she still has claim to the jewels. She sets her swain, Melvyn Douglas, to use his wiles and worldly temptations on the emissaries. Then Garbo arrives, as the "big boss" from Moscow to check up on the playboys.

But she, too, falls for the suave Douglas, who is at first really only on a job for his Grand Duchess, but whose labor ripens into

love. In between, there are hilarious adventures, many rich scenes of the more repressed type handled with the masterful Lubitsch touch, and a grand round-up finale in Constantinople which leaves all stripped of serious worry about ideologies and very happy.

The screenplay is well in step with the Lubitsch direction; the cast, as has been said, great in every respect. In addition to the principals mentioned, Bela Lugosi is among those seen to best advantage. There's something wrong with a Hollywood which cannot

realize that Lugosi is an actor of outstanding class, not merely a horror.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Strongest for the adult trade, but easily the most appealing to American audiences of many recent Garbo attractions. Previewed October 6th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The Metro exploiters are using the slogan 'Garbo Laughs' for 'Ninotchka.' Their second thought should give them a greater selling slogan—

The Exhibitor Laughs—Audiences Laugh—Everyone Laughs and enjoys 'Ninotchka.' For that's what's going to happen when the picture hits release. The exhibitor will laugh in happiness because of his business; audiences will laugh because of the picture's fine entertainment; everyone will laugh who can crowd into any theater showing 'Ninotchka.' What a picture!"

VARIETY: "'Ninotchka' is a critics' picture, but it also has the sound vitality and the good human marrow to beguile the populace. Smart, exhilarating, penetrating, it will delight especially those who have some sense that what goes on in the world today has its humorous aspects as well as the dreadful and portentous."

'The Great Commandment' Unusual Religious-Entertainment

(Cathedral Films)

(The Digest Estimates ??)

ProducerJohn T. Coyle
Associate Rev. James K. Friedrich
DirectorIrving Pichel
StoryDana Burnet
StarJohn Beal

Featured: Maurice Moscovitch, Albert Dekker, Marjorie Cooley, Warren McCollum, Lloyd Corrigan, Ian Wolfe, Olaf Hytten, Harold Minjir, Anthony Marlowe, Lester Scharff, John Merton, Perry Evans, Stanley Price.
PhotographyCharles Boyle
Film Editor.....Ralph Dixon
Time85 minutes

"The Great Commandment" is a picture that any exhibitor should view. It has entertainment, but more importantly, many tempting angles for exhibitors in community situations where a bit of good will can be used to advantage.

The subject is Biblical, the sponsor and producer, an Episcopalian minister, Rev. James K. Friedrich, the treatment thoroughly professional by director, writers, and cast. It sums up as a very welcome achievement. It was no simple task to take a religious subject, combining in its tale the closing days of the Old Testament, and the dawn of the New; to treat it reverently and at the same time "entertainingly"; to handle it so that there will be no question of creed or dogma to becloud its appeal.

We suspect that, aside from the due meed of credit due the producer, the reasons for this remarkable result lie in the talents of that unrecognized actor and directorial genius, Irving Pichel. Pichel brings the most solid traditions of stagecraft to his screen work, and one of these days he is

going to get his real break—it may come as actor or director.

There is good writing also in "The Great Commandment," in the script by Dana Burnet; exceptional photography by Charles Boyle; and quality production background by Associate Producer John Coyle.

For their story, the producers have chosen that portion of Judea's history when the people were ground under the heel of Roman despotism, and clung desperately to the hope of a day when the Messiah would appear. There is an intertwined love interest against this background, and moments of action in hopeless revolt against the Roman legions. There is rumor that a Messiah has been born, and plans to enthrone him in glory and military power. But when He is found, He is a simple soul who preaches Love of the neighbor, and the strength of gentleness.

Pichel and Burnet have done a remarkable job of maintaining all the elements of suspense, drama, action, and soul, while easing through the handicaps of costumes and the necessities of a sincere approach to a reverent theme.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Our understanding is that present plans call for road-showing under locally selected auspices, though a major release is possible. We advise all exhibitors to get a look at it for themselves as soon as some local exchange has it. Reach your decision based upon community problems, and local cooperative opportunities. Not a run of the mill picture to be booked in the routine way. Previewed October 2nd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID.

REPORTER: "'The Great Commandment' is not a million-dollar Biblical spectacle, of which the screen has had several in years past, but it, the first release of a new producing company, would do credit to any of the major studios. In only a few scattered scenes, all of which can be tightened, does it fail to hold audience interest."

VARIETY: "Breaking away from modern plot formulas to lift its story from the Bible, 'The Great Commandment,' is, perhaps, a daring bid for a place in spotlight of the general cinema. Yet it will no doubt attain the goal set by its producers due to its values in outright entertainment, to say nothing of artistry in both direction and performances."

The Fastest Growing Paper
in the Industry



The Box Office DIGEST

Laurel-Hardy At Best In First Morros Production

RKO-RADIO

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer.....Boris Morros
Director.....Edward A. Sutherland
Original Screenplay, Ralph Spence,
Alfred Schiller, Charles Rogers,
Harry Langdon.

Stars: Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy
Featured: Jean Parker, Reginald
Gardiner, Jean Del Val, Charles
Middleton.

Photographer.....Art Lloyd
Film Editor.....Jack Dennis
Time.....65 minutes

"Flying Deuces" takes rank as probably the best of the Laurel-Hardy feature efforts, and will find a welcome spot on many bills.

It is straight, old-fashioned Laurel and Hardy humor, gagged to a fare-you-well, zaney and screwy, and entirely without sense. But it has its laughs aplenty, a

pretty steady stream of them, with two or three high spot sequences that really go to town.

Old time Laurel and Hardy fans will remember a previous adventure they had in the French Foreign Legion when under the Roach banner. This time, appearing in the initial Boris Morros production for RKO release, they are again back in the Legion, with a new set of gags, and the same fertile background for their use.

The action opens in Paris, where the boys, fish-peddlers from Des Moines, are on a vacation, Hardy becomes involved in a flirtation with the daughter of the innkeeper, only to suffer a broken heart when he learns that she is married.

The boys decide to end it all by

a nosedive into the Seine, and their attempted suicide brings on the first high spot, a sequence that is milked for a wealth of hilarity. They are dissuaded from the act by a Legion officer who persuades them to join up with the devil dogs. When the girl of the inn shows up at the Legion post as the wife of their superior officer, complications begin.

They attempt an escape with all the variety of screwy happenings you would expect of the duo and a capable crew of gagsters. In the Legion sequence Laurel gets his big scene with a Harpo Marx "harp" solo played on bed springs of his prison cot. It's a riot.

Eddie Sutherland has directed with a veteran's hand, and Producer Morros can feel well satis-

fied with the all-around values given his RKO debut.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good supporting fare, particularly as a balance to some of the heavy dramas current. Previewed October 5th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "There's not much to this new Laurel-Hardy comedy, mainly because of lack of story material, but what there is proves to be better than the average feature length show with this pair of funsters."

VARIETY: "Essentially funny and one of the most whimsical pieces of dual clowning turned out by Laurel and Hardy, 'The Flying Deuces' needs only some judicious trimming and tightening of the preview footage to stack it up as prime entertainment and profitable program merchandise."

Ritz Bros. At Tops In "Pack Up Your Troubles"

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Executive Producer.....Sol Wurtzel
Director.....H. Bruce Humberstone
Original Screenplay: Lou Breslow,
Owen Francis.

Stars.....Jane Withers, Ritz Bros.
Featured: Lynn Bari, Joseph
Schildkraut, Leon Ames, Stanley
Fields, Ed Gargan, Henry Vic-
tor.

Photographer.....Lucien Andriot
Film Editor.....Nick De Maggio
Time.....75 minutes

It remained for the last picture on their Fox contract to provide the Ritz Brothers with probably their best opportunity on the screen. Produced at a modest budget, "Pack Up Your Troubles," is a corking screw-loose war bur-

lesque that will tickle many an exhibitor when he hears the audience howl within the theater.

With the added value of Jane Withers' name for the marquee, the picture really relies on the Ritz Brothers' antics. Jane is growing up now, and is as appealing and clever as ever, but her moments are needed for plot, when the audience would probably be well satisfied to forget sense and accept undiluted portions of the Ritz nuttiness.

Director Bruce Humberstone can stick a feather in his cap. Without a super-budget, he has moulded his elements into a super B, that wits its marquee and entertainment values, will rank very

satisfactorily at the top of the bill in many spots.

It's all screw-loose. The Ritz Brothers, a down at the heels vaudeville trio, enlist in a branch of the service that they think will be kept safely on this side of the waters, only to wind up as muleskinners in France. Jane is the American-born daughter of a French officer, Joseph Schildkraut, who is doing spy duty in German territory.

Events enter a whirligig which finds the quartette behind the German lines, amidst adventures aplenty, and even sees the Ritz boys decorated as German heroes.

Joseph Schildkraut is at home in the principal supporting role.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Crazy enough for all ages. Mark it down for the date you need a wild comedy. Previewed October 6th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This hilarious and completely cock-eyed affair is apt to prove a sleeper as the first—and unexpected—hit comedy of the new war cycle. Situational as to humor, it has a couple of sequences which are uproarious, while the slender drama thread and the comedy are neatly interwoven."

VARIETY: "Provided with powerful support by the Ritz Brothers, Jane Withers spreads her wings in 'Pack Up Your Troubles' and takes off for broader fields in the cinematic realm . . . will meet with a real welcome from exhibs and customers alike."

Tone and Sothern Click In "Fast and Furious"

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer.....Frederick Stephani
Director.....Busby Berkeley
Original Screenplay: Harry Kurnitz
Stars: Ann Sothern, Franchot
Tone.

Featured: Ruth Hussey, Lee Bowman, Allyn Joslyn, John Miljan, Mary Beth Hughes, Margaret Roach

Photography.....Ray June
Film Editor.....Elmo Veron
Time.....71 minutes

"Fast and Furious" makes a very pleasant chapter in this Metro series depicting the adventures of a book dealer when events force him to become an amateur sleuth, and it may be reported that Franchot Tone and Ann Sothern are a delightful team

making their debut in the top roles.

The general pattern of these stories is well known to exhibitors by now. Tone is the book dealer who just can't seem to help stumbling over murders, Ann is his wife who tags along, mostly meddling, sometimes helping. In this case Tone and wifey have started for a vacation when their toes stumble into crime.

Not one murder, but two fatalities, enter the lists before moments of thrill and many more laughs have brought the picture to its end with the solution of the crimes.

Told with tongue in cheek treatment, excellently scripted, and directed in stride by Busby

Berkeley, the whole shapes up as a pleasant, and frequently near-hilarious evening of entertainment. Tone's suave method of playing, Sothern's ability to make any line register for full value, make them an ideal team. Ruth Hussey, last seen in "Maizie" is also present to advantage in a semi-heavy role.

Production values are all on the class MGM scale and the complete job a worthy addition to the record of Frederick Stephani as a producer.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Fine fare for any time, and all ages, with marquee values fair. Previewed October 3rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: ". . . in grabbing the laughs here and there they lost what would have been an excellent piece of entertainment through gumming up an interesting premise. However, as it is, it will prove a satisfactory short end of a dual show."

VARIETY: "'Fast and Furious' not only lives up to its name in matter of plot unfoldment, but it tosses off laughs with the speed of a machine gun. Although aimed at dualers it's a picture that will cause customers to forget world's ills for its full 71 minutes, and send them away spreading valuable word of mouth bally."

THE HONOR BOX PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Frank Lloyd

DIRECTOR-PRODUCER



"RULERS OF THE SEA"

THE HONOR BOX PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

PLAYED DAVID GILLESPIE



"RULERS OF THE SEA"

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	169
The Rains Came	FOX	169
Dodge City	WAR	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
The Women	MGM	149
Union Pacific	PAR	145

Kentucky	FOX	138
The Red Glory	UA	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Bean Geste	PAR	131
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	124
Boaters of the Sea	PAR	124
Butter	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120

Thunder Afloat	MGM	119
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	114
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	112
Midnight	WAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
Last Side of Heaven	UNIV	110

In Name Only	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Loppy Takes A Trip	UA	106
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	102
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris, Honeymoon	PAR	102

Talespin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93

Laura Finds A Son	MGM	91
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St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83

Three Musketeers	FOX	81
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B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	115
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Bardys Ride High	MGM	130

Dark Victory	WAR	128
Golden Boy	COL	121

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	109
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106

Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	100
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Marsie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	93
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Blackmail	MGM	91
Espionage Agent	WAR	91
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
The Under-Pup	UNIV	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
These Glamour Girls	MGM	84
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
\$1,000 A Toneladown	PAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
The Gorilla	FOX	80

Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
The Under-Pup	UNIV	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
These Glamour Girls	MGM	84
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Cafe Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
\$1,000 A Toneladown	PAR	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
The Gorilla	FOX	80

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	80

I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	77
Winter Carnival	UA	77
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Coast Guard	UNIV	76
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	75
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
Boy Friend	FOX	75
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
I Stole A Million	UNIV	73
Bridal Suite	MGM	72
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	72
The Lady and the Mob	COL	71
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR	71
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	70
King of the Turf	UA	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Clouds Over Europe	COL	70
Stronger Than Desire	MGM	70
Our Leading Citizen	PAR	67
Stolen Life	PAR	67
Hotel Imperial	PAR	66
Zenobia	UA	66
Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	64
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	63
The Flying Irishman	RKO	63
Smiling Along	FOX	63
Climbing High	GB	63
Way Down South	RKO	62
Women in the Wind	WAR	62

Devil's Island	WAR	78
The Day The Bookies Wept	RKO	78
Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
What A Life	PAR	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Flight at Midnight	REP	75
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	75
Two Bright Boys	UNIV	74
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Missing Daughters	COL	73
Blonde Takes Vacation	COL	73
The Spellbinder	RKO	72
It Could Happen To You	FOX	72
King of Chinatown	PAR	72
Society Lawyer	MGM	72
Persons in Hiding	PAR	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	72
Stop, Look and Love	FOX	72
Ex-Champ	UNIV	72
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	71
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Sorority House	RKO	71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR	71
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	71
The Girl and the Gambler	RKO	71
Quick Millions	FOX	71
Blind Alley	COL	71
Million Dollar Legs	PAR	71
Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX	71
Unexpected Father	UNIV	70
Island of Lost Men	PAR	70
Chasing Danger	FOX	70
Unmarried	PAR	70
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
Big Town Czar	UNIV	70
On Trial	WAR	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	70
Ambush	PAR	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
Torchy For Mayor	WAR	70
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	70
Within the Law	MGM	70
Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	70
Buildog Drummond's Bride	PAR	70
Death of a Champion	PAR	70
Cowboy Quarterback	WAR	70

Some Like It Hot	PAR	69
Buildog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
News Is Made At Night	FOX	68
The Family Next Door	UNIV	68
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
Fixer Dugan	RKO	68
The Saint in London	RKO	68
For Love or Money	RKO	68
The Man They Couldn't Hang	UNIV	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
Conspiracy	RKO	67
Playing With Dynamite	WAR	67
A Woman Is A Judge	COL	66
Forgotten Woman	UNIV	66
Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation	FOX	66
Code of the Streets	UNIV	66
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
They Asked For It	UNIV	66
The Ware Case	GB	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	65
Tell No Tales	MGM	65
Conspiracy	RKO	65
They All Come Out	MGM	64
Exile Express	MGM	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR	64
6,000 Enemies	MGM	64
Night Work	PAR	63
The Kid From Texas	MGM	60
Miracles For Sale	MGM	58
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	54
Career	RKO	53
This Man Is News	PAR	52

The Milkado	UNIV	77
They Shall Have Music	UA	72
Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71
She Married A Cop	REP	70
Hidden Power	COL	70
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	70
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
Trapped in the Sky	COL	70
Orphan in the Street	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Parents On Trial	COL	68
The Five Little Peppers and	COL	68
How They Grew	COL	68
Konga, The Wild Stallion	MONO	68
Streets of New York	UNIV	68
Inside Information	REP	68
I Was A Convict	MONO	68
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
Behind Prison Gates	COL	68
House of Fear	UNIV	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	GN	67
Irish Luck	MONO	67
Wolf Call	MONO	66
Forged Passport	REP	66
First Offenders	COL	66
Rookie Cop	RKO	66
Wanted by Scotland Yard	MONO	66
Waterfront	WAR	66
Everybody's Hobby	WAR	66
Mickey The Kid	REP	65
The Zero Hour	REP	65
Outside These Walls	COL	65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave	REP	65
Mr. Wong in Chinatown	MONO	65
The Man Who Dined	WAR	65
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64
Should A Girl Marry?	MONO	64
Smuggled Cargo	REP	63
Should Husbands Work?	REP	63
Street of Missing Men	REP	63
Star Reporter	MONO	63
Undercover Agent	MONO	63
Boy's Reformatory	MONO	63
Panama Lady	RKO	62
Panama Patrol	GN	62
The Girl From Rio	MONO	62

S. SYLVAN SIMON

Directed

"FOUR GIRLS IN WHITE"

"THESE GLAMOUR GIRLS"

"DANCING CO-ED"

Under Contract
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10. No. 7.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, OCTOBER 16, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

“Hollywood Cavalcade”
Tops the Week’s
Box Offices

SEE PAGE 5

The Editor Warns
That Radio Competition
Is Worse Than War

SEE PAGE 3

Field Man Finds Zone
Where Epics Are Sold
For Seven and a Half Cents

SEE PAGE 12

●

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

●

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week 20th CENTURY-FOX Wins With
"HOLLYWOOD CAVALCADE"---157%



V. P. in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer
HARRY JOE BROWN



Director
IRVING CUMMINGS



DON AMECHE



ALICE FAYE

Featured Players

J. EDWARD BROMBERG
ALAN CURTIS
BUSTER KEATON
DONALD MEEK
EDDIE COLLINS
BEN WELDEN
JED PROUTY
MARY FORBES
WILLIE FUNG
CHICK CHANDLER
BEN TURPIN

Original Idea by
LOU BRESLOW

Based on a Story by
HILARY LYNN - BROWN HOLMES

Photographer
ERNEST PALMER

Technicolor Photographer
ALLEN M. DAVEY

Film Editor
WALTER THOMPSON



STUART ERWIN



AL JOLSON

DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

RADIO OR WAR?

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

At a time when every picture individual is giving his concentrated attention to war worries, your Editor would be just the fellow to come up with a more important headache.

Have our picture big shots noticed the trend of radio in recent months, and the definite program for the coming season?

We mean: A trend that will keep people AT HOME.

Can you imagine what that is going to do to the luckless picture theatres which must PULL folks from their firesides in order to be paid for their merchandise.

* * *

Let us explain:

There is one program on the air starting this new season, which gives a thousand dollars or so to the winner and plenty of other awards to listeners, who happen to be at home at the time that their phone rings.

Cash is cash. What decision will be reached by a million or more people who must choose between buying three or four tickets at fifty-five cents for a motion picture and staying at home for the one-in-a-million chance of collecting the price of the mortgage on the home?

This particular program may be just the entering wedge, but, if our ears are correct, there are one hundred and one others that are offering people prizes TO STAY AT HOME.

Do you get what we mean?

A family might win an amount that seemed like an Irish Sweepstakes award, by staying at home, but if they go out to the theater for the evening they may have to spend three times fifty-five cents to see a floppo picture.

What would your choice be, if it were not for the fact that you earn your bread and butter from the motion picture industry?

The Digest is not alarmist by nature. We have been in the picture business long enough to know from experience that the best way to help our exhibitor readers — and by doing that, help the whole industry—is by tipping them off to hot pictures and money making opportunities as contrasted to being just a common scold.

As a matter of fact, the exhibitor has experience and

enough in most cases to smell a bad one from quite a distance; what he wants from a trade paper service is the tip-off that gets him that extra money which pays off the bank.

So, as we wrinkle our editorial brow over what is happening to the foreign market, and then are faced by the heavier and more direct competition of some very clever showmanship ideas in radio, we are forced to double the wrinkles, and then take time out from the referee for a moment's thought.

* * *

Here we are all running around in circles worrying about the very definite fact that the foreign market is seriously curtailed.

But at the same time we are blinding ourselves to the fact that there is a domestic threat which will hit the pocketbook in dollars — as contrasted with francs and shillings.

Where is the Hays organization in a situation like this? Or is the Hays organization's function merely that of censorship and legislative lobbying?

Or could it be possible that the Hays organization's number one rule is to have complete ignorance of the business side of the industry?

This might be the proper guess, since one of our biggest executives recently asked James Roosevelt, after some six months experience in the industry, to tell us all what to do.

* * *

But a number of these thoughts we have expressed are aside from the real thought which prompted this page.

And that thought is: That in all the welter of worry about the foreign situation let's not forget we have intelligent American competition from those folks who handle radio.

For the past year or two our highbrow editors, and some of our foot-loose executives, have been condemning exhibitors to asylums for the feeble-minded because they gave away dishes one night a week, or showed double bills.

It was all nice conversation for Santa Anita and it had the double advantage of making the people concerned feel members of the intelligencia.

But now what?

(Continued on Page 4)

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	.....13	Releases.....	98
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	.....40	Releases.....	96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	.....39	Releases.....	94
4. Warner Brothers	.....39	Releases.....	87
5. Paramount	.....42	Releases.....	83
6. RKO-Radio	.....30	Releases.....	82
7. Universal	.....30	Releases.....	79
8. Columbia	.....28	Releases.....	75
9. Republic	.....18	Releases.....	68
10. Monogram	.....16	Releases.....	66
11. Grand National	.....4	Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	.....2	Releases.....	65

THE HIGHLIGHTER APPLAUDS DIRECTORS GUILD FOR ATTITUDE ON ARBITRARY SALARY CUTS

Your Highlighter is one of those most unfortunate individuals in the world. . . . There are so many "crises" situations in this industry that he would love to be the fellow who was always hitting the nail on the head, or at least hitting someone on the head. . . . But his experience always seem to dictate that there is some sort of reasonable difference of opinion between individuals that leaves him up in the air. . . . Unless his readers will give him a break, and believe he is honest, and is just calling his shots as he sees them.

There's An Example In The Director's Guild Attitude

To start this thought off we can use the phrase: For example: Take the Screen Directors Guild. (Don't try to take them too far, they are pretty hefty customers.) . . . But last week the proposition was put to some of the Director Guild members of a flat cut in salary, on just the word and explanation of a distribution executive. . . . Did the individual members go running around in circles like chickens with their foreheads removed? . . . No, they went to their organization. . . . Did the organization just use an assortment of rough words in turning down the salary cut suggestion? . . . No, like the business men they are, they passed an intelligent resolution. . . . The concrete part was that there will be no salary cuts until the Guild knows the facts that might dictate such cuts, but the really important part was that the Guild's attitude was, "We will play ball, if we are sure everybody else is on the same team." . . . That's a sincere and orchid-worthy attitude on the part of what is the most important body of business men in this industry today—because every one of your big shot directors is a big motion picture business man. . . . He is as interested in your theater as you are in his picture. . . . Of course some of them can take executive help on their productions. . . . The big fellows know it, too. . . . Or else they would be foolish enough to believe that General Motors could maintain its position in industry by turning over the plants to the engineers and designers. . . . No sir, if you get to the heart of the "cash-pay-off" section of Hollywood you meet a lot of intelligent people. . . . Our own modest intelligence is with the Directors Guild in its refusal of anything like a blanket salary cut at any studio. . . . These are times where angels are not around, and chisellers are under your mattress. . . . But at the same time we believe that our biggest directors will admit that there will be necessity for "adjustments" in the months to come.

Studio News Interesting— But Nothing Spectacular

The exhibitor may as well resign himself to the fact that there will be few of those bing-bang million dollar announcements from the Hollywood studios in coming months. . . . Good news is in the fact that we have learned

3 Features "Going Up"

	Was Now
1. The Women	MGM...149...158
2. \$1,000 A Touchdown	PAR... 81... 83
3. What A Life	PAR... 77... 83

from direct sources, the distributors are ready to go to work on deals, but also have decided to spend all the extra coin they can find on national exploitation for the benefit of the local theater man. . . . You can call it selfish if you want to, and ascribe it to the loss of the foreign market, but the profitable part about it is—that it is happening. . . . Something mysterious about that Walter Wanger preview of "Eternally Yours." . . . It was not held in Los Angeles. . . . One fellow said that, after his recent Liberty Magazine blast at the columnists, Walter was afraid of a local crew, but thought the New York bread-eaters would be nicer. . . . At any rate, we haven't got the review for you this week because we have a certain hesitation about reporting on pictures that we don't see ourselves. . . . When we catch up with it, you will hear what we think, because we are not—plural or singular—a columnist.

The Week Had Little News But Plenty of Pleasure

Not enough people changed jobs or called contract fights to make what is usually called a week's news in Hollywood. . . . We were glad to hear that Frank Seltzer has been stepped up to New York representation for Hal Roach. . . . It may be principally because Frank has the knack of meeting people in a way that keeps them friends, but probably more importantly, he has the picture experience that will make him a good man on the job. . . . Rumor has it that Charles Rogers is buried under important deals these days at Paramount, but we have one fact: The active preparation on a subject that looks pretty hot, "Jane Addams of Hull House." . . . We'll accept as a Christmas present the Chicago rights to that subject. . . . Bill Seiter is journeying to Universal to direct the next Deanna Durbin picture, with Joe Pasternak again at the producer's helm. . . . This must seem like old-times to Seiter, who was keep-

7 Features "Going Down"

	Was Now
1. The Real Glory	UA...138...136
2. Thunder Afloat	MGM...119...116
3. Honeymoon in Bali	PAR...111...102
4. Dust Be My Destiny	WAR...100... 95
5. Espionage Agent	WAR... 91... 88
6. Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV... 75... 73
7. They Shall Have Music	UA... 72... 70

ing Reginald Denny on the top of the comedy heap for Universal, at the same time that Joe was the busy assistant to Wesley Ruggles.

Why Not Talk About Pleasant Things?

Since the serious side of the industry is so barren of news, perhaps his enthusiastic following will forgive The Highlighter for talking about some of the lighter touches of Hollywood life. . . . He could report that Perino's spot atop the Saks building has miraculously taken over the class business of the town that used to pay Trocadero prices largely for the comfort of avoiding autograph hounds. . . . He could mention L. B. Mayer and quite a few names you'd like to meet. . . . Or he could forget food and seek to get the scores of those Monday handball games in which the undaunted Dave Epstein takes on Notre Dame's Nick Lukats. . . . For that matter, since he is roaming around, The Highlighter might tip some of the night owls that Will Morrissey is getting quite a Hollywood play at his French Casino. . . . The Highlighter didn't have a pencil handy for the items, but he does remember bumping into Joan Davis and husband as he entered the portals. . . . "Babe" Hensley bursts loose again, this time with "17" Club. . . . Looks as though he has what they want, too. . . . Somehow The Highlighter gets a kick out of the thought that Boh Saggan, Notre Dame star, in the midst of his weekly Saturday worries about touchdowns would take time out to write a friend requesting an autographed picture of Don Ameche. . . . Will Don be a rooter for Saggan from now on?

Radio Or War?

(Continued from Page 3)

Today we have radio offering cash prizes which must be fundamentally based on keeping possible picture customers AT HOME.

Some of the prizes are big enough to set up a family for life.

Is the same highbrow editorial writer or executive who criticized a Kalamazoo exhibitor for giving away a set of dishes last Christmas willing to come out in the open now?

Or is it just possible that he is sitting at home these evenings with his wife hoping to win one of those radio prizes?

* * *

We make one last humble suggestion:

It appears that for a year or more all of us may have to live on this American market.

Doesn't it seem common sense that we should make a survey of the battles that will have to be fought in this American market?

AMECHE AND FAYE TOP BOX OFFICES IN ZANUCK'S "HOLLYWOOD CAVALCADE"; "BABES IN ARMS" VERY STRONG

20th-FOX--3 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox takes the honors this week with the top grossing picture and also has two other releases, one of which is fairly good, while the third is not so strong.

"HOLLYWOOD CAVALCADE" has opened in several key city first runs for extended engagements, as well as in several small town runs, and it is averaging very strong, approximately 55% above normal business, which is another feather in Darryl Zanuck's cap, following closely on the heels of "The Rains Came" and "Stanley and Livingstone." This Technicolor special dealing with the history of the movies, co-stars two of Fox's most popular players, Alice Faye and Don Ameche.

Harry Joe Brown was associate producer, while Irving Cummings, one of the screen's most consistently successful directors, handled the megaphone.

Many stories have been filmed about life behind the scenes in the movies but none has ever been so completely interesting as "HOLLYWOOD CAVALCADE." Consequently there is every reason to believe that this picture will maintain a high box office figure wherever exhibited, and considering the big exploitation campaign, the fact that the picture is filmed in Technicolor and that Faye and Ameche are in the cast this one should, and is breaking many box office records, which is a credit to all associated.

Twentieth Century-Fox's second release this week is Richard Greene's first starring vehicle, "HERE I AM A STRANGER," which is doing fairly well at an 84% average, but not quite as strong as we had estimated.

Exhibitor reports tend to show that this is both a good critic and audience picture with a good cast but that the title is against it. If this be true, word of mouth may build it up somewhat on future bookings.

Richard Green is supported by an exceptionally strong cast of featured players including: Richard Dix, Roland Young, Gladys George, Edward Norris and not forgetting Zanuck's new find, Brenda Joyce, who recently scored so heavily in "The Rains Came."

Harry Joe Brown also acted as associate producer on this one, with Roy Del Ruth responsible for the direction.

Twentieth Century-Fox's third and last release this week is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, "CHARLIE CHAN AT TREASURE ISLAND," 74%, starring Sidney Toler, who replaced Warner Oland in the popular Charlie Chan series. Our reports indicate that audiences have warmly accepted Toler and this series should continue its consistent rating. The fine supporting cast includes such good marquee names as: Cesar Romero, Sally Blane, Wally Vernon and Pauline Moore. Norman Foster directed.

*Of Ten New Releases In The Past Week,
Two Came Through Very Strong,
Six Came Through Okay, and
Two Were Rather Weak.*

MGM--Also 3 New Releases

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer likewise has three new releases this week, one a big box office smash and the other two much better than average programmers. MGM's biggest hit since "The Women" seems to be the new Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland production, "BABES IN ARMS," which has opened in several cities and is holding very strongly at a 147% average, indicating that this musical will be one of Metro's outstanding releases of the current season.

Mickey has climbed to the top stellar ranks through his Andy Hardy series and Judy has become an important box office name since she scored so heavily as Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz."

The important featured cast includes such famous troupers as: Charles Winniger, Guy Kibbee, Grace Hayes and Henry Hull and gives a good opportunity to three very clever young personalities in Betty Jaynes, Doug McPhail and June Preisser, from whom we can expect a lot in the future as they are all in their teens.

The second MGM release this week is another in the "Fast" series, the last one being "Fast and Loose," and this time gets "FAST AND FURIOUS," 88%. This time Ann (Maisie) Sothern and Franchot Tone are co-starred in this fast moving laugh riot. Ruth Hussey, Lee Bowman and John Miljan are featured.

The Joe Cohn program unit also has another release this week, "DANCING CO-ED," 81%, which supposedly introduces Lana Turner to stardom. While this young lady has given several very fine portrayals, both at Warners and MGM, still her name is hardly strong enough for stardom as yet. Consequently not too much can be expected. But it has a good box office title, and a fairly good supporting cast which includes Richard Carlson, Ann Rutherford, Lee Bowman, Leon Errol and Roscoe Karns.

COLUMBIA--1 New Release

Columbia's London studios have delivered an excellent box office picture, "U BOAT 29," which was recently produced off the English coast. While this picture was probably originally intended for the English market, yet now, because of the European war situation, it is a very timely subject for the United States and consequently the first exhibitor reports on it are very good, averaging around 91%.

Conrad Viedt, whom older exhibitors will remember as a former Universal star in the silent days, is co-starred in this with Valerie Hobson and Sebastian Shaw, but since these names have no particular value on this side of the pond, it is better to play up the title and go a little overboard on an extra exploitation campaign.

Universal--1 New Release

Universal's new release this week is "RIO," a special that doesn't appear to be doing any special business considering that this was a rather big cast.

"RIO" was originally purchased by Universal for Danielle Darrieux, but when previous commitments held her in Paris, Sigrid Gurie was rushed into the role and needless to say she has neither the box office value or oomph that Miss Darrieux proved that she had in her last picture, "The Rage of Paris." So consequently Universal and exhibitors will suffer, although this one will get by on the average double bill.

RKO--1 Release

RKO has a much better than average program picture in their new release, "FULL CONFESSION," which despite a heavy theme is running along pretty well at an 85% average and was even held over for a second week at the New York Rialto which is indeed unusual.

As the story is based around the life of the priest, Joseph Calleia, this picture will probably continue to improve in the neighborhood. Since the drama is rather heavy in theme, it should be booked with a much lighter attraction, preferably a comedy or a musical of some marquee value.

Calleia is co-starred with Victor McLaglen and Sally Eilers, with Barry Fitzgerald and Elisabeth Risdon featured.

John Farrow directed and Robert Sisk supervised for the Lee Marcus program unit.

Warners--1 Release

Warner Bros.-First National's only release this week is a programmer from the Bryan Foy unit, "NO PLACE TO GO," which is just getting by at a 68% average. As the picture is based on an Edna Ferber story, it is an interesting enough tale, still it is lacking in marquee strength.

10 New Features Not in Last Issue

		We Est.
1. Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	157.....160
2. Babes In Arms	MGM	147.....145
3. U Boat 29	COL	91.....90
4. Fast and Furious	MGM	88.....90
5. Here I Am A Stranger	FOX	84.....90
6. Rio	UNIV	82.....75
7. Full Confession	RKO	85.....80
8. Dancing Co-ed	MGM	81.....80
9. Chan At Treasure Island	FOX	74.....75
10. No Place To Go	WAR	68.....70

'Roaring Twenties' Rough and Ready Gangster Yarn

Hellinger Yarn; Warner's Experience and Cagney Personality Tie It Up

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Executive Producer.....Hal Wallis
 Assoc. Producer.....Samuel Bischoff
 Director.....Raoul Walsh
 Screenplay: Jerry Wald, Richard Macaulay, Robert Rossen.
 Original.....Mark Hellinger
 Stars: James Cagney, Priscilla Lane.

Featured: Humphrey Bogart, Gladys George, Jeffrey Lynn, Frank McHugh, Paul Kelly, Elizabeth Risdon, Ed Keane, Joe Sawyer, Joseph Crehan, George Meeker, John Hamilton, Robert Elliott, Eddie Chandler, Max Wagner, Vera Lewis.

Photographer.....Ernie Haller
 Film Editor.....Jack Killifer
 Time.....104 minutes

You do not have to worry about "The Roaring Twenties." Give Warner Brothers a gangster theme, then give them James Cagney, and the result should be pretty well obvious.

The Warner Brothers know their racketeer themes. James Cagney knows his individual abilities. And Samuel Bischoff, associate producer on "The Roaring Twenties," knows his audiences.

The combination sums up as one of those rip-roaring heavy-heavy mellers that have their definite spot and box office value. Mark Hellinger wrote the story, and it would probably have been impossible to find anyone who knew more about "The Roaring Twenties."

Raoul Walsh directed, and if there is a better director to make he-man stuff for the screen we cannot recall his name at this moment. Do you remember "What Price Glory"?

As if these elements were not enough, Bischoff inserted Priscilla Lane, Humphrey Bogart, and others of like calibre to assure a socko job. The story starts back in the World War period, and gives an honest-to-goodness depiction of the speak-easy days as only a good reporter would remember them. It is bang bang and bang bang from start to finish, as Cagney cruises through all the levels of racketeering.

The work of the star and the supporting cast mentioned in the credits above is so excellent and so prominent that we do not have to repeat their names as we near the end of this review. But if it

means anything, we should also not forget to mention a trio of screen writers who turned in a good job: Jerry Wald, Richard Macaulay, and Robert Rossen.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Typical Warners' hell-bent-for-leather gangster meller, and produced only as Warners can produce this type of subject. Previewed October 11th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The pace of the picture is furious and even though over-length in its preview last night, packed a wallop rarely seen in one of these yarns. Added to

that terrific story pace, and combined with it was a terrific tempo set up by Raoul Walsh, plus an acting cast that fitted in with all the action and the speed set up by the direction. All of which should unreel a picture that most audiences will go for in quite a big way."

Mono Hits High in 'Mutiny in Big House'

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer.....Grant Withers
 Director.....William Nigh
 Original.....Martin Mooney
 Screenplay.....Robert D. Andrews
 Stars: Charles Bickford, Barton MacLane, Dennis Moore.

Featured: Pat Moriarity, William Royle, Eddie Foster, George Cleveland, Charlie Foy, Nigel de Brulier, Jeffrey Sayre, Russell Hopton, Richard Austin, Jack Daly, Dave O'Brien, Charles King, Richard Austin, Wheeler Oakman.

Photographer.....Harry Neumann
 Film Editor.....Russell Schoengarth
 Time.....84 minutes

"Mutiny in the Big House" will undoubtedly prove the biggest Monogram money-maker of the past few seasons. It is powerful drama, given quality production, and securely fitted to handle the top of the bill in many situations.

Tight scripting, crisp direction, and excellent performances share the credit for the fine result. Charles Bickford and Barton MacLane top the cast in name value, but all members of the all-male group deserve a bow for their response to William Nigh's direction.

It is drama, powerful prison drama, and with little effort at light relief. Bickford is seen as the priest-chaplain, and his skill in a sympathetic role is even more welcome than past leering villains. It is Bickford's task, as the kindly and understanding priest, to hold together and keynote a story that touches on every phase of prison life—from delightfully pathetic touches such as the voluntary return to his cell of the elderly prison gardener who couldn't

stand the hectic pace of life in the troubled outside world, to an execution, and on to a mutiny climax.

Chief strength of the picture is its adherence to a single, straight and effective line, together with compactness of screenplay and direction. William Nigh, who used to turn out quite a few of these successful red meat subjects back down the years at MGM, gets the direction orchid: Robert Andrews, that for the script. Martin Mooney, former New York reporter of many experiences, provided the original yarn. Grant Withers checks up a winner in his second effort as an associate producer.

Some mention should be given the members of the cast supporting the fine work of Bickford and MacLane. That sure-fire, and unappreciated character actor, George Cleveland, receives his real opportunity and delivers as everyone but major lot casting directors know he can; Charles Foy, of the Foy's, is excellent in his spot; Richard Austin, in a sequence where he recites the Lord's Prayer as Nigel De Brulier is going to his execution, gets one of those red meat opportunities for

VARIETY: "A tale Warners has now brought to the screen in a chain of animated etchings under the title 'The Roaring Twenties.' In its transfer from the real to reels, it has lost none of its thrilling excitements, its joys and heartbreaks, nor its all too tragic realities."

which actors wait a lifetime. And he gets the audience. Nigel De Brulier is as effective as always.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Monogram contract exhibitors are in luck, for they probably have something at a price one half of what it is worth. Others, in communities where they want their drama strong and without a chaser, should look into it. Not for the kiddie days. Team it with a screwloose comedy. Previewed October 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Mutiny in the Big House' Monogram has the finest production in its history; a short history, but one that has given theatres some top grosses, such as the Jackie Cooper pictures 'The Hoosier Schoolboy' and others. This, however, is far and away the best produced, best written and best acted picture of them all—a picture that would be a solid credit to any major studio."

VARIETY: "Boldly treated prison melodrama of more than usual substance and conviction in its division, 'Mutiny in the Big House' is a strong entry for the secondary duals and has calibre enough to support in the first division if judiciously coupled."

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. The Roaring Twenties.....	WAR.....125
2. At The Circus.....	MGM.....115
3. Disputed Passage.....	PAR.....110
4. Law of the Pampas.....	PAR.....80
5. Sued For Libel.....	RKO.....75
6. Dr. Christian.....	RKO.....75
7. Mutiny in the Big House.....	MONO.....75
8. Those High Grey Walls.....	COL.....70

The Fastest Growing Paper
 in the Industry



The Box Office DIGEST

'Disputed Passage' Has Its Box Office Value

*Harlan Thompson
Creates Sincere Portrayal;
John Howard
Registers Strongly*

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

ProducerHarlan Thompson
DirectorFrank Borzage
Screenplay: Anthony Veiller, Sheridan Gibney.

Based on novel by: Lloyd C. Douglas.

Stars: Dorothy Lamour, John Howard.

Featured: Akim Tamiroff, Judith Barrett, William Collier, Sr., Victor Varconi, Gordon Jones, Keye Luke, Elisabeth Risdon, Gaylord Pendleton, Billy Cook, William Pawley, Renie Riano, Z. T. Nyi, Philson Ahn, Dr. E. Y. Chung, Philip Ahn, Lee Ya-Ching.

Photographer.....Wm. C. Mellor
Musical score: Frederick Hollander, John Leipold.

Film Editor.....James Smith
Time87 minutes

There is always a real and concrete box office value in any picture produced from a Lloyd C. Douglas story. It is similar to the value in the old classics, or the near-classics such as the Gene Stratton Porter stories. No matter what the producer does with the picture, a certain safe amount of box office money is there.

In this case let it be reported that Harlan Thompson and Frank Borzage have produced for Paramount a sincere interpretation of the novel which first appeared in the *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and that they have also done some other things.

First of all, they have given John Howard his best screen opportunity to date, and Howard himself proves that he can meet any opportunity as an actor. We heard many women talking about him as we left the theater, and to your biased reviewer this is always the signal that reads "A Star Is Born."

There are many cash customers who know of the Lloyd C. Douglas novel, and who at the same time forgive his rather trite treatment of big themes. In this case Mr. Douglas takes on the problem of medical ethics and contrasts

Akim Tamiroff—scientist with a frigid heart—with the medical students who must pass his courses.

Howard is the student who falls under the spell of the master, until love—that great word LOVE—enters the scene, and the Chinese war with its murder of innocents, brings him back to being a human being.

The girl in the case is Dorothy Lamour. For our money, she could have been left at home and all the male actors in the picture would have done a better job. But there are people who pay money to see the stolid, pasty-faced Dorothy, so who are we to argue? All we can do is to warn them that she

never strips to a sarong in the course of this picture.

Efficient support is given to Howard and Tamiroff by William Collier, Sr., Victor Varconi, and Keye Luke.

Our orchids go to Harlan Thompson for his realization that the right way to make a Lloyd Douglas picture is to give Lloyd Douglas fans what they expect.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: An adult picture, so therefore to be spotted carefully. But you know the values in your own community on a *Cosmopolitan* magazine serial and a Lloyd C. Douglas novel, so you can spot it better than we can. It is a good picture. *Previewed October 11.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A vivid and absorbing entry in the screen's portrayals dealing with the medical science, this is a telling example of sheer story value. Without a glittering name in the lineup, it is a beautifully played, excellently written, splendidly directed and handsomely produced picture which holds unflagging interest. It deservedly takes its place in the fore rank with the other screenings of Lloyd Douglas novels."

VARIETY: "Literary dignity of the screen play, together with excellent characterization and skillful direction invest this film transcript of the Lloyd C. Douglas novel with moving conviction and an assurance of general appeal."

Marx Brothers 'At the Circus' Okay For Reviewer

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

ProducerMervyn LeRoy
DirectorEdward Buzzell
ScreenplayIrving Brecher
StarsThe Marx Bros.

Featured: Florence Rice, Kenny Baker, Eve Arden, Nat Pendleton, Margaret Dumont, Fritz Feld, James Burke, Jerry Margenhe, Barnett Parker.

PhotographerLeonard Smith
Musical Director...Franz Waxman
LyricsE. Y. Harburg
MusicHarold Arlen
Art Director.....Cedric Gibbons
Film Editor.....Wm. H. Terhune
Time85 minutes

The reviewer who covers a Marx Bros.' picture is always on the spot. If he admits that he had an evening of laughs he is a lowbrow; if he states his opinion that the Marx Bros.' humor must always go screwy, and just a bit rough and rowdy, he is a critic.

For our own part, we will report the picture as we saw it. We enjoyed it. We were even willing to forget some of the rough and rowdy burlesque dialogue lines and situations, for the simple reason that the audience all around us also forgave them, and what is more, seemed to enjoy them.

It is not for us to say whether this is the best of the Marx Bros. offerings, because that is a matter

of opinion on which there can be many opinions. We must repeat that we are a reporter and that we enjoyed the picture very much.

It is just as screwy and crazy as anything you would expect from the Marx Bros. It has been scripted by gag men who know their stuff, and handled by director and stars who know their timing.

The story thread is so slender that it helps the picture's audience appeal because it never gets in the way of the Marx trio. It seems that Kenny Baker, a Newport scion, owns a circus which is always in danger of being closed up by the heavy-heavy villain, James Burke, and at the same time is in love with Florence Rice. All this does not make much sense, but the story writers did not expect it to so long as the circus background gave the opportunity for the craziest antics that the Marx Bros. have ever pulled on the screen.

The picture gives more prominence to Chico Marx than in previous pictures created by the brothers, and he comes through very well. At the same time all the talents of Groucho and Harpo are used, and to great audience advantage.

In the support, some good words should be said for Florence Rice, James Burke and Eve

Arden with a small orchid for Fritz Feld, who only gets a small opportunity toward the conclusion of the picture, but makes the most of it.

Kenny Baker is a million dollars at any box office when he is singing, but it is just too bad that Kenny is still a musical comedy player when he gets into semi-serious scenes.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: The Marx Bros. have had a fluctuating value at box offices in recent pictures, so we leave it to you to decide that element. But the picture itself a helluva lot of laughs and fun for those who will take the Marx Bros. type of humor. *Previewed October 12.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'At The Circus' is a further step-down for the Marxes and their brand of comedy, not because of the Marxes, nor of the swell job of direction by Eddie Buzzell, but because of the thin story, a lack of good gags and fewer lines of comedy."

VARIETY: "Hilarious clowning, which ranks 'At The Circus' up amongst the first three in the Marx Brothers deliveries, comparable to 'Animal Crackers' and 'A Night at the Circus.' Out at a time when broad comedy will be at a premium, it pours forth lavish laugh entertainment and will swell the Marxian patronage and needle the b.o. sharply."

THE ONLY AUTHENTIC BOX OFFICE FIGURES PUBLISHED . . .

The **BOX OFFICE DIGEST**

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Harry Joe Brown

“Alexander’s Ragtime Band”

“The Rains Came”

and now



THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Irving Cummings

Directed

Hollywood Cavalcade



THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Don Ameche



**HOLLYWOOD
CAVALCADE**



'Law of the Pampas' High in Harry Sherman Score

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

ProducerHarry Sherman
 Asso. Producer.....Joseph W. Enge
 DirectorNate Watt
 Original Screenplay: Harrison Jacobs.
 Based on character created by
 Clarence E. Mulford.
 StarBill Boyd
 Featured: Russell Hayden, Sidney Toler, Steffi Duna, Sidney Blackmer, Pedro De Cordoba, William Duncan, Anna Demetrio, Eddie Dean, Glenn Strange, Jo-Jo La Savio and the King's Men.
 PhotographerRussell Harlan
 Film Editor.....Carrol Lewis
 Time72 minutes

It is our impression that "Law of the Pampas" is the first release on the new season Harry Sherman-Bill Boyd list

at Paramount. If we are correct, we can report early that the picture gets the series off with a bang. If it happens to be the final on last year's deal, then the contract winds up in a blaze of entertainment.

There are all the usual elements and not a few of the formula touches. that Western adherents not only do not object to, but really demand. But thanks to a corking job of casting, a story and script job a bit above the intelligence expected in horse operas, and capable direction by Nate Watt, the hard-riding and shooting elements have taken on a touch of class.

The picture has its touch of

novelty in transporting Boyd and his side-kick, Russell Hayden, after a fast-moving Colorado opening, to the Argentine. This is not only going to help the Latin-American market, but it gives freshness for fans in the States. The same stock characters may be there, but they don't sound as trite when you get away from the sheriffs and cattle rustlers of the routine.

Boyd and Hayden are their usual selves in the leads, with Sidney Toler standing out as a comedy asset to this series. Romance is supplied by Steffi Duna, intrigue by Sidney Blackmer, dignity by Pedro de Cordoba.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: You know your "Hopalong Cassidy" values. Mark this as one of

the best pictures in the series. Sidney Toler's build-up as Charlie Chan will help. Previewed October 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Even in a western series noted for its even par of excellence, as Harry Sherman's 'Hopalong Cassidy' series has grown to be with both exhibitors and public, 'Law of the Pampas' is outstanding entertainment."

VARIETY: "Hopalong Cassidy series takes on added class and action with 'Law of the Pampas.' Topping its predecessors in both entertainment and production qualities, this newest edition of the Harry Sherman-Paramount group gets away to a slap-bang start, increasing the intensity of its fight and chase footage as it moves along."

'Sued For Libel' Good Program Fare From RKO

RKO-RADIO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
 ProducerCliff Reid
 DirectorLeslie Goodwins
 StoryWolfe Kaufman
 ScreenplayJerry Cady
 Featured: Kent Taylor, Linda Hayes, Lillian Bond, Morgan Conway, Richard Lane, Roger Pryor, Thurston Hall, Emory Parnell, Roy Gordon, Keye Luke, Edward Earle, Jack Arnold, Leona Roberts.
 PhotographerJack MacKenzie
 Film Editor.....Desmond Marquette
 Time65 minutes

Radio maintains its rather consistent standard in the production of programmers with "Sued For Libel." The picture has novelty of background, a neat balance of melodrama and comedy, and a capable cast.

The freshness of background is supplied by the use of a radio news-broadcasting program, with Kent Taylor the air commentator. He is tricked into broadcasting a "guilty" verdict in the case of Morgan Conway's trial for murder, when the jury had really found him innocent.

This puts Taylor's paper on the spot for a libel suit, so with reporters Richard Lane and Linda Hayes he sets out to dig into the past of Conway in an effort to pin a different murder rap on him.

In the end three murders are uncovered, but there is a surprise twist ending that is very well handled.

Jerry Cady's workmanlike screenplay is in large measure responsible for the smooth flow of the picture, and its fine suspense. Direction was capably handled by

Les Goodwins, and all the principals well at home in their roles, with Richard Lane the possible stand-out.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A safe programmer for the "meller" half of the bill. Previewed October 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "RKO has a neat little package of comedy murder mystery in 'Sued For Libel.' . . . It emerges as entertainment that will give more than general satisfaction on any bill. Its production is, noticeably, a shade above the average in this budget class."

You Will Be Glad to 'Meet Dr. Christian'

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

ProducerWilliam Stephens
 Associate Producer.....Monroe Shaff
 DirectorBernard Vorhaus
 Original Story.....Harvey Gates
 Screenplay: Ian McLellan Hunter, Ring Lardner, Jr., Harvey Gates.
 StarJean Hersholt
 Featured: Dorothy Lovett, Robert Baldwin, Enid Bennett, Paul Harvey, Marcia Mae Jones, Jackie Moran, Maude Eburne, Frank Coghland, Jr., Patsy Lee Parsons, Sarah Edwards, John Kelly, Eddie Acuff.
 PhotographerRobert Pittack
 Film Editor.....Edward Mann
 Time63 minutes

"Meet Dr. Christian" was not made for epic box offices, but it is a pretty good job of picture making, aimed at human beings. The general box office figure will probably approximate the estimate we have given above, but the audience satisfaction will be much higher,

and in community houses it will give extra satisfaction.

Plus a human theme, the picture has behind it the radio value of Jean Hersholt's air program.

Judging solely from a picture standpoint, "Meet Dr. Christian" is a capable job of production in the program bracket. Producer William Stephens assembled a competent crew in his first release for RKO. Bernard Vorhaus capably handled the direction, the screenplay was in the hands of Harvey Gates and the cast is the sort of cast that you would expect an "agent-turned-producer" to put together for a picture. It is a good job of casting and production.

The story carries Jean Hersholt along in the character which has become popular on the radio. Jean is the small town Doctor giving out with good will, but always ready to meet any emergency situation, political or otherwise. In the case of this initial story there is a sort of political argument concerned with Dr. Christian's position as health commissioner.

Action is injected into the picture and some very effective suspense. The cast supporting Hersholt is efficient.

A newcomer, Dorothy Lovett, is seen to advantage as a nurse. She received her opportunity as a result of an appearance in a studio play. She shows promise.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A good bet for rural communities, and a better bet where you are certain that the radio program has created a following. Previewed October 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It will be a mighty tough skin that 'Meet Dr. Christian' fails to get under. It is a beautiful picture — rich, warm and understanding. It is modestly unpretentious and infinitely wise."

VARIETY: "Simple, modestly presented but appealing narrative of a small town doctor's humanitarian devotion to his community introduces Dr. Christian from radio to screen. With proper selling and exhibitor enthusiasm 'Meet Dr. Christian' should get off to good response in the family trade for which it is intended."

Nichols Finds Territory Where Epics Sell At Two For Fifteen Cents; Read And Weep



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

Wichita, Kansas.—In many territories of the United States, particularly those where the United States court have accepted a consent decree, the exhibitors have the benefit of an authoritative book which establishes clearance and zoning conditions, and since it is printed, there is a fair assumption that exchange practice must be fair to one and all.

They need such a book in Wichita. On our recent visit there we met a disheartening independent exhibitor reaction in relation to Fox-Midwest. There is no really confident feeling on the part of the exhibitor that the clearance placed in his contract by the local manager is what the New York office desires, or what he should be entitled to under better conditions.

It all makes for an unsatisfactory seller-customer attitude.

Having heard rumors of this unsettled condition before our arrival in Wichita, we tried to get close-to-headquarters information as soon as we arrived there.

And, just as Will Rogers used to say, "All I know is what I read in the papers," we merely pass on to you "All we heard is from the men on the firing line." We know the situation will be of interest to exhibitors in other sections of the country.

Our first call was on an old friend, the manager of a major exchange. He handed us what purports to be the Fox-Midwest Zoning and Clearance schedule for Wichita.

We quote:

"Twenty-five cents first run. Sixty days over first suburban admission, twenty-five cents, an additional fourteen days over subsequent run theaters for each five cent drop in admission price."

Also:

"On pictures played first run on double bill programs, clearance on subsequent runs is decreased by thirty days when subsequent runs single bill. When subsequent shows on single bill, clearance is to be same as regular clearance, according to the admission charged by the first run."

This particular set-up of the Wichita situation carries the date of January 28th, 1935. That's going back quite a long time. We cannot get any later definition with any sense of authority, nor can we actually say that this is the present arrangement—any more than can the local independent exhibitors who wonder if there may by chance be a master agreement in the New York offices.

We should not express opinions in this strictly repertorial page, but it seems to us, after visiting some seventeen other exchange zones in the nation, that the independent exhibitors in Kansas and Missouri are operating under handicaps. To say it softly.

At Any Rate, Let's Get A Picture of Wichita

Exhibitors in all sections are interested in the other exhibitor's problems. Some times they find themselves better off, sometimes they are amazed at a few of the things that can happen in certain spots.

We thought it might be interesting to just give the data on Wichita.

This city, made famous in our childhood days by Carrie Nation, is one of those "healthy" show spots of the country. It has not only a live local citizenry, it draws from the lush payrolls and dividends of near-by Oklahoma oil wells.

Here is the way it is set:

"Fox-West have five houses in Wichita. The roster: Miller Theater, forty cents; Orpheum, thirty-five cents; Palace, twenty cents, with a fifteen cents balcony; Balloonev, fifteen cents; the Uptown, a subsequent run, fifteen and twenty cents; the Wichita is closed for "remodelling."

There are two well-placed spots operated by independent Sullivan, the Civic, at twenty-five cents, and his West at fifteen cents. There is also a Nomar, operated by McColl-

ister, with a fifteen cents admission.

And now prepare yourself, out there in Hollywood, for the shock.

This Is Something For The Record In Indelible Ink

There is a theater in this territory which, by a screwy exploitation idea, only charges its customers SEVEN AND ONE HALF CENTS to see those big epics that your Hollywood editors go so crazy about.

You don't believe it? Here's the lay-out:

Gibbons operates this proposition, the New Theater.

Let's go back and look it over in a business-like way:

If Clearance Clause exists, and if it were interpreted as we attempted to do at the start of this page, it would be the one under which Fox Midwest are at presently operating, and this would mean that all fifteen cent breaks in Wichita would clear in eighty-eight days. But the contracts we examined at the Nomar Theater showed—and our own feeble eyes saw the writing—that their clearance in one hundred and forty-eight days. . . . Wherinell is all the sense in these funny arrangements? . . . Clearance that breaks a man's heart in some situations, and revenue that Hollywood needs tossed to the winds by local czars; in other situations epics playing for a double deal that means seven and a half cents admission per customer. . . . And so what?

Daily Papers Are Interesting— Because They Talk Cash

This Wichita situation was finally so muddled up that we tried to take a rest, and spend it with the day's papers, and their ads. . . . But even the ads got us befuddled. . . . The first thing we discovered was that the Miller Theater played "Daughters Courageous" on a "two for one deal" at a twenty cents admission. . . . That news didn't start us off feeling very good about those Hollywood epic-makers. . . . Because "Daughters Courageous" is too good a picture to get that sort of treatment. . . . And naturally, any exhibitor will know that this violated any sort of understanding with the Clearance Clause in the Fox Mid-West agreement.

And incidentally, this booking and advertising, gives all subse-

quent runs THE RIGHT TO CANCEL THIS PICTURE WITHOUT PENALTY.

In other words, Fox Mid-West has established its own precedent of taking an independent percentage engagement and putting it on FIRST RUN—on a two for one admission.

And Then We Come To The Seven and a Half Cents House

Continuing to read the Wichita papers, we encountered the New Theater's advertisements. This house is playing the best of product. It is receiving the same availability as the Fox house, the Nomar, and the West Theater. And now we give you a sample newspaper ad:

NEW THEATRE
607 E. Douglas — 10c-15c
THIS AD AND ONE PAID
ADMISSION
Admit Two
"Blondie Meets the Boss"
"Within The Law"

This ad and 5c admits one child. Kindly notice the 10c and 15c which undoubtedly shows, in its wording, that it is possible that 10c will admit two people. Of course we can only take the ad's word for it and have no personal knowledge that two people are ever admitted for 10c.

We have before us a list of the bookings from Warner Brothers from 6-28-39 to 9-15-39, some 21 pictures that have played the New Theatre at an admission price of seven and one-half cents. Only one picture, "Dodge City," was played at this theatre at a straight 15c admission. "Angels With Dirty Faces," "Robin Hood," "Jezebel," "Wings of the Navy," "Oklahoma Kid," "Gold Is Where You Find It" and many others, played the New Theater for seven and one-half cents.

We inquired of the Nomar Theater as to when he received his availability notices on pictures for his 15c break. He supplied us with the following list from Warner Brothers:

Women in the Wind, available 8-28, notice sent 8-28; Sweepstakes Winner, available 7-3, notice sent 6-19; Code Secret Service, available 7-3, notice sent, 6-19; Adventures of Jane Arden, available 7-20, notice sent 7-3; On Trial, available 7-20, notice sent 7-3.

Field Man Ridge Gathering Spot News About Exhibitor Activities In Southern Territory



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Memphis, Tenn., October 1.—Unanimity of opinion exists in the South, with respect to the solution of the producers' financial problems, due to the loss of foreign revenue.

"Both producer and exhibitor should stand their respective shares."

Among the leading exhibitors attending the Tri-State meeting in Memphis last week, not one could be found who was adamant to doing his bit, provided producer, star, director, executive and capitalist threw in and made it a Valley Forge mess, out of which all received their sustenance.

William F. Rufin, of Covington, Tennessee, who operates half a dozen theatres, Prexy R. X. Williams, and others said: "We are always willing to do our share, to get good product for our patrons. If it means more money, as long as we can stand it, we will contribute our share. We do not feel, however, that the already over-charged exhibitor should have to stand it all, unless the million dollar a year executives and stars bring their take down proportionately. It is hardly fair stars get \$5000 a week, so frequently used unjudiciously, in the face of these strained times, and then ask us to increase our rentals. We have been bamboozled into paying increasing rentals, year after year. We have not been able to lay up a sinking fund, with which to rebuild, or remodel, when that time comes. Big pictures are promised, in ever increasing numbers, for which we have been charged more and more, and they have not all materialized.

"For men like Mr. Nicholas Schenck, to come forward as he did this week, and tell us that

without the producer, we only have brick and mortar that are useless as show places, is true. But Mr. Schenck, you only have a strip of celluloid, with a lot of folks cutting up didoes, some not even funny, unless you have these brick and mortar places to show them for profit. And as many houses as you folks own, they will not provide you a profit without us MAIN STREET folks.

"And then, Mr. Schenck, you failed to mention anything about you big boys taking a little cut in income along with us. It's a fifty-fifty proposition. But it would be handled with easier grace, if the Mayers, Warners, Schencks and Goldwyns would start right now, and show what THEY ARE GOING TO DO to match our bit."

M. A. Lightman, Publix partner in 75 theatres in Memphis, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee, does not see such a bad situation confronting the producer as the publicity released would indicate. He does believe that there may have to be some adjustments. He does not see the need of big increases in film rentals. Rather he sees the necessity

or conservation of product already made. He agrees with Mr. Schenck that longer runs on big product at the present time, are absolutely essential. He is convinced that even average pictures should have extended runs. In this way the shortage of coming big pictures will be felt less.

"We just cannot stand more film rentals, and live," he stated. "Economies must be exercised in the studios. There is where there have been abuses galore. There is where this trimming should start. There can be a good many million dollar productions made, and the money needed mostly derived from economies within the walls of the Hollywood studios. Stars, directors, executives all can soon solve this 35% foreign revenue loss, if their income is brought to a sensible level.

"I can think of one man who could produce a million dollar picture from a cut in his salary, and still have better than four times as much income as the President of the United States. General Washington shared his all with the Colonial soldiers, in a

stressed war time. Surely some of these big wigs, are no less patriotic. It is in a country made free by General Washington, that they have had their opportunity. Surely they can help now, when old country perils must be kept from our shores, that our splendid business may be kept healthy."

Mr. Lightman believes that after a short time, the English and French markets will not show more than a 10 per cent loss over former income. "Of course," he stated, "the distributor cannot take his money out of those countries immediately. But our distributors and theater folks have invested large amounts already in those countries, and to let it stay there a few years, will not materially affect them. Really, I do not see too much to get panicky over. But one thing is sure, we exhibitors cannot take all the burden. We have always done our share, but it's time some house cleaning took place in the studios. It should have been done a long time ago. Film rentals then would not have been so high that it's about all a small house can do today to exist."

'Those High Grey Walls' Too Heavy; Connolly's Performance Good

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

ProducerB. B. Kahane
DirectorCharles Vidor
Screenplay: Lewis Meltzer, Gladys Lehman.

Based on story by William A. Ullman, Jr.

StarWalter Connolly
Featured: Onslow Stevens, Paul Fix, Bernard Nedell, Irish Meredith, Oscar O'Shea, Nicholas Soussanin, Don Beddoe.

PhotographerJohn Stumar
Film Editor.....Gene Milford
Time79 minutes

"Those High Grey Walls" is not exactly made for public consumption. Which is a shame because the picture is highlighted by one of the best performances of Walter Connolly's solid career, support is above average and Charles Vidor's direction clear-cut and intelligent.

The trouble is not entirely that

it is a prison picture, for Monogram in this same week turned out a prison picture that will get mass response. It must be that this yarn centers itself pretty much around the hospital ward, and gets its movement from a problem that is a bit too psychological for all-around audience interest.

Connolly is a humane country doctor, sent to prison on a charge of harboring a young first offender, a crime which betrayed his sympathies, and not his morals, and behind those grey walls discovering a task that is welcome to his heart.

He helps the inmates, and becomes something of a godfather to them; only to discover that his real problem is the important prison medico, Onslow Stevens. Using the easy-going country doctor psychology, he proceeds to break Stevens down, and point towards a happy ending.

It is all interesting, and you have no complaint when the evening is over that you have not seen your money's worth of motion picture. But it is a bit too far on the heavy side to be called entertainment.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: We have said everything above; be careful how you spot it. Previewed October 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Other than the fact that its subject matter is much too drab and depressing in these troublesome times, Columbia's "Those High Grey Walls," is a well made production, with some fine portrayals, and an excellent job of direction by Charles Vidor."

VARIETY: "While "Those High Grey Walls" is good drama, it builds into a picture that will have limited audience appeal."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	183
The Ribs Game	FOX	169
Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	159
Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	157
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	136
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	131
Babies In Arms	MGM	147
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	138
The Real Glory	UA	136
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Bean Geste	PAR	131
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	124
Inarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	122
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Market	UNIV	121
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120
Only Angels Have Wings	GOL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander's Graham Bell	FOX	117
Thunder Albat	MGM	116
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	114
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	111
Midnight	WAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
In Name Only	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	102
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris, Honeymoon	PAR	102
Ta-Tspan	FOX	97
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Lancelo Finds A Son	MGM	91

St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	143
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	109
Golden Boy	GOL	107
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106

Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	102
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Manie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	95
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	93
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Blackmail	MGM	90
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Espionage Agent	WAR	88
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Fast and Furious	MGM	88
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	85
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
These Glamour Girls	MGM	84
Here I Am A Stranger	FOX	83
\$1,000 A Touchdown	PAR	83
Under Pup	UNIV	82
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Rio	UNIV	82

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

U-Boat 29GOL..... 91

What A Life	PAR	87
Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	GOL	81
Full Confession	RKO	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	80

Gate Society	WAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Dancing Co-ed	MGM	81
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
The Gorilla	FOX	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Never Say Die	PAR	78
Winter Carnival	UA	77
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Coast Guard	COL	76
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
Boy Friend	FOX	75
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	75
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	73
I Stole A Million	UNIV	73
Bridal Suite	MGM	72
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	72
The Lady and the Mob	COL	71
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR	71
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	70
King of the Turf	UA	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Cloudb Over Europe	COL	70
Stronger Than Desire	MGM	70

The MikadoUNIV..... 77

They Shall Have MusicUA..... 70

Devil's Island	WAR	78
The Day The Bookies Wept	RKO	78
Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Flight at Midnight	REP	75
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	75
Two Bright Boys	UNIV	74
Chan in Treasure Island	FOX	74
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	73
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Missing Daughters	COL	73
Blondie Takes Vacation	COL	73
The Spellbinder	RKO	72
It Could Happen To You	FOX	72
King of Chinatown	PAR	72
Society Lawyer	MGM	72
Persons in Hiding	PAR	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	UNIV	72
Ex-Champ	RKO	72
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	71
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Sorority House	RKO	71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR	71
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	71
The Girl and the Gambler	RKO	71
Quick Millions	FOX	71
Blind Alley	COL	71
Million Dollar Legs	PAR	71
Charlie Chan in Reno	FOX	71
Stop, Look and Love	FOX	70
Unexpected Father	UNIV	70
Island of Lost Men	PAR	70
Chasing Danger	FOX	70
Unmarried	PAR	70
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	70
Winner Take All	FOX	70
Big Town Czar	UNIV	70
On Trial	WAR	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	70
Ambush	PAR	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
Torchy For Masoy	WAR	70
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	70
Within the Law	MGM	70
Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR	70
Death of a Champion	PAR	70
Cowboy Quarterback	WAR	70

Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71

She Married A Cop	REP	70
Hidden Power	COL	70
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	70
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
Trapped in the Sky	COL	70
Orphan in the Street	REP	70

I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Parents On Trial	COL	68
The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew	COL	68
Konga, The Wild Stallion	COL	68
Streets of New York	MONO	68
Inside Information	UNIV	68
I Was A Convict	REP	68
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
Behind Prison Gates	COL	68
House of Fear	UNIV	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	GN	67
Irish Luck	MONO	67
Wolf Call	MONO	66
Forged Passport	REP	66
First Offenders	COL	66
Rookie Cop	RKO	66
Wanted by Scotland Yard	MONO	66
Waterfront	WAR	66
Everybody's Hobby	WAR	66
Mickey The Kid	REP	65
The Zero Hour	REP	65
Outside These Walls	COL	65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave	REP	65
Mr. Wong in Chinatown	MONO	65
The Man Who Dared	WAR	65
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64
Should A Girl Marry?	MONO	64
Smuggled Cargo	REP	63
Should Husbands Work?	REP	63
Street of Missing Men	REP	63
Star Reporter	MONO	63
Undercover Agent	MONO	63
Boy's Reformatory	MONO	63
Panama Lady	RKO	62
Panama Patrol	GN	62
The Girl From Rio	MONO	62

Some Like It Hot	PAR	69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
No Place To Go	WAR	68
News Is Made At Night	FOX	68
The Family Next Door	UNIV	68
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
Fixer Dugan	RKO	68
The Saint in London	RKO	68
For Love or Money	UNIV	68
The Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
Conspiracy	RKO	67
Playing With Dynamite	WAR	67
A Woman Is A Judge	COL	66
Forgotten Woman	UNIV	66
Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation	FOX	66
Code of the Streets	UNIV	66
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
They Asked For It	UNIV	66
The Ware Case	GB	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	65
Tell No Tales	MGM	65
Conspiracy	RKO	65
They All Come Out	MGM	64
Exile Express	GN	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR	64
6,000 Enemies	MGM	63
Night Work	MGM	63
The Kid From Texas	MGM	60
Miracles For Sale	MGM	58
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	54
Career	RKO	52
This Man Is News	PAR	52

Our Leading Citizen	PAR	67
Stolen Life	PAR	67

Hotel Imperial	PAR	66
Zenobia	UA	66

Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	64
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Spirit of Culver	UNIV	63
The Flying Irishman	RKO	63
Smiling Along	FOX	63
Climbing High	GB	63
Way Down South	RKO	62
Women in the Wind	WAR	62

Thanks to

LEE MARCUS

BOB SISK

CLIFF REID

for an extremely happy year

JERRY CADY

(Management Walter Kane)



Screenplay for

FIVE CAME BACK ★
FULL CONFESSION

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The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 8.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, OCTOBER 25, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

“Mr. Smith Hits High
At Box Offices
For Columbia

SEE PAGE 5

The Editor Wants
Break For Local
Branch Managers

SEE PAGE 3

Highlighter Analyzes
War Situation
In Dollars and Cents

SEE PAGE 4

●

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This Week COLUMBIA Wins With

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CLAUDE RAINS
GUY KIBBEE
PORTER HALL
BABY DUMPLING
RUTH DONNELLY
ASTRID ALLWYN
WATSON BOYS

Story
LEWIS R. FOSTER

Screenplay
SIDNEY BUCHMAN

Film Editors
GENE HAVLICK, AL CLARK

Photography
JOSEPH WALKER



JAMES STEWART



EDWARD ARNOLD



THOMAS MITCHELL



BEULAH BONDI



EUGENE PALLETTE

The Box Office DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

BACK TO NATURE

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

It's funny, what a lot of mental acrobatics the effect of the war is bringing on the American industry these days.

Producers who have paid no heed to the possible damage they were doing to American exhibitors for the past few seasons by aiming most of their big shows towards the British Empire, have suddenly started a frantic search for star spangled banner themes.

Critics in distribution and newspaper circles who have been snorting in aesthetic horror at any picture that pretended to be a show and did not show a million dollar cost, are even condescending to admit that there can be entertainment in a "B" package.

Others whose artistic sensibilities were severely shocked at the sight of an exhibitor drawing a packed house with the aid of a set of dishes, or a Bank Night, are wondering if they can coax the showman into trying these crutches again—now that they see Radio bribing the customers to stay at home with awards ranging from autos, completely furnished homes on up to the riches of Midas.

It's all funny.

In a way.

* * *

Because it only serves to illustrate, by the mental confusion now, in time of trouble, the amount of haphazard thinking—and speaking—that can go on in such a disintegrated industry as this in the best of times.

"Disintegrated" we said.

Because that is the seat of all our industry's worries.

Creation, production, distribution, and exhibition compose an industry that is a vast glittering mansion that has always been divided against itself. They don't speak the same language.

Creators are imported to Hollywood who have never seen the vast buying territory of the United States except through the windows of a Pullman train, and with one success under their belts, are allowed to spout pontifically on what the public NEEDS in its pictures. Not what it might buy.

Production executives with no more background than a few by-lines in American Mercury, or a possible flesh-in-the-pan sophisticated Broadway success, can speak with equal authority. They criticise local executives whose roots are twined with the industry's roots.

It must be said this group seldom bothers to criticise the exhibitor; the man who sells their wares is beneath their criticism.

Distribution executives who once knew every town and hamlet and half of their populations in the exchange zones from which they were graduated go to New York and before next Michaelmas—they have forgotten the language of back yonder.

Exhibitors are bewildered. One day they are receiving kindly advice from the big shots on how to run their theaters; the next day they find themselves battling to see that the big shots don't take their eye-teeth along with their theaters.

* * *

What an opportunity the present worrisome times present. To do the important thing:

Clean up our own domestic house!

And how to start the clean-up?

We have one humble, but nonetheless important, suggestion:

Give more of the picture business responsibility back to the LOCAL BRANCH MANAGER.

Curb the tendency that is making him an office boy for executives thousands of miles distant.

In other words, return a share of the responsibility to the man who lives with the customer, who must continue to live with him and his problems next season, and the next.

We used the word "return" above, because that is all this sug-

gestion implies. This industry knew its greatest profits—as contrasted with grosses—in the days when the branch manager was a responsible figure.

He was the man who knew every cross-town trolley and every cross-road turnpike in his territory. He knew his customers. Whats' more:

HE GOT THE MONEY!
AND HE KEPT THE CUSTOMER!

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	15 Releases	99
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	41 Releases	96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	39 Releases	94
4. Warner Brothers	41 Releases	85
5. Paramount	42 Releases	83
6. RKO-Radio	30 Releases	81
7. Universal	30 Releases	78
8. Columbia	29 Releases	75
9. Republic	19 Releases	70
10. Monogram	17 Releases	66
11. Grand National	4 Releases	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases	65

309

"TO COLLECT OR NOT TO COLLECT" IS BRITISH MARKET PROBLEM, SAYS HIGHLIGHTER

Chief Highlight of the Week is one on which there is no spotlight shining. . . . It concerns all of us—in New York, Hollywood, and in Kankakee. . . . It's the question: How much money can American companies get out of England in the next year—if they can get any; and, secondly, what price will they have to pay for what they do get. . . . Don't pay any too much attention to either those wishful thinkers who quote you newspaper yarns that all is well with the business in England once more, nor to the extremists on the other side who say that all is shot to hell.

It Isn't A Piker's Problem—It's War Itself

Our big executives are not laying down on this problem and just taking their information from newspaper headlines. There is tall work going on behind the scenes. . . . Both here and in London. . . . On the one side an American industry fighting for something that concerns each and everyone of us; on the other side, a nation at war, with its own problems to consider. . . . Such matters don't work themselves out in the bright sunlight. . . . At least, not in the synthetic Mazda lamp sunlight of newspaper squibs, or half-baked statistical rigamaroles. . . . Essentially, the problem is two-fold. . . . For Great Britain it is this: A nation at war must conserve its capital sources, its money. At the same time it appreciates the morale value of entertainment. But if its subjects, in buying that entertainment, are weakening the national cause by sending money OUT of the country—that doesn't seem sensible. . . . For the American picture industry the problem is this: How to plan a year's product when you don't know how much money you can bring across the ocean. . . . And you must figure on that ocean wave money, because how else plan your Hollywood payrolls? . . . So it sums up to a grand slam of give-and-take. . . . Can the British allow ALL revenue from American pictures to leave the country, or a slim twenty per cent or so? . . . Can American production executives base their plans on receiving no cash from Britain, or some sort of quota deal which makes them spend as much over there as they can possibly earn from American importations? . . . (The average British quota picture wouldn't earn the print cost on a American big money special.) . . . Finally: When new director and star contracts come up for renewal and discussion, who is the Solomon to say what anybody is worth next year?

Considerable Shifting Around In Release Plans

Exhibitor readers will probably have been the first to notice the few big pictures covered in recent weeks by our box office reports. . . . The majors are spreading their top subjects out. . . . The slow selling season had something to do with this, but Your Highlighter

3 Features "Going Up"

	Was Now
1. Honeymoon in Bali.....PAR.....102.....106	
2. U-Boat 29 .....COL..... 91..... 97	
3. What A Life .....PAR..... 83..... 96	
4. Coast Guard .....COL..... 76..... 79	
5. Indianapolis Speedway WAR..... 72..... 75	
6. Forgotten Woman .....UNIV..... 66..... 68	

believes that the active reason now is that war conditions have caused producers to encourage longer playing time and more efficient selling by spreading their big pictures out, rather than the old October practice of cutting each others throats with all the big pictures piling on top one another. . . . The procedure will help exhibitors too, if they are on their toes in selling the real attractions for every dime they are worth when they get a real attraction. . . . Some of them will be bewildered if they are still expecting the big attractions to be dumped in their laps week in and week out to sell themselves without any effort on the part of the exhibitor. . . . These are the days when the real attractions must be played for every last nickle possible. . . . But exchanges must cooperate if this is to be done. . . . They can't ask the exhibitor to streamline himself to a 1941 condition, and then hamstring him with contract terms gaited to a peace and harmony age.

Don't Be Frightened By The Few Previews This Week

Exhibitors surveying the few previews of new picture shown in Hollywood during the past week—as reflected by The Digest pages—may get the idea that many foolish newspaper headlines have suggested. . . . That dear old Hollywood has shut down. . . . The impression is not true. . . . For one important reason: that this season practically every producer was in a better position than ever in having advance product ready for the Fall season, and a fair slump was to be expected. . . . For example, Twentieth Century-Fox pulled no punches when Zanuck delivered "The Rains Came" and "Hollywood Cavalcade" at the period of the year that exhibitors usually yearn for such attractions. . . . Metro struck home with "Wizard of Oz" and "Babes In Arms." . . . Columbia had its Capra ready. . . . And so on through the list. . . . Then the war came. . . . And for once, when producers and distributors were geared

7 Features "Going Down"

	Was Now
1. Each Dawn I Die.....WAR.....122.....120	
2. Fifth Avenue Girl .....RKO.....114.....111	
3. Lady of the Tropics.....MGM.....102.....100	
4. Angels Wash Their Faces.....WAR..... 93..... 87	
5. Nurse Edith Cavell.....RKO.....109..... 86	
6. Espionage Agent .....WAR..... 88..... 84	
7. Rio .....UNIV..... 82..... 74	
8. Everybody's Hobby .....WAR..... 66..... 63	

up to deliver as they had often hoped to, something happened beyond their control. . . . But there are still plenty of big pictures coming up—only delayed, because the start had been so good they were not expected so soon. . . . The weeks between now and Christmas will see "Drums Along the Mohawk," "Northwest Passage," a new Deanna Durbin, "Destry Rides Again," "The Fighting 69th," and a half dozen others that sound like top money. . . . And after the first of the year there will be those two talked-about subjects, "Gone With The Wind," and "Grapes of Wrath." . . . Yes, despite the starved look of the preview pages this week, the box office will have nourishment.

Travelling Here and There Around The Studios

We like Harry Sherman's idea that there should be a special Academy Oscar for the outstanding Western production of the year. . . . Principally because of the point that Harry makes: Good Western fare has been the day in and day out bread and butter sustenance of this industry since its inception. . . . And while the plot range is limited, Western producers of quality have not failed to keep step with increased demands for technical skill, in scripting and mechanics, over the years. . . . The good Westerns pay off a lot of the exchange salaries, they are the most popular American film fare in foreign markets, so why should they be Academy step-children? . . . The Highlighter can't see any mention of the important point in that announcement that Benchley will leave MGM and make a series of shorts for Selznick-International. . . . Where is the series to be released? . . . David is currently a United Artists producer, but United doesn't go strongly for shorts. . . . His current "Gone With The Wind" is an MGM release. . . . Can it be possible that Leo will continue to release Benchley subjects through father-in-law's company? . . . Quite puzzling. . . . John Stahl has closed his Universal deal and is surveying material and the field before announcing a new connection. . . . His independence has gone so far, however, as to the establishment of his own offices. . . . It is still quite possible, though, that John will finish with a Universal release, when one remembers the number of years that the annual John Stahl production was the Universal lifesaver. . . . John Wentworth, known to every Hollywood picture advertising man, has his own 16mm feature production firm hitting so strongly on high that he now has representatives in every Coast city clear to Seattle, and incidentally has just snagged an important contract for a picture depicting the workings of Uncle Sam's Post Office system. . . . There is little surprise in the news that Mark Hellinger has been handed three important new production assignments in the

(Continued on Page 5)

"MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON" TOPS WEEK'S NEW RELEASES; "ETERNALLY YOURS" HOLDING UP OKAY

COLUMBIA-- 2 Releases

Columbia Pictures annual big box office bonanza—the Frank Capra Production—this time entitled "MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON" has been released in the past week and needless to say like all other Capra specials this one has started off with excellent boxoffice results.

The picture was given a press preview at Constitution Hall in Washington, D. C., last Tuesday night with a majority of our leading law makers attending. And a few days thereafter it opened its regular runs throughout the country and is currently averaging 152%.

"MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON" boasts an excellent cast, headed by James Stewart, Jean Arthur, in the greatest performances of their careers, along with Edward Arnold, Claude Rains, Guy Kibbee, Eugene Pallette prominently featured.

Columbia's second release this week is another prison melodrama, "THOSE HIGH GREY WALLS" which is just getting by a 71% average. Other than Walter Connolly, the star, this one is lacking in marquee names as the supporting cast is of no importance. Furthermore, there seems to be a superabundance of prison tales on the market at the present time for since "Each Dawn I Die" last month there have been no less than eight prison stories and the public may be getting tired of watching a chain gang—at least the women-folk anyway, and they are 65% of our audience.

U. A.--Also 2 Releases

United Artists has two fairly good releases this week, one from the Walter Wanger unit and one from the David Selznick unit.

Wanger's latest effort is "ETERNALLY YOURS," 103%, co-starring Loretta Young and David Niven. This light comedy about the life of a magician hasn't opened up in enough spots yet to determine its definite value, although in spite of the unusual story we cannot expect a great deal more than its present 103% average.

Loretta Young generally pulls a fair house and since David Niven's big triumph opposite Ginger Rogers in "Bachelor Mother" and more recently opposite Gary Cooper in "The Real Glory," his name has become a definite box office asset and it is too bad that he had to go to war to join the Highland Regiment.

Tay Garnett directed this Walter Wanger production from Gene Towne and Graham Baker's very entertaining screenplay.

According to first exhibitor reports received on "ETERNALLY YOURS" Walter Wanger's unpopularity with the press hasn't helped this one a great deal—for as a mat-

Of Nine New Releases In The Past Week Only Two Ran Over 100%. One Came Through Okay, And Six Were Very Weak.

ter of fact it has only helped the picture get poorer reviews that it might have otherwise had. Maybe Jimmy Fidler was right.

United Artists' second release this week is "INTERMEZZO," 98%, and it is the first picture to come from the Selznick International Studios in a long time, as Mr. Selznick has spent almost the entire year producing his "Gone With The Wind" for MGM release.

In many instances "INTERMEZZO" is going to prove a freak picture, the title is anything but box office and the marquee names are not strong. On the other hand it is a fine woman's picture—if you can get them in.

Gregory Ratoff directed for Producer Selznick, basing the story on the original Swedish production that was made abroad a year or two ago. However, this is a class picture and exhibitors in the average workingman's neighborhood should be certain to bill it with a strong action picture appealing to men in particular.

FOX--I Release

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release this week is just another fair programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, entitled "THE ESCAPE." While this one is a fairly good melodrama still it can't be used for anything else but a weak filler due to the lack of marquee value.

Amanda Duff and Kane Richmond are co-featured and are supported by June Gale, Edward Norris and Henry Armetta. Ricardo Cortez directed.

WARNERS--2 New Releases

Warners-First National have two new programmers from the Bryan Foy unit this week.

neither of special importance, although they will both make good fillers as the lower half of a strong double bill. "NANCY DREW AND THE HIDDEN STAIRCASE, 72%, is the third in this series, starring Bonita Granville, which seems to be fairly popular in the nabes. Frankie Thomas and John Litel are also featured. William Clemens directed.

Warners' second release, "THE PRIDE OF THE BLUEGRASS," 65%, is the story based around the famous blind horse "Gantry" and originally this picture was sold to exhibitors as "Gantry The Great."

Edith Fellows and James McCollion are featured and Bill McGann directed.

REPUBLIC--I New Release

Republic's new release this week is "CALLING ALL MARINES," 71%. It has a fairly good box office title for action houses, but outside of that not much can be said for this one. The story idea itself is very insincere and not up to the usual par set by Republic.

There are no stars or featured players of any importance in the picture; the cast is headed by: Donald Barry, Helen Mack and Warren Hymer.

MONOGRAM--I Programmr

Monogram's only new release this week is another of the Tailspin Tommy series entitled "SKY PATROL," 70%. Due to the fact that John Trent, the star of this series, has not had sufficient publicity or exploitation campaigns, this series must depend on the wide popularity of the newspaper strip, and will undoubtedly build further in value as the youngsters become acquainted with Trent.

Marjorie Reynolds and Jackie Coogan are featured. Paul Malvern produced and Howard Bretherton directed.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

"A" bracket—not after the raves given "The Roaring Twenties" by critics from coast to coast. . . . Clyde Elliott has a humdinger of a title for the next wild animal picture he is at work on now. "Catch 'Em Alive." . . . It has the thrill necessary for marquee, without the sting that hurts with humane societies. . . . An orchid to the Screen Actors Guild for their vigorous effort to clear up the extra situation, and charges, whether true or false, that pay-offs are in vogue for the few stray jobs an average extra gets. . . . The Guild is going to clear the air, at any rate.

9 New Features Not in Last Issue

		We Est.
1. Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.....	COL.....	152.....155
2. Eternally Yours	UA.....	103.....105
3. Intermezzo	UA.....	98.....95
4. The Escape	FOX.....	72.....70
5. Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase.....	WAR.....	72.....70
6. Calling All Marines	REP.....	71.....70
7. Those High Grey Walls	COL.....	71.....70
8. Pride of the Bluegrass	WAR.....	65.....70
9. Sky Patrol	MONO.....	63.....65

THE GREATEST OF ALL CAPRA HITS!



"CAPRA OUT-CAPRAS HIMSELF"

—Louella Parsons, *L. A. Examiner.*

"DESERVES 'SUPER-SPECIAL MUST' "

—Edwin Schallert, *L. A. Times.*

"4 STARS. CAPRA'S MASTERPIECE"

—Kate Cameron, *N. Y. News.*

"CAPRA TOPS CAPRA"

—Sidney Skolsky.

" 'MR. SMITH' — A CAPRA SMASH HIT"

—Ed Sullivan.

" 'MR. SMITH' IS MONUMENTAL"

—Douglas Churchill, *Redbook Magazine*

"HITS ALL TIME HIGH"

—Kay Mulvey, *Woman's Home Companion.*

" 'MR. SMITH' IS CAPRA'S BEST"

—Harrison Carroll, *L. A. Herald.*

"BEST TALKING PICTURE EVER MADE"

—Sheilah Graham, *N. A. N. A.*

"SHOULD WIN EVERY ACADEMY AWARD"

—Screen Book.

"ONE OF THE BEST SHOWS OF THE YEAR"

—*N. Y. Times.*

" 'MR. SMITH' IS TOPS"

—*N. Y. Daily Mirror.*

"EASY TO PREDICT MORE ACADEMY GOLD AWARDS FOR CAPRA"

—*Washington Times Herald.*

FRANK
CAPRA'S

MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON

co-starring

JEAN ARTHUR • JAMES STEWART

with

CLAUDE RAINS • EDWARD ARNOLD • GUY KIBBEE • THOMAS MITCHELL • BEULAH BONDI

Directed by FRANK CAPRA • Screen play by SIDNEY BUCHMAN • A COLUMBIA PICTURE

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

FRANK CAPRA
Producer, Director



"MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON"

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK



JEAN ARTHUR

"MR. SMITH GOES

A COLUMBIA PICTURE

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK

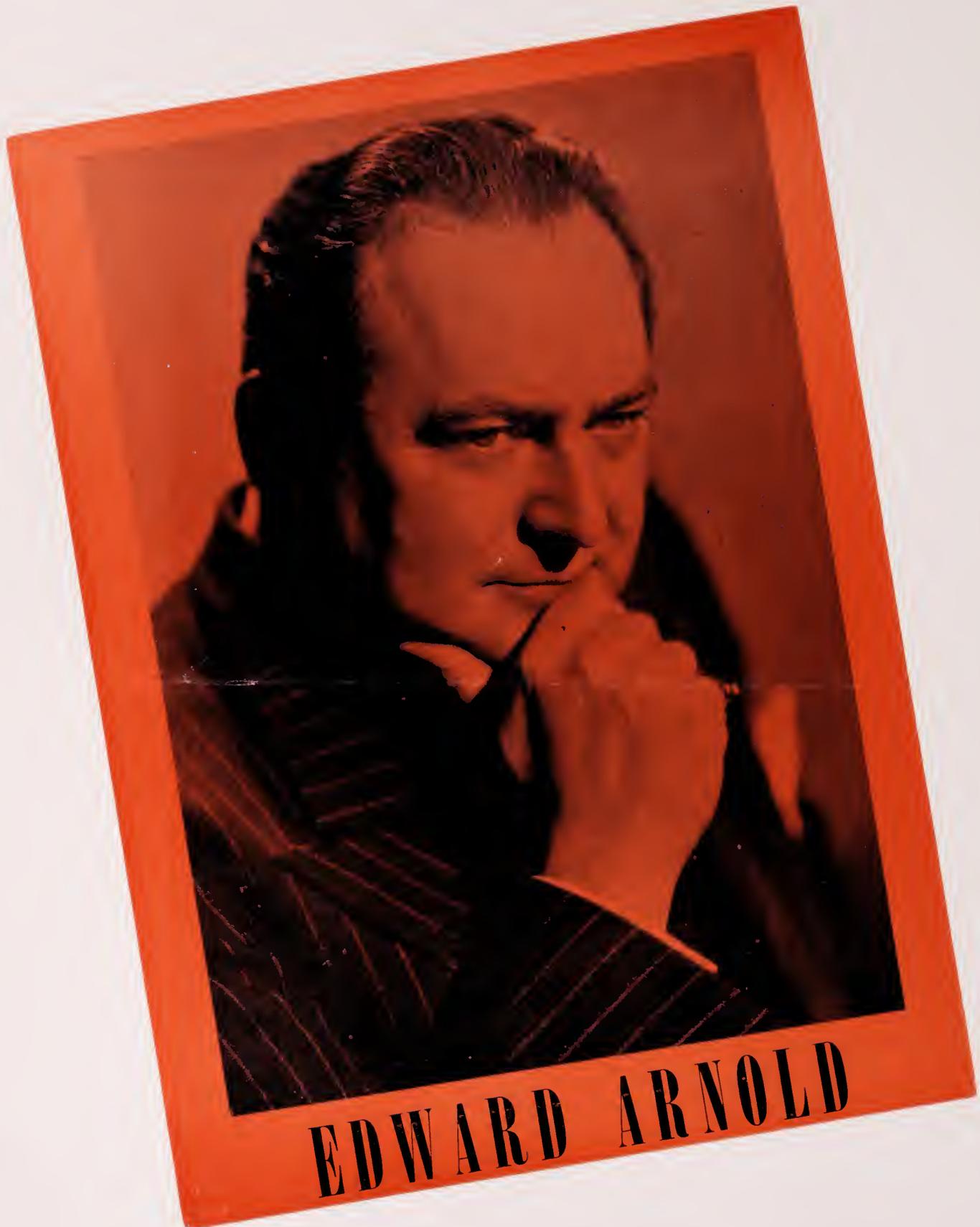


JAMES STEWART

TO WASHINGTON "

A COLUMBIA PICTURE

THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK



"MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON"

A COLUMBIA PICTURE

Seiter's Direction Tops in 'Alleghany Uprising'

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

ProducerP. J. Wolfson
 DirectorWilliam A. Seiter
 ScreenplayP. J. Wolfson
 Based on the factual story, "The First Rebel," Neil H. Swanson.
 Stars: Claire Trevor, John Wayne
 Featured: George Sanders, Brian Donlevy, Wilfrid Lawson, Robert Barrat, John F. Hamilton, Moroni Olsen, Eddie Quillan, Chill Wills, Ian Wolfe, Wallis Clark, Monte Montague.
 Photographer: Nicholas Musaraca
 Art Director.....Van Nest Polglase
 Film Editor.....George Crone
 Time81 minutes

Director William A. Seiter's veteran skill at making every moment count, cooperation by a capable and likeable cast, combine to make "Alleghany Uprising" an action picture that will give general satisfaction in most spots.

It is only too bad that Producer-Scripter P. J. Wolfson laid down on his aides and did not give them a screenplay that would have lifted it to higher rating.

The theme has tempting possibilities, being essentially a 1939 version of those beloved five cent lurids of our youth, "The Liberty Boys of '76." This is a premise that has elements of patriotism, sustaining menace, and possibilities of mounting suspense to a crashing climax.

Seiter's skill handled the elements with his customary ability, which is why the picture will generally satisfy for mass audiences. But Wolfson's skeleton failed to provide the coherence and the on-rushing drama, which is why it falls short of bigness.

John Wayne is seen to exceptional advantage, as the lone wolf hero of the colonists in pre-Revolutionary days, fighting a running battle against the Indians and treachery within the ranks of the British military, engineered by Brian Donlevy, who is supplying the redskins with the materials of war. Claire Trevor is pleasing in the heroine's role.

The story concerns that period before the Revolution when the sturdy colonists still faced the combined problem told above. The British soldiers portrayed are the ones we read about in grammar school history, stiff-necked, European-trained, unwilling to accept the hard-won experience of the trail-blozers as a guide in fighting the redskins. Donlevy is the heavy, playing

both ends against the middle. His performance helps.

The entire supporting cast is fine, with Wilfred Lawson and George Sanders outstanding. Lawson's work ranks as one of the top character performances of the year. Production values are excellent, though one yearns for a bigger scale slam-bang climax which the script did not provide.

An attempt to justify the script treatment is made in a foreword which warns that we are to see "history." Audiences prefer Zanuck's versions of history.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Will give general satisfaction to mass audiences, though not as big as theme and advance talk had

'U Boat 29' Surprise British Headliner

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

ProducerIrving Asher
 DirectorMichael Powell
 ScreenplayRoland Pertwee
 StarConrad Veidt
 Featured: Sebastian Shaw, Valerie Hobson, June Dupres, Marius Goring, Anatole Stewart, Agnes Laughlin, Helen Haye, Cyril Raymond.
 PhotographerBernard Browne
 Time76 minutes

This British-made production, released here by Columbia, was listed in our last week's box office reports on the strength of numerous Eastern openings, but this is the first opportunity we have had to view it in the Los Angeles territory.

After seeing the picture it is clearly evident why a figure of 91% was established on its opening engagements, despite the lack of established American marquee names. The title, the theme, and the picture itself are all the selling power the picture needs.

It is a corking timely buy while the heat of submarine activity is on.

Produced by Irving Ascher, the picture ranks as a production with the best of the English pictures to reach these shores. This goes for scripting, cast and production elements. The story-telling balances humor with its many punch scenes; the cast is excellent on the whole, topped by three exceptional performances by Conrad Veidt, Valerie Hobson, and Sebastian Shaw; the production has the authentic ring of a newsreel depiction of current headlines.

The plot might have been written after last week's headlines, in-

CURRENT REVIEWS		We Est.
1. Allegheny Uprising	RKO.....	115
2. 20,000 Men A Year	FOX.....	95
3. U-Boat 29	COL.....	90
4. Bad Little Angel	MGM.....	75

made us anticipate. In Wayne and Donlevy you have two players pretty hot right now. Previewed October 20th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It is extremely doubtful whether 'Allegheny Uprising' will cause the least bit of uprising at the box office in this country, but it is certain that the English, in whatever English market there is left in these times,

will turn thumbs down on this picture."

VARIETY: "Lurid and exciting semi-factual melodrama is here-with projected from an early American colonial episode in which the frontier 'rabble' preserved their guaranteed civil rights against encroachment of the military. Sturdy entertainment is built upon P. J. Wolfson's screenplay with convincing performances and vigorous direction by William A. Seiter."

stead of before. It concerns Conrad Veidt, as a Nazi sub commander who manages to set up secret headquarters within the shadow of Britain's dreadnaughts at Scapa Flow. Miss Hobson and Shaw are British spies. After much plot and counter-plot, Veidt is forced to attempt escape in a captured British freighter, and the sub which he himself commands sends him to the bottom.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: A natural at this time that will stand up under exploitation. Previewed October 17th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'U-Boat 29' is a remarkably interesting picture. It is also one of the best pictures ever made in England and shipped across for general release in this country. It is fascinating, and there is no other word for it, in its timeliness—as timely as this morning's newspaper."

VARIETY: "Particularly timely is this British-made production by Irving Asher, which Columbia is distributing, of German activity with submarines during wartime. Aside from this angle, film is especially well done, admirably cast and provides an hour and a quarter of diverting screen entertainment."

'20,000 Men a Year' Has Timely Air Theme

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Executive Producer: Sol M. Wurtzel.
 Director.....Alfred E. Green
 Screenplay: Lou Breslow, Owen Francis.
 Original Story.....Frank Weed
 Stars: Randolph Scott, Preston Foster, Margaret Lindsay, Robert Shaw.
 Featured: Mary Healy, George Ernest, Kane Richmond, Maxie Rosenbloom, Douglas Wood, Sen Yung, Paul Santon, Tom Seidel, Edward Gargan, Harry Tyler, Sidney Miller, Edwin Stanley.
 PhotographerErnest Palmer
 Aerial Photographer: Charles Marshall.
 Musical Director.....Samuel Kaylin
 Film Editor.....Fred Allen
 Time82 minutes

"Life" Magazine gives several pages in its current issue to the subject that this picture concerns—so that should be full indication of its timeliness and exploitation possibilities. The theme is

—Uncle Sam's present gigantic effort to train 20,000 airmen in the colleges of the country.

"20,000 Men a Year" treats the subject with absorbing factual interest, some corking air stuff, and a story skeleton that holds its end up as entertainment, even if nothing to write home about. In fact, a stronger story would have helped the interest of those sections of the audience that may not be highly interested in the aviation and youthful training theme.

A good cast is headed by Randolph Scott, who turns in a fine performance as the veteran aviator, down on his luck, and given an opportunity for a comeback when the Government announces its vast program. Maxie Rosenbloom is his sidekick, for comedy relief.

Along with Scott, we follow
 (Continued on Page 12)

NICHOLS ENTHUSES OVER ORGANIZATION OF NEW ALL-PACIFIC COAST EXHIBITOR GROUP



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

History was made in a suite of rooms at the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, last Thursday night. We ask you to remember the date, October 18, 1939. This date will go down in the motion picture history. The above date will also rank in importance by future motion picture historians beside that of February 13, 1939, when the United States Supreme Court handed down its affirmative decision in the Texas-Interstate case. Just six men were present, how we wish we had the editorial genius of Arthur Brisbane so we could have captured for you in words the sincerity and honesty

of purpose that these six men radiated. Gone were the political and selfish interests that prompt certain individuals to set themselves up as exhibitor leaders. None of the old scramble to be the big frog in a little puddle.

The gentlemen were present on serious business. Every one of them had been leaders in different organizations. They were all aware as in the past, what a terrific toll would be exacted from them. For a none too grateful past constituency. Each and every one there were present to pool all their experiences as members and leaders of different exhibitor organizations; ready to listen to a way out of the old time formulas, realizing that the exhibitors' problem is the distributor and producer problem. They wanted to build on a solid foundation, a foundation built for the good of the entire industry, not just the independent exhibitor. They wanted to keep step with the Government and the Courts just as our right minded producers and distributors want to do. For who in the hell in this business doesn't want it a legitimate structure.

We have all been victims of a

system founded on greed and illegal practices. No one could tell who started it. It just grew and grew. Each time certain sales managers joined the company they had smart and sometimes an illegal sales policy to sell. Their associates became involved in practices they didn't like but had to sanction. One illegal act followed another, other companies in self defense had to adopt these policies. The exhibitor then started his own code of ethics and most of them were not any too hot. It was just a case of dog eat dog. Organizations were started to help the independent and their own officers sold out their exhibitor members. The producers and distributors paid a man a high salary to watch each member in their own organization. That's where they, the producers, were smart. This idea certainly would have helped the independent exhibitors' cause.

But enough of that.

Allow us to introduce to you Robert H. Poole, executive director of the I.T.O. of Southern California, who needs no introduction to Southern California exhibitors, a personality that frankly is hard

to classify. And we cannot liken him to any one we have ever met in this business. You think it strange? Well, the man is honest and believes the other fellow is. He has no theatres but a mind with solid ideas not patterned after the old organization formulas that we all know so well and which are looked on with a great deal of suspicion. But rather he is in step with the times, with a sincere belief that the Motion Picture Industry is going now into a legitimate phase. His plans for a great organization of all exhibitor units on the Pacific Coast including Salt Lake and Denver territories is well on the way to accomplishment.

Following is the roster of the new trustees of the Pacific Coast Conference, and which is not complete as yet: Rotus Harvey, I.T.O. of Northern California; L. O. Lukan; Fred Mercey, Jr.; and William Ripley of M.P.T. O.A. of the Pacific Northwest; Hugh Bruen and Jack Y. Berman, I.T.O. of Southern California and Arizona. No deadwood here. Through a mixup in wires the Oregon unit in the person of Bob
(Continued on Page 13)

'Bad Little Angel' Okay MGM Programmer

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

ProducerAlbert E. Levoy
DirectorWilliam Thiele
ScreenplayDorothy Yost
Based on book by Margaret Turnbull.

Featured: Virginia Weidler, Gene Reynolds, Guy Kibbee, Ian Hunter, Elizabeth Paterson, Reginald Owen, Henry Hull and Lois Wilson.

PhotographerJohn Seitz
Musical ScoreEdward Ward
Film EditorFrank Sullivan
Time77 minutes

Nothing pretentious, but withal, a neat little gem of family entertainment. "Bad Little Girl" plays right down to the audiences that can sigh, and cry, and laugh and chuckle with the trials and tribulations of an orphan.

It does this skilfully, both in script and direction. And little Virginia Weidler—who still has not started to grow up—gets a prize opportunity to wring the emotions both for smiles and near-sobs.

The picture has an additional value for theaters catering to family audiences — particularly in

small towns—in a religious note that is handled with a fine combination of reverence and entertainment value. If you get what we mean.

Basis of the picture is the always safe "a little child shall lead them." In this case it is Virginia's deep-seated belief in God that becomes the machinery to solve the problems of all with whom she comes in contact. This sounds rather simple as a story outline, and its appeal is in its simplicity. Which is to the credit of William Thiele, at the director's post, and Dorothy Yost, who delivered the script.

Gene Reynolds, who clicked in "Boys Town," then repeated in "They Shall Have Music," is seen opposite the Weidler moppet, and seen to advantage. Adult roles are in capable hands, with Guy Kibbee standing out. You don't need our word to tell you what Henry Hull does to his part.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: One of Weidler's best, and fine family entertainment. Will need

something with action or comedy stressed to balance the bill. Previewed October 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Produced strictly for the family trade, 'Bad Little Angel' advances the acting stock of young Virginia Weidler in a

screen story which sets off her talents to unusual advantage. The picture moves brightly toward an inspirational conclusion and may suitably bear out any double bill."

VARIETY: "Here is a sparkling and heart touching little gem, beautifully played, skilfully directed and ably produced to hold its own on any program."

'20,000 Men a Year' Okay

(Continued from Page 11)

through the facts of the new training program, with the story carrying along a thread of youthful romance, and working up to a thrill climax in a search for lost aviators.

Al Green has directed in step with the material given him. The airstuff is above par, but audiences have seen so much air material in the course of the past year that a little can go a long ways, especially if that little is trimmed to the socko scenes.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A hot programmer in many sections because of its timely angle;

a fair programmer that will satisfy in most others. Then you have Randolph Scott for the marquee—and he has value. Previewed October 20th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "As a boost for aviation, particularly mass training of American youth to fly, and, as demonstration of aerial photography and flying wizardry, this is a wow, but as virile entertainment, it doesn't quite come off."

VARIETY: "'20,000 Men A Year' is a picture that opens with a wallop and continues it to the end. It is mass entertainment suitable for any situation, should drag the customers in."

FIELD MAN RIDGE SAYS WARNERS PULLED BONER INVADING SENATOR'S HOME TERRITORY



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Morgantown, W. Va., October 20, 1939. — Boners! They occur every day in this industry.

Here is one for the book.

Down here in West Virginia, where the name Hatfield is both respected, and years ago feared, one former Senator, John L. Hatfield, is in the show business. He is an important stockholder, as well as director in the Metropolitan Theatres Company, in Morgantown. They operate two houses, and have for fifteen years. The town was theirs, except for a small subsequent run theatre. Things were going along fine for years. The company was making money, in spite of a bad depression, in a town of 20,000 people, and all banks closed except one.

Senator Hatfield is one of West Virginia's most influential statesmen. His influence in Washington for a decade, has been unquestioned. He wields a telling influence there right now. Fundamentally he was opposed to such legislation as the Neely Bill; the Brookhart proposal and similar inimical legislation, designed to ham string the producers. He believed in the fair dealing of the producer, and always espoused his cause. He never dreamed, when he entered this field, that the manufacturer of films, would ever invade his baliwick. Had his company not always played all major product? Had they not always paid a fair price for it? Surely there was no cause for them to look with greedy eyes on Morgantown.

But how wrong more recent events have proven Senator Hatfield's early opinions.

Today in Morgantown is the Brothers Warner. They came to town with a quarter of a million

dollar theatre. They went after product. They had their own. They went after Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. They secured it, but not for long. They overlooked the fact that Mrs. Nicholas Schenck was a former resident of Morgantown, and was a friend of George Sallows, the operating head of Metropolitan Theatres. She was formerly associated with this organization. So Senator Hatfield's house got a split Metro, in spite of the power buying of the Brothers Warner.

But the tale does not end here. A fight started. The Senator Hatfield crowd bought Paramount, 20th Century-Fox also stuck with the operating head, George Sallows, Senator Hatfield, George Comuntis and the rest of the Met crowd. Today it is said the Brothers Warner are losing upwards of \$50,000.00 a year in Morgantown.

But \$50,000.00 is peanuts, compared to what the Motion Picture Industry may be losing in this city of the "Mountaineers," the home of the West Virginia State University boys.

Today Senator Hatfield and his associates are most active behind the Neely Bill. They thought the Distributors would mind their own business, years ago when they invested half a million in the theatre business in Morgantown. They respected the Producer's position, and did not question his integrity, that he did not want to injure the exhibitor, where their product was getting fair treatment.

How wrong Senator Hatfield and his friends were, and how they believe now they misplaced their confidence, is best evidenced by the way they have organized a fight to get the Neely Bill on the Statutes in this country. Senator Hatfield's influence in Washington today, is being felt behind the Neely Bill. He is a neighbor of Senator Neely, who lives but 19 miles across the mountain in Fairmont, West Virginia.

And an industry with billions of invested capital, is being jeopardized by such "BONERS," as the Brothers Warner pulled in Morgantown. And in addition, they are said to be losing better than fifty grand annually.

It just does not makes sense, does it?

Ridge Finds Territory

Where Peace and Quiet Reign

Pittsburgh, Pa., Oct. 22, 1939. —It's hard to believe, but there is a calm in Pittsburgh that is uncanny. Exhibitors are happy, and content. Exchange managers and salesmen are complacent. Business is good and definitely on the upturn. And for a week the wind has been blowing all the smoke far afield, and yet Fred J. Harrington, for 30 years secretary of the exhibitor's organization, says everything is Jake, in the Iron City.

Paramount is more than 90% sold, 20th Century-Fox 95% on the books. United Artists and the rest of them far ahead of previous years. No battles over Code application; no real complaints can be found about increased numbers of percentage pictures; no barking about having to play the shorts or any of the thousand yowls that come out of Cleveland, Cincinnati and Detroit, could be found anywhere here.

When we inquired of Dave Himmelman, Paramount manager here, how they did it, he said, "Why we have the finest lot of fair minded exhibitors in this territory in the world. They give us

a fair break. We treat them as customers should be treated. They pay us all our product will produce for them. It's been that way a long time. Exhibitor and exchange men both have been here a long time. There is no reason for it to be otherwise. There is no reason why it should not be that way all over the country." To Dave it just seems a natural result of fair men on both sides of the fence.

Even though we saw it and heard of it with our own eyes and ears, it still seemed screwy, after having been through Chicago, Cleveland and some other cities, where there have been more accusations of treachery from both sides of the fence, than exists in Paris and Berlin. To top it all off, the Pittsburgh mills are running better than 90% capacity. The first big pay roll came in this week. Everybody even outside of the industry, points to the belching smoke stacks, as evidence to the fact that "happy days are really here again." Here is evidence that this cockeyed business can be operated as others. Paraphrasing Ted Lewis' old line, "everybody is happy" in Pennsylvania.

NICHOLS ENTHUSES OVER ALL-PACIFIC GROUP

(Continued from Page 12)

White and, we think, Bill Graeper could not get here in time to attend the initial meeting, but unquestionably they are for, this great idea. There is no question in our minds but that the Salt Lake group will be members of the Pacific Coast Conference, and unquestionably they will have to then change the name to the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain Conference. This department will put in an early nomination for trustees in the eprsons of John Rugars and V. A. Gillhool, for the Salt Lake group.

At the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Pacific Coast Conferences, Robert H. Poole was elected executive secretary, Hugh Bruen, treasurer. Funny set-up—No President? Yes, friends, there are a lot of things about this idea and group that are strange. These trustees mentioned above are sincere, and that in itself is a novelty. We are proud to have had the chance to mingle with these men, after this momentous meeting. To listen to

their enthusiastic conversation, as we said before, one senses the unusual was taking place.

The following statement handed out to the press is very clear and informal. It reads as follows:

"The purpose of the conference as outlined by the Trustees is to act upon calls of constituent members to conciliate and to protect each member against all discrimination, unfair clearances and zoning, unfair selling practice, unethical competition, non-theatrical competition, and other injustices that may arise in the Motion Picture Industry effecting any of the member associations within the jurisdiction of the Pacific Coast Conference of the Independent Theatre Owners."

Yes, I know you have all heard all this before. But, friends, as we told you, it has a different ring. You will hear more about it later. Watch it closely for here is a rising force for good in this industry that will never be stifled nor subdued. WE KNOW ITS IDEALS AND PERSONNEL.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
The Rains Came	FOX	165
Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Mt. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	152
Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	151
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
Babes In Arms	MGM	147
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	138
The Real Glory	UA	136
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Beau Geste	PAR	131
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Sagecoach	UA	126
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	124
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
Thunder Afloat	MGM	116
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	102
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	111
Midnight	WAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
In Name Only	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Eternally Yours	UA	103
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Whispering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	100
Tailspin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Intermezzo	UA	98
Man of Conquest	REF	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

Title	Distributor	%
The Old Maid	WAR	141
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardy's Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Title	Distributor	%
U-Boat	COL	97
What A Life	PAR	96

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

D. BELOW \$100,000

Title	Distributor	%
Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	80
Full Confession	RKO	78
Devil's Island	WAR	78
The Day The Bookies Wept	RKO	78

St. Louis Blues

Title	Distributor	%
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

Late Society PAR 81
 King of the Underworld WAR 81
 Dancing Co-ed MGM 81
 Under Pup UNIV 80
 Arizona Wildcat FOX 80
 The Gorilla FOX 80
 I'm From Missouri PAR 79
 The Sun Never Sets UNIV 79
 The Girl Downstairs MGM 79
 Coast Guard COL 79
 \$1,000 A Touchdown PAR 78
 Never Say Die PAR 78
 Winter Carnival UA 77
 The Lady's From Kentucky PAR 77
 Prison Without Bars UA 77
 Let Us Live COL 77
 The Lady Vanishes FOX 75
 Boy Friend FOX 75
 Indianapolis Speedway WAR 75
 Rio UNIV 74
 Adventures of Sherlock Holmes FOX 74
 Charlie Chan in Honolulu FOX 74
 Fisherman's Wharf RKO 74
 Mutiny on the Blackhawk UNIV 73
 I Stole A Million UNIV 73
 Bridal Suite MGM 72
 The Jones Family in Hollywood FOX 72

The Lady and the Mob COL 71
 The Magnificent Fraud PAR 71
 Back Door To Heaven PAR 70
 King of the Turf UA 70
 One Third of a Nation PAR 70
 Clouds Over Europe COL 70
 Stronger Than Desire MGM 70

They Shall Have Music UA 70

The Mikado UNIV 77

Blackwell's Island WAR 77
 Pardon Our Nerve FOX 77
 Hawaiian Nights UNIV 76
 You Can't Get Away With Murder WAR 76
 Flight at Midnight REP 75
 Inside Story FOX 75
 Pacific Liner RKO 75
 Man They Couldn't Hang COL 75
 Two Bright Boys UNIV 74
 Chan in Treasure Island FOX 74
 Mystery of the White Room UNIV 73
 Boy Slaves RKO 73
 Disbarred PAR 73
 Missing Daughters COL 73
 Blondie Takes Vacation COL 73
 The Spellbinder RKO 72
 It Could Happen To You FOX 72
 King of Chinatown PAR 72
 Society Lawyer MGM 72
 Persons in Hiding PAR 72
 Society Smugglers UNIV 72
 Mr. Moto's Last Warning FOX 72
 Twelve Crowded Hours RKO 72
 Ex-Champ UNIV 72
 The Escape FOX 72
 Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase WAR 72
 Nancy Drew Reporter WAR 71
 Prizes of the Skies UNIV 71
 Sorority House RKO 71
 Mystery of the White Room UNIV 71
 The Girl and the Gambler UNIV 71
 Quick Millions RKO 71
 Blind Alley COL 71
 Million Dollar Legs PAR 71
 Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 71
 Those High Grey Walls COL 71
 Stop, Look and Love FOX 70
 Unexpected Father UNIV 70
 Island of Lost Men UNIV 70
 Chasing Danger PAR 70
 Unmarried FOX 70
 Romance of the Redwoods PAR 70
 Winner Take All COL 70
 Big Town Czar FOX 70
 On Trial UNIV 70
 Torchy Blue in Chinatown WAR 70
 Ambush WAR 70
 They Made Her A Spy PAR 70
 Torchy For Mayor RKO 70
 The Girl From Mexico WAR 70
 Within the Law RKO 70
 Grand Jury Secrets MGM 70
 Bulldog Drummond's Bride PAR 70
 Death of a Champion PAR 70
 Cowboy Quarterback WAR 70

Some Like It Hot PAR 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police PAR 69
 Everybody's Baby PAR 69
 No Place To Go FOX 68
 News Is Made At Night FOX 68
 The Family Next Door UNIV 68
 The Saint Strikes Back RKO 68
 Undercover Doctor UNIV 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger Island PAR 68
 Adventures of Jane Arden FOX 68
 Almost A Gentleman RKO 68
 Fixer Dugan RKO 68
 The Saint in London UNIV 68
 For Love or Money UNIV 68
 The Man They Couldn't Hang COL 68
 Forgotten Woman UNIV 68
 Lone Wolf Spy Hunt UNIV 68
 Conspiracy COL 67
 Playing With Dynamite RKO 67
 A Woman Is A Judge WAR 67
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation COL 66
 Code of the Streets FOX 66
 Beauty for the Asking UNIV 66
 Sudden Money RKO 66
 They Asked For It PAR 66
 The Ware Case UNIV 66
 Boy Trouble UNIV 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'Connor PAR 65
 Secret Service of the Air MGM 65
 Tell No Tales WAR 65
 Conspiracy MGM 65
 Pride of the Bluegrass RKO 65
 They All Come Out WAR 65
 Exile Express MGM 64
 Sweepstakes Winner UNIV 64
 6,000 Enemies WAR 64
 Night Work MGM 63
 The Kid From Texas PAR 61
 Miracles For Sale MGM 58
 Inspector Hornleigh FOX 58
 This Man Is News UNIV 54
 Career PAR 54
 Career RKO 53

Our Leading Citizen PAR 67
 Stolen Life PAR 67
 Hotel Imperial PAR 66
 Zenobia UA 66

Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64
 Spirit of Culver UNIV 63
 The Flying Irishman RKO 63
 Smiling Along FOX 63
 Climbing High GB 63
 Way Down South RKO 62
 Women in the Wind WAR 62

Whispering Enemies COL 75
 Homicide Bureau COL 71
 Mysterious Mr. Wong MONO 71
 Woman Doctor REP 71
 North of Shanghai COL 71
 Calling All Marines REP 71
 She Married A Cop REP 70
 Hidden Power COL 70
 The Sunset Murder Case GN 70
 Pride of the Navy REP 70
 Tough Kid MONO 70
 Mysterious Miss X REP 70
 Trapped in the Sky COL 70
 Orphan in the Street REP 70

I Am A Criminal MONO 69
 Fighting Thoroughbreds UNIV 69
 Gambling Ship UNIV 69
 Convict's Code MONO 68
 Parents On Trial COL 68
 The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew COL 68
 Konga, The Wild Stallion COL 68
 Streets of New York MONO 68
 Inside Information UNIV 68
 I Was A Convict REP 68
 Navy Secrets MONO 68
 Federal Man Hunt UNIV 67
 House of Fear UNIV 67
 My Wife's Relatives REP 67
 Long Shot GN 67
 Behind Prison Gates COL 66
 Wolf Call MONO 66
 Forged Passport REP 66
 First Offenders COL 66
 Rookie Cop MONO 66
 Wanted by Scotland Yard RKO 66
 Waterfront WAR 66
 Mickey The Kid MONO 65
 The Zero Hour REP 65
 Outside These Walls COL 65
 S. O. S. Tidal Wave REP 65
 Mr. Wong In Chinatown MONO 65
 The Man Who Dared WAR 65
 Mystery Plane MONO 64
 My Son Is A Criminal WAR 64
 Code of the Secret Service COL 64
 Should A Girl Marry? WAR 64
 Everybody's Hobby MONO 63
 Smuggled Cargo REP 63
 Should Husbands Work? REP 63
 Street of Missing Men REP 63
 Star Reporter MONO 63
 Undercover Agent MONO 63
 Boy's Reformatory MONO 63
 Sky Patrol MONO 63
 Panama Lady RKO 62
 Panama Patrol GN 62
 The Girl From Rio MONO 62



'WHAT A LIFE'

(Paramount)



'GREEN HELL'

(Famous-Universal)

John Howard



'DISPUTED PASSAGE'

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 9.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 1, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

Field Man Hears
Film Salesmen Talk
of Forming Union

SEE PAGE 3

“The Roaring Twenties”
Roaring on High
For Warner Brothers

SEE PAGE 5

The Highlighter Snorts
At Washington Worries
About “Mr. Smith”

SEE PAGE 4

●

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

●

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **WARNER BROS.** Wins With
"THE ROARING TWENTIES" 128%



V. Pres. in Charge of Production
JACK WARNER



Executive Producer
HAL WALLIS



Associate Producer
SAM BISCHOFF

Featured

GLADYS GEORGE
JEFFRY LYNN
FRANK McHUGH
PAUL KELLY
ELISABETH RISDON



JAMES CAGNEY

Screenplay

JERRY WALD
RICHARD MACAULAY
ROBERT ROSSEN

Photographer

ERNIE HALLER



Director
RAOUL WALSH



PRISCILLA LANE



Original Story
MARK HELLINGER

A SALESMAN'S UNION?

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

One of our Field Investigators, J. Maurice Ridge, comes through this week from a West Virginia stop-over, with a dispatch that bears an ominous note for the already sorely troubled industry. You will find it on page 10.

He reports, not one, but several territories, as he moves North and South, East and West, where the film salesmen are rumbling. They are saying:

"If we can get hired and fired at caprice, if those Hollywood workers in every line just inch their incomes up year by year—why are we forgotten?

"Maybe we need a UNION!"

And why not?

* * *

We hate to be the bringer of bad news to big shots, but those pages of Mr. Ridge's deserve close attention from the aforesaid big shots, and at least passing attention from every swimming pool owner in Hollywood.

The film salesman is engaged in a SPECIALIZED job.

Once in a million years a trained, and previously successful salesman in other lines, can enter the picture industry and grasp its intricacies—and trickeries—quickly enough to justify a breaking-in period.

We know of exceptions that total that one in a million. There is a pretty successful gentleman who came from the American Druggists Syndicate to the picture business, and who travelled far. His name is Sidney R. Kent.

By and large, however, your film salesman is a man who has spent over a decade specializing in the peculiarities of film selling, with its highways and byways and crooked paths; very often he has been an exhibitor in the past. He must know more law than a Philadelphia lawyer's group in convention assembled; he must know more ways of hiding fine print in contracts, and he must retain the faith of his customer.

Top that off:

If he were selling almost any other article of manufactured merchandise he could foursquarely GUARANTEE the quality of his product; he could have faith in the ethics of his branch and home office.

He cannot do either of those things with a product so intangible as the motion pic-

ture; or with organizations so shifting and evasive in policies towards their customers.

* * *

Field Investigator Ridge brings up another important point in his front line trench report. We quote a sentence, omitted from the article for the sake of avoiding duplication:

"The salesman says: We work in a field where there are never more than ten active MAJOR employers. Few of us, regardless of ability, can ever hope to become branch managers; none of us would dare think that we might one day reach one of those polished New York desks.

"No—our value is our knowledge of our individual territory—that's an immediate brake on our progress. Our future is—a lay-off, 'voluntary vacation,' or a salary cut every time New York or Hollywood gets a headache.

"Why not a union? We are specialized workers; we live a payroll existence that is a hop, skip and a jump—with often no place to jump to; why not STABILITY?"

There is the case for the salesman. And if The Box Office Digest brings the case to you first, it is just another one of the cases that The Box Office Digest has brought first to the attention of that portion of Hollywood that believes the picture business is run by the ten percenters, the connivers of options, and the builders of swimming pools.

* * *

Incidentally:

All union victories in Hollywood are won by the background of fear on the part of major producer-circuit owner groups that the projectionists of the country will be pulled from their booths.

That's a fact. What about this:

With all the victories won on the Western front, suppose the projectionists over the nation decide about next January that it is time for their highly paid Hollywood brethren to back them up in a gesture?

Huh? Why not? It's only fair play.

And, with the customary bow to Mark Hellinger, don't say we didn't tell you so.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Distributor Name, Releases, and Batting Average. Lists 12 distributors including United Artists, Twentieth Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, Paramount, RKO-Radio, Universal, Columbia, Republic, Monogram, Grand National, and Gaumont British.

The Highlighter: FAILS TO GET EXCITED OVER STUFFED SHIRT WORRIES OVER "MR. SMITH"

Cheery news and bad news alternately smack The Highlighter as he travels around the studios these days. . . . One brings him in contact with the phenomenal number of hold-over engagements that "Hollywood Cavalcade" is running up, which proves that all is not lost in the picture business—if you have a show. . . . The next visit down the studio trail will inform him of a studio that is going dark "temporarily"—or until the war lords make up their minds. . . . Then he looks over the records and discovers the top figures being chalked up by "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington" and his smile returns. . . . Only to have it sour when the next day hears of another studio that is "so caught up on production" that it will be able to close down for two or three months. . . . It's all pretty tough, m'hearties. . . . To date the vacation announcements concern Selznick International, Monogram, the Warner B department, Sam Goldwyn's organization, and a slight marking of time on 20th Century's A's, that company just about putting in the can two of its biggest efforts, "Drums Along The Mohawk," and "Little Old New York." . . . Incidentally, if you knew what a salvation that last mentioned picture was to Hollywood's thousands of extras in the past several troubled weeks, you would realize that Zanuck is not pulling his punches on pictures in the works, war or no war.

"Mr. Smith" Was Made For Customers—Not Stuffed Shirts

Mention of "Mr. Smith" causes The Highlighter to record his own impression that all this noise about the Washington legislators and their ire over its depiction of a fictional Senatorial case, is being overplayed. . . . These are troublous times, at home and abroad, more particularly at home. . . . Times when legislators are supposed to be legislating with wisdom and impartial judgment for the country's welfare. . . . And we would hate to be any Washington stuffed shirt who would go home to his constituents about election time, and admit to those cash customers of the movies who had seen "Mr. Smith" that he had voted on any bill—the Neely Bill, or any other—because a corking piece of current pictorial literature had ruffled his dignity. . . . Maybe he hasn't so much dignity with the folks back home anyway, he only wears it in Washington. But, don't you see the real point? . . . He would be PROVING by his vote in the sacred halls of Congress, that all "Mr. Smith" tells about the pettiness and shilly-shallying of legislation depicted in "Mr. Smith" comes close to the truth. . . . In other words, a Capitol legislator who lets it be known that a puncture in his own stuffed shirt deflated him to the status of a peeved pumpkin, proves the picture's case.

8 Features "Going Up"		Was	Now
1. Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	151	155
2. Babes In Arms	MGM	144	150
3. Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	95	98
4. What A Life	PAR	96	98
5. U.Boat 29	COL	91	97
6. Fast and Furious	MGM	88	91
7. Blackmail	MGM	88	91
8. Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	86	91

Jogging Here and There Around The Studio Corners

The Highlighter is interested in the news concerning assignments and future plans of some of his favorite box office directors. . . . George Stevens has the assignment as producer-director on "Enchanted Cottage," with Ginger Rogers and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., in the top spots. . . . George's record shows that he can handle 'em from farce to thriller, so the result should be a safe prophecy. . . . Howard Hawks, winding up "His Girl Friday," the remake of "The Front Page," shows interest in a story based on the colorful Ernest Hemingway career. . . . Has an interesting sound. . . . David Butler is nearing the starting gate on the next Bing Crosby-Universal offering. . . . Butler will function as producer-director this time. . . . Irving Cummings is deep in preparations for "Johnny Apollo," which Darryl Zanuck has on the top of his list of expectations to crash box offices after the New Year.

Producers Take Their Hats In Their Hands To Unions

There is a ring of sincerity in that letter of Eddie Mannix's on behalf of the producers asking the IATSE unions to reconsider the recent ten per cent increases granted in the face of current world conditions. . . . There is a fair hope of a not unpleasant welcome in the first comment of able William Bioff: "The communication will be given every consideration." . . . Now let's all hope that something can be worked out, if merely to clear the air and prove the case for amicable, around-the-table discussion of a family's internal problems. . . . Chief headache of the industry's present problem does not concern the actual facts or the uncertainties of the foreign situation, so much as it does the flurry here and the flurry there domestically that

10 Features "Going Down"		Was	Now
1. The Real Glory	UA	136	129
2. Beau Geste	PAR	131	128
3. Thunder Afloat	MGM	116	112
4. Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	111	103
5. Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	106	103
6. \$1,000 A Touchdown	PAR	78	75
7. Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	76	74
8. Flight Into Midnight	REP	75	72
9. Rio	UNIV	74	72
10. Coast Guard	COL	79	76

prevents executives from cool-headed planning. . . . Exhibitors are jittery and not signing contracts on a broad enough basis nationally to give a planner some indication of revenue to be expected. . . . Future box offices are uncertain guesses, with hopes for the zones fed by war industries and crossed fingers for the others. . . . Workers in all lines, labor and otherwise, are jittery, because they don't want to be taken advantage of by emergency pressure. . . . It is all a case of the jitters which straight talking and straight thinking should be able to settle. . . . The Artists Managers Guild and the Screen Actors Guild have just jointly signed a ten year pact. . . . Which proves that all things are possible for negotiation—if you have patience and will take time enough.

The Stuffed Shirts Okay "Mr. Smith's" Treatment of Them

Lyle Bolton, Democratic congressman from Oklahoma, takes advantage of the Congressional Record privilege for printing "extension of remarks" in a diatribe against the picture industry as Public Enemy Number One. . . . "Extension" usually means that the Representative wanted to say something that he didn't have the nerve—or guts—to say out in public, and before his colleagues, so quaint Congressional privilege allows him to have the words printed at tax-payers' expense and scattered to his home folk as though he had really made the speech. . . . Says Mr. Bolton in one prize line: "I invite your thoughtful analysis to careful consideration of the methods of the Al Capones, the Pretty Boy Floyds, the Dutch Schultzes, and so forth, to those of the movie moguls." . . . These bombastic words led up to his announcement that "we plan to put more teeth into the Neely Bill." . . . When an elected representative of the people can attack an important American industry by a comparison with Al Capone and Pretty Boy Floyd, perhaps The Highlighter can be forgiven for advising official Washington to draw its chin in, or do a turtle stunt with it, or maybe even go so far as to emulate the ostrich. . . . The less they say the better for that ultra-sensitive "dignity." . . . Because the less they say, the less they show up before the home folks.

"Drums Along The Mohawk" To Start With Real Roar

That nation-wide broadcast to launch the ballyhoo on "Drums Along the Mohawk" coming next Friday, bids fair to be a wow. . . . It has already got more publicity, through the migration of Kate Smith's entire entourage, including able man-of-all-jobs, Ted Collins, to the coast, and other angles, than many of the past year's stunts. . . . It has had Darryl Zanuck, Harry Brand, and Bill Bacher hopping around like frogs on a hot griddle with the intricate and elaborate preparations necessary. . . . We suppose Charlie McCarthy had his share of woes at
(Continued on Page 5)

The Box Office: FINDS "ROARING TWENTIES" SET FOR AN OLD-FASHIONED WARNERS CLEAN-UP

WARNERS--2 New Releases

Warners-First National have two new releases in the past week both of which are running above the 100% line with "THE ROARING TWENTIES" scoring the highest at a 128% average on its first openings.

The national press all "went to town" for Mark Hellinger's first original movie story, "THE ROARING TWENTIES," which is an epic of the post war period from 1919 to the market crash of 1929. The story of the boys that came back from France in 1918-19 and their inability to get jobs and the liquor racketeering that followed has always been an interesting era in American history of today. Associate Producer Sam Bischoff guided it through to a top box office hit.

And not only is this a fast moving, exciting story but also very timely now that the European war is on and the American dough-boys may possibly again be involved. Accordingly exhibitors all over the country will unquestionably continue to receive excellent box office figures on this picture. Furthermore, this picture will always have future strong re-issuing possibilities.

James Cagney and Priscilla Lane are co-starred and there is an usually strong supporting cast.

Raoul Walsh handled the megaphone with his usual skill and ability, again showing what he has on the ball when given real material. Watch for Walsh's next—a Republic special.

Warner Brothers-First National's second release this week is a new musical, their first in some time, entitled "ON YOUR TOES," starring the famous Zorina, who scored quite heavily a year or two ago in Samuel Goldwyn's "Follies" (United Artists release). Eddie Albert of 'Brother Rat' fame, is co-starred and those seen in support are Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, James Gleason and Gloria Dickson.

As the two stars of this picture are better known on the New York legitimate stage than they are to the millions of movie fans, this may be a slight detriment to the box office results on the picture. However, to offset that weakness Charles Einfeld has opened up a big exploitation and ad campaign for "ON YOUR TOES" and consequently on its first bookings "ON YOUR TOES" is averaging quite well at around 102%.

Ray Enright directed this famous Rodgers and Hart musical.

PARAMOUNT--1 Release

Paramount's only new release this past week is a new Charles Laughton English importation entitled "JAMAICA INN," 112%. Two or three years ago when Charles Laughton was in Alexander Korda's London productions such as "Rembrandt," his releases didn't fare so well on this side of the Atlantic. However,

Of Six New Releases In The Past Week, Three Ran Over 100%, One Came Through Okay, and Two Were Weak.

since joining up with Erich Pommer things seem to have turned for the better, especially from a box office viewpoint. Their first release, "The Beachcomber," did very well in most American theatres and now "JAMAICA INN" is repeating the success of "The Beachcomber."

Exhibitors will soon be booking RKO-Radio's "Hunchback of Notre Dame" starring Laughton and undoubtedly the publicity that Laughton will receive from this million dollar RKO-Radio special will help those theatres who follow-up "The Hunchback" with "JAMAICA INN."

As DeMaurier's novel "JAMAICA INN" is a blood curdler of the first degree along the lines of "Frankenstein" and "Dracula" exhibitors should book a much lighter picture with it, particularly with a strong feminine appeal. Maureen O'Hara, who is Laughton's leading lady in this one, also appears with him in RKO's "Hunchback of Notre Dame."

Alfred Hitchcock, now directing "Rebecca" for Selznick International, directed "JAMAICA INN" in England for the Erich Pommer productions.

FOX--1 Release

Twentieth Century-Fox's new release this week is a comedy production from the Sol Wurtzel unit, entitled "PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES," which was originally sold under the title of "TIN HATS," which of course suggests the story idea of a war comedy, and as a matter of fact, "TIN HATS" might have been a better box office title than the one now used.

In the past few weeks there have been any number of dramatic war subjects on the market, some produced here, some abroad, and others like "Western Front" being re-issues. Most of these war "mellers" have done rather well, but so far the same cannot be said for "PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES," as it is only averaging a fair 80% on its first bookings.

This comedy co-stars Jane Withers with the Ritz Brothers. In our opinion it is very lively

and should pull much better business, as it may do on future bookings. In situations where it is possible to do so, exhibitors should plug this one with extra advertising and exploitation stunts and they will probably be well rewarded, for this comedy is no slouch; but it does need plenty of extra plugging.

If "PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES" doesn't pick up on future bookings, it probably indicates that this world, at least America in particular, is taking the present war crisis very seriously and is not interested in the comedy side.

Or else it may be the closing box office argument in the case of the Ritz Brothers.

Lucky Humberstone did the excellent directorial job.

UNIVERSAL--1 New One

Universal has a better than average programmer in their new Crime Club series release this week, "THE WITNESS VANISHES," 77%, which co-stars Edmund Lowe and Wendy Barrie. However, since Lowe has been off the screen for some time, and Miss Barrie is not a strong box office draw, exhibitors should play safe and double bill this with a much stronger attraction. Irving Starr produced for Universal and Otis Garrett directed.

REPUBLIC--1 New Release

Republic's new release this week, "SABOTAGE," 67%, is another of the many new stories dealing with the effects of the European War here in America, such as was recently shown in Warner Brothers "ESPIONAGE AGENT." Due to the lack of marquee names, not very much can be expected from this one.

Arleen Whelan (courtesy of 20th-Fox), Gordon Oliver, and Charley Grapewin are featured, so take it for what it's worth. Hermon Schlom produced and Harold Young directed.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

the Eastern end. . . . It will make a lot of money for "Drums Along the Mohawk" and the exhibitors who play the picture. . . . And we hope that it makes a lot more than a lot. . . . Because these are days that demand showmanship. . . . And we would like to see a lesson taught to executives who always consider "retrenchment" first means of firing of the publicity and exploitation boys who mean "showmanship." . . . When we own our next company, it will be our policy, whenever an industrial crisis arises, to double our publicity and exploitation staff. . . . And don't say we won't be picking dividend plums while "retrenchers" are wailing.

6 New Features Not in Last Issue

		We Est.
1. Roaring Twenties	WAR.....128	125
2. Jamaica Inn	PAR.....112	105
3. On Your Toes	WAR.....102	100
4. Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX.....80	85
5. The Witness Vanishes	UNIV.....77	80
6. Sabotage	REP.....67	70

'Cat and the Canary' Once More Smash Thriller Hit

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 100%)

ProducerArthur Hornblow, Jr.
DirectorElliott Nugent
Screenplay: Walter DeLeon and
Lynn Starling.

Based on stage play by John Willard.

Stars: Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard.

Featured: John Beal, Douglass Montgomery, Gale Sondergaard, Elizabeth Patterson, Nydia Westman, George Zucco, John Wray, George Regas.

PhotographerCharles Lang
Art Directors: Hans Dreier and Robert Usher.

Film Editor.....Archie Marshek
Time72 minutes

Apparently "The Cat and the Canary" will never die. First brought to the screen in the silent days after a year or more of sensational Broadway success as a play, then playing a return engagement in the early days of the talkies, here it is again. And if anything, it seems to improve with age, and lend itself admirably to 1939 streamlinings.

Paramount's current version, under the guiding production hand of Arthur Hornblow, and the direction of Elliot Nugent, accentuates all the solid virtues of "The Cat and the Canary," which, in this reviewer's opinion, will always remain as the model for comedy - mystery entertainment. When playwright John Willard, who never clicked so well again, set the blue print down for this one, he devised a formula that can well stand as Lesson No. 1 for ambitious writers of the "thrills with laughs" concoctions.

Nor does the present cast fail to keep step with the modernizing of the favorite. Bob Hope gets his teeth into a real part, and justifies by his acting ability in something more substantial than past roles, all the expectations held for him by many in the business. Paulette Goddard, sharing top honors, is also effective. It is a different type of role for her, also, and she justifies her selection.

Supporting parts have been cast with judgment. Gale Sondergaard's dour-visaged housekeeper, George Zucco's smooth lawyer, get the best opportunities, with John Beal and Douglass Montgomery excellent as rivals in the Hope-Goddard romance.

You remember the story. Such changes as have been made in characterizations and scripting, are improvements. It concerns the small group of relatives arriving at the eerie home of a departed eccentric relative for the reading of his will, and the things that

happen after it is discovered that Miss Goddard is sole heir, but that if something happens to her soon enough—the others will get a cut of the pie. Many things do happen, and in the course of the action there are a couple of murders, before Bob Hope saves the day.

A bow to Director Nugent and to Scripters Walter DeLeon and Lynn Starling for a good job well done.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Tops in comedy-mystery-thrillers, and will step Bob Hope along in ranking. A good bet for any audience, of any age. Previewed October 24th.

'Our Neighbors, The Carters' Powerful Human Interest Story

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

ProducerCharles R. Rogers
DirectorRalph Murphy
ScreenplayS. K. Lauren
Based on story by Renaud Hoffman.

Stars: Fay Bainter, Frank Craven
Featured: Edmund Lowe, Genevieve Tobin, Mary Thomas, Gloria Carter, Scotty Beckett, Bennie Bartlett, Donald Brenon, Nana Bryant, Thurston Hall, Granville Bates, Edward McWade, Norman Phillips, Richard Clayton, Frank Reicher, John Conte, Martha Mears, Olaf Hytten.

PhotographerGeorge Barnes
Art Directors: Hans Dreier and Earl Hedrick.

Film Editor.....William Shea
Time83 minutes

When we saw the name of Renaud Hoffman on the original story credit for "Our Neighbors, the Carters," we reminded ourselves to remind ourselves of a punchy package of heartdrama, "Not One To Spare," which arrived in New York unsung, and went out to clean up sensationally. That was down the dim years of the '20's.

We didn't need the reminder, because "The Carters" turns out to have the same basic heart punch theme. But aside from the theme, the resemblance ends. For this Charles Rogers version is as modern as your corner drug store, produced and directed with all the skill that the intervening decade has taught us.

Lack of ultra-strong marquee strength, will make the picture a problem for careful booking on its key city spots. Exploitation and careful balancing of the bill should help there, and word of

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. On Your Toes	WAR.....100
2. The Cat and the Canary	PAR.....100
3. Our Neighbors, The Carters	PAR.....90
4. Little Accident	UNIV.....75
5. Too Busy To Work	FOX.....70

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Liberally spiked with thrills, excitement and plenty of good comedy situations, Paramount's 'Cat and the Canary' emerges as a top notch comedy murder mystery that will stand up as the first feature on any bill."

VARIETY: "An old favorite, considerably streamlined, especi-

ally through modernization of gags and dialog, returns to screen with the unveiling of this new version of 'The Cat and the Canary.' Taking on a mixture of spine-chilling and comedy qualities surpassing those it contained either as a stage play or when Universal harnessed it for cinematic b.o. purposes, it should easily repeat, if not better, its earlier silversheet success."

mouth will pave the way for the family audiences.

Frank Craven, as "Doc" Carter, the small town druggist who must give way to chain store invasion, is the center of the story. His worry, and that of his wife, Fay Bainter, is to make ends meet against modern conditions, and to keep intact a healthy brood of youngsters.

Edmund Lowe and Genevieve Tobin represent the contrast. They are wealthy, but childless, and envious of the poverty-stricken Carters. Comes the time when Lowe offers to take one of the children as his own, with every advantage, and then the poignant choice: "Which one can we spare?"

The picture starts slowly in establishing its characters, but gets under way and moves smoothly. Ralph Murphy directed with skill and a note of sympathy for his subject. In addition to the fine cast of principals, a moppet, Mary Thomas, scores strongly.

Charles Rogers can be satisfied

with having achieved his aim—a family heart socko, unpretentious but human—in his second picture for Paramount release.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Must be bolstered for the marquee, but sure-fire family audience stuff for the great majority of houses. Previewed October 30.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "For what this is, it could not have been better. A fine acting cast, magnificently directed and produced, a good home-spun story that may, at times, become a bit too maudlin, but for the better part of its length well written, and the combination of all these elements well balanced into as fine a piece of entertainment of this sort as you would ever hope to get."

VARIETY: "Light on story, heavy on dialog, 'Our Neighbors—the Carters' emerges as a mildly entertaining drama that might be considerably strengthened through further judicious editing. Its saving graces are its occasional heart tugs and the fine—and, at times, inspired—performances of Frank Craven and little Mary Thomas."

The Fastest Growing Paper
in the Industry

The Box Office DIGEST

'On Your Toes' Must Sell Glamorous Zorina

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 100%)

Executive Producer...Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer...Robert Lord
Director.....Ray Enright
Screenplay: Richard Macaulay and Jerry Wald.

Based on musical play by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart.

Stars.....Zorina, Eddie Albert
Featured: Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, James Gleason, Leonid Kinskey, Gloria Dickson, Queenie Smith, Erik Rhodes, Berton Churchill, Donald O'Connor, Sarita Wooten.

Photographer...James Wong Howe
Art Director.....Robert Haas
Film Editor.....Clarence Kolster
Time90 minutes

Exhibitors will do well to sell "On Your Toes" on the strength of those sexy ad cuts of "Zorina," which Charles Einfeld's staff is playing up for Warners, and not

oversell it as musical entertainment. The 1936 Broadway stage hit has not improved with the years awaiting its transfer to the screen.

Chief trouble seems to be in the stuttering, discursive unbalance of the screenplay provided. Director Ray Enright uses all his experience and skill to get the utmost from individual sequences but even that is not sufficient to get it moving smoothly and with pace.

For the star, Zorina, it can be reported that she again displays the pulchritude and terpsichorean wizardry that her initial screen appearance in the "Goldwyn Follies," and her high Broadway standing, would lead us to expect. Eddie Albert, who scored in

"Brother Rat," is seen in a hoof-er-composer role, and registers effectively. Support is from a group of Hollywood stand-bys, only hampered by their material. At that, Leonid Kinsky manages to stand out.

Treatment of the Rodgers and Hart vehicle verges towards the burlesque in its efforts to seek for laughs. Albert is seen as the former hoof-er, now a composer, whose mind turns to higher artistic things when his path crosses that of a Russian ballet troupe, and he falls for the star, Zorina.

With many ups and downs, and a plentitude of back stage characters and broadly drawn theatrical figures, the action carries through to the point where Eddie's own ballet composition,

"Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," is presented for the highlight and the happy ending.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Will get by, but don't go overboard on it. Previewed October 24th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'On Your Toes,' Warners demonstrated that pictures with ballets as well as bullets can hit the boxoffice mark. Songs have been omitted in the screen translation of the Rodgers-Hart-Abbott musical hit, but as we recall it, they weren't sung too well anyway."

VARIETY: "Screen translation of the Rodgers-Hart-Abbott musical play resolves itself into a burlesque ballet which attempts with only moderate success to strike a different note in choreographic comedy."

'Little Accident' Okay Programmer For Baby Sandy

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer-Director Charles Lamont
Original Screenplay: Paul Yawitz, Eve Greene.

From the play by Floyd Dell, Mitchell.

Stars: Baby Sandy, Hugh Herbert
Featured: Florence Rice, Richard Carlson, Ernest Truex, Joy Hodges, Fritz Feld, Kathleen Howard, Howard Hickman, Edgar Kennedy, Etienne Girardot, Charles D. Brown.

Photographer.....Milton Krasner
Art Director.....Jack Otterson
Film Editor.....Frank Gross
Time63 minutes

"Little Accident" rates as satisfactory program fare, with a special appeal for family audiences where the innocent genius of little Baby Sandy will likely provide extra chuckles. Charles Lamont, who years ago first brought Shirley Temple to the screen in a series of "all-kiddie" pictures, is at home handling the two year old, and gets the utmost from her.

But the baby is growing up. With the growth, she is bound to lose some of the infant cuteness, compensated for somewhat, but not entirely, by new tricks of appeal. So it behooves Universal to give more careful study to story structure and preparation if they are intending to carry the tot along to Shirley proportions as she increases the number of her birthdays.

Audiences will be surprised, and not displeased to find Baby Sandy playing her real life part of a girl this time, instead of the boy she impersonated for Bing Crosby's hit. The story finds her abandoned in a newspaper office in the

care of Hugh Herbert, the latter being the editor of a department on the care of babies, which he conducts under a woman's name. There is fun and trouble enough bundling an abandoned infant around, until things get pseudo-serious when an air of scandal enters the picture and Herbert must admit the tyke is really his grandchild. Which would be alright, were it not for the fact that Herbert's daughter, Florence Rice, is not wed.

You can see the farce possibilities in the well known stage hit. Director Lamont has handled

them well on the whole, but the script in seeking to play up Sandy, has its difficulties giving the supporting cast any more than spot opportunities.

There is a hilarious chase finish, with Sandy lost in the chute of a laundry, which will send the family customers away more than satisfied.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good program entertainment, a neat balance for any bill with family audiences. Previewed October 25th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Concocted expressly to show off its star, Baby Sandy, 'Little Accident' fails to provide entertainment other than the moments when the child's million-dollar smile is flashed on the screen. This is due 100 per cent to poor story material."

VARIETY: "The elfin charm of Baby Sandy is delightfully utilized in this unusually fresh and appealing domestic comedy, marking the third appearance of Universal's starlet and certain to add more admirers to her b.o. entourage. Even beyond the family trade zones, the picture offers a happy complement for balance bills."

'Too Busy To Work' Tops in Jones Series

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Exec. Producer.....Sol M. Wurtzel
Associate Producer.....John Stone
Director.....Otto Brower
Original Screenplay: Robert Ellis, Helen Logan, Stanley Rauh.

Based upon "The Torchbearers" by George Kelly.

Also based on "Your Uncle Dudley" by Howard Lindsay, Bertrand Robinson.

Featured: Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, Ken Howell, George Ernest, June Carlson, Florence Roberts, Billy Mahan, Joan Davis, Chick Chandler.

Photographer...Edward Cronjager
Time64 minutes

Sol Wurtzel telescoped two highly successful stage plays of some years ago—"The Torchbearers" and "Your Uncle Dudley"—into one for the episode in the adventures of the Jones Family, and with refurbishments by the scripters, comes up with one of the top-notchers of the series.

"Too Busy To Work" comes

close to being one of those "laughs from start to finish" things. And thanks to the solid framework of the plays on which it is based, even an occasional dash of the good old hoke, there is a fairly sturdy framework of legitimacy to the whole.

With due bows for the basic materials supplied by the plays, credit for the result must go to Director Otto Brower, and the Jones scripting veterans, Robert Ellis and Helen Logan, this time joined in a trio by Stanley Rauh. With full meed of credit to John Stone as associate producer.

The regular Jones family regulars are all present to effect, with added spice present in the madcap country cousin, Joan Davis. The story follows "The Torchbearers" theme, when Spring Byington and Florence Roberts enter the little theater field to show Jed Prouty that they too can partake in af-

fairs of the world outside the home.

Action is fast and furious, laughs aplenty, many welcome ones on the slapstick side, as the members of the family struggle with their high art ambitions.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Sure-fire laugh hit for family audiences. Previewed October 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER. "Sol Wurtzel has struck an unexplored vein of gold with his latest number in the 'Jones Family' series. For the first time, a 'Jones Family' screenplay is based on a well-known play, in this case two of them, and as a result, "Too Busy To Work" emerges as definitely one of the toppers in the series."

VARIETY. "Crammed with laugh-making business and lines, and traveling at a speedy clip for the full route, 'Too Busy To Work' will be hailed by Jones Family addicts as setting a new high for this long-lived 20th-Fox series."



THE HONOR BOX WINNER



SAM BISCHOFF

Associate Producer



"THE ROARING TWENTIES"



THE HONOR BOX WINNER



RAOUL WALSH

Directed



"THE ROARING TWENTIES"

Ridge Discovers Undercurrent Among Film Salesmen Agitating Organization In Union Labor Ranks



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Charlotte, W. Va.—Oct. 23.—There is one problem child in the distribution department of all companies, that sooner or later will be causing this industry a lot of concern. Possibly a situation is developing that may bring it about or give it impetus, that is not entirely of the making of the men, the Forgotten Men, of this industry. Nevertheless, as this writer wends his way across the country, confidences are imposed in him, about the general discord that exists in many quarters among employees, especially the sales departments. Particularly have many salesmen asked the question, "when are they going to organize a 'Salesmen's Union'?"

When this question was first asked, we were of the opinion that it was only some disgruntled fellow. But as we traveled on east, there were men in every exchange center who inquired about the studio unions among the cameramen, sound engineers, authors, writers and others who are working in the creative end of this great industry.

Present Conditions Adding to The Worries of the Boys in Trenches

Now comes the question of layoffs. More of these men have brought up the question in every port we have worked. They are fearful that they are going to lose out, at least some of them. They openly state, but not for publication, that if such an opportunity comes, they will go into a salesmen's union. They point to the threats recently made, in the fight against the Neely Bill. It has been stated many times out here in the provinces, that should the Neely Bill become a law, sales forces would be depleted of necessity; that the producers would have to demand exhibitors come

to exchange centers to screen and buy pictures; that the industry could not absorb the cost of selling in the field. So this has added to the concern of these "Forgotten Men."

Hollywood may be oblivious to this danger, but if the men who guide the destiny of this two million dollar industry, could have heard the complaints of their field forces, that have come to the writer's ears this summer and fall, they would realize that there is brewing a discontent in the field, that may give them real concern, if organized labor makes an effort to extend its lines to this department.

Many of these men have stated to the writer in substance these words, "We will never become branch managers, at least 90 per cent of us. There is no probable promotion, that will make our employment secure. There is but one way left for those of us who have spent two decades peddling film and that is to be organized for our protection."

Exchange Mgr. Writes Letter To Exhibitor—Formerly a Manager

Charleston, W. Va., Oct. 25.—Blundering letter number 313 from an exchange manager in Cincinnati, to the Custer Theatre in Charleston, came to the writer's attention this week. Except for the fact that I have known all parties for so many years, and regard them, and particularly the exchange manager, highly, I would use his name. Here is what he did:

Jack Custer booked a cheap picture for the third one on a double bill on an off night. His business jumped up sufficiently to pay for it and make a little profit, over the double bill night.

Right now comes a letter from the exchange manager, calling the theatre manager names for such contemptuous action. He told him he would have to cancel all future bookings, if this was continued, and that he thought the management of the theatre had more sense than to do such a thing.

Custer immediately replied in a letter inquiring what paragraph in his contract forbade such booking, and what understanding either verbal or written precluded him from running the entire forty odd pictures in one night if he paid for them and could get the prints,

To this the manager replied that he was not a lawyer; that he would refer the matter to their New York attorney, who would settle the matter with Custer.

This exchange manager forgot that John Balaban, of Chicago, has been triple billing his company's product for a long time in Chicago. He also forgot to read his contract, which says not a word about how many pictures may be played in one day. He forgot that he should be happy to have his product played, that is most of it, even if there were five pictures, including his, on a bill.

And of all things, Custer used to be a Branch Manager before he became an exhibitor and to criticize him as the letter did, and to threaten him with cancelling his bookings, is the kind of material many Government agents have pounced upon, for use in suits against film companies.

MPTOA Execs Urge Importance Of Main Street Exhibitor

White Sulphur Springs, W. Va. Oct. 21.—Ed Kuykendall and his twenty-eight executive committeemen met today in this mountain retreat, to not only lay plans for the rescuing of this billion dollar business from the encroaching influences of Government control, but to help solve the problems of the small exhibitor who belongs to the MPTOA group of theatre men. Regardless of any group's sympathies between Allied and MPTOA, no one can question the sincerity with which these men from every section of the country, tackled the present problems. With them was "Metro's Bill Rodgers," who again was trying to get a motion picture "Koran," acceptable to all factions.

Out of all their discussions, came one pertinent fact, which all agreed upon: that unless the big wigs in production and distribution recognize the power of the Main Street crowd; the small exhibitor, who is ten-fold as numerous as the chain operators, there is bound to be inimical legislation that may engulf the industry, levied on them from Washington.

Being more specific, Sol Hyman, one of the Executive Committeemen, expressed it thusly: "Every small exhibitor knows his Congressman. They are in intimate touch with him even in off years. Not an operator of big

theaters in the country, can command the attention of these men at Washington, these Main Street boys wield. The producer and distributor forgets that votes back home influence every Representative in Washington. These guardians of the people's interest are there to serve the interests of their constituents. The Congressmen's constituents are the hundreds of small exhibitors back home. These men in Washington harken to the plea of the small fellow, for protection of his business, even though small, from the encroachment of the chains, multi-millionaire producers and the big wigs. But the producer, distributor and others in high places place too little importance on the Main Street exhibitor. He is the balance of power in this industry. Without him pictures would not make a profit. He is ten times as influential at Washington as the big fellow. It's about time the big wigs in the industry started taking him into account."

Exhibitor Leader Talks It Over With MGM's Sales Chief

Mr. Hyman said he and others discussed this with Mr. Rodgers. He said Mr. Rodgers agreed with him, and that he too had told his company's executives this very thing, but still generally the Main Street exhibitor is ignored; his influence on Congress is belittled, an evidence of which is the progress the Neely Bill has made, in the face of what is supposed to be big opposition.

But the worst is yet to come, according to men like Sol Hyman and Mr. Rodgers. The Neely Bill comes up soon in the House of Representatives. Here the small exhibitors, ten thousand of them from all over the country, see a panacea for many of their ills from block booking, clearance ills and cancellation privileges. Their demands on their own Congressmen will carry infinitely more weight, than the barking of the producer, who claims his business will be ruined if the Neely Bill is passed. Thus the fear of the MPTOA Executive Committeemen becomes a real thing; something for them to conjure with, and yet they have been unable to sell the big wigs, except in isolated instances as they claim they have Mr. Rodgers of the impending disaster that is just around the corner. (Continued on Page 12)

Field Man Nichols Starts Readers On Tour Of Southern California Territory And Its Problems

Hollywood, October 28.—Before going into the story this week we herewith give you a pledge—we will report to you from a strictly impersonal viewpoint, treating each theatre case, as a pile of brick and mortar and giving you the facts as we find them.

Come and get in the car with us and we will tour the beautiful San Gabriel Valley in California; the Valley with approximately 350,000 people and 350,000 headaches for exchangemen and exhibitors. We warn you it will be quite a trip and will take at least four weeks to see all the scenery. This panorama will unfold each week until the trip is completed and you exhibitors in Chicago will get quite a kick out of it.

Our first stop is in the fair city of Alhambra, adjacent to Los Angeles. Here we find the Garfield theater owned by Harry Vinnicof. The Alhambra and El Rey operated by Jimmie Edwards for Principal Theaters, which is headed by Mike Rosenberg. These three theatres work under a pooling arrangement, or a thirty-three and a third interest, split three ways. The Alhambra is owned by Mr. Edwards. El Rey by Mike Rosenberg. Fox West Coast have 25 per cent of Principal Theaters, a part of which is the El Rey theater. If the Principal Theaters have any interest in the Alhambra, FWC would have then a corresponding interest in the Alhambra also. Principal Theaters takes five and a fourth per cent administrative expense for the booking of pictures. It is not known just what Fox West Coast receive for their buying of pictures for Principal.

We First Visit An Independent Exhibitor in The Valley

Now this leaves us with a visit to a lone independent exhibitor, one Charles Ferry, who operates the Granada theater. Mr. Ferry has run this theatre continuously since 1926. The Granada at the start had Fox first run, with an established second run with all companies. Principal Theaters purchased the Temple in 1923, and entered into a pooling arrangement with the Alhambra and Garfield. Exchanges then, so we are informed by Mr. Ferry, refused to sell him second run and then placed his house in third run classification. Mr. Ferry later

cancelled these third run agreements and started suit against Fox West Coast. Principal and most of the distributors. This case ended in a private consent decree by the distributors and the second run was restored to the Granada in 1929. This condition was enjoyed by the Granada until the buying season of 1932-33 product.

Mr. Edwards then entered the picture by purchase from O. Lewis of his interest in the Alhambra theatre and formed the Alhambra Amusement Corp. The Temple is now known as the El Rey theatre. Mr. Ferry tries to purchase the second run again, and is informed that the deal for product is handled by Fox West Coast for the Alhambra in their New York office, and that they, the local exchange managers, have no say in the matter.

So the second run that has been enjoyed by the Granada, reverts to the El Rey. However, when this was done, so Mr. Ferry informs us, Mike Rosenberg offered Mr. Ferry his choice of Fox second run, or Universal and Columbia; Mr. Ferry at this time had RKO on a five year franchise deal, second run, which did not expire till '35. RKO then offered Mr. Ferry, so he states, a new second run deal at a fifty per cent increase, which was refused, and this product joined the others at the El Rey.

Apparently The Boys Put The Pressure On In Many Ways

Then started the circulation of free service 10c passes by the thousands in the immediate neighborhood of the Granada, by the El Rey, which dropped its admission price from 25c to 15c, then going back to 25c and dropping again to 15c. The Granada is operating at 20c and 70 days after first run by all companies at this time. The blue book then calls for this kind of clearance. The El Rey then goes to 20c. The white book is brought out later and dusted off to meet the new situation. This white book is a zoning and clearance book containing the now defunct NRA Motion Picture Code Authority, application of what they thought would be a fair zoning for the L. A. territory.

At the present writing the Gra-

nada is now on a 77 day and in some cases an 84 day clearance; with the exception of MGM, which still sticks to the 70 day availability. We quote further from Mr. Ferry's signed statement: "RKO informed me that Mr. Edwards insisted that they hold back the Granada bookings to an additional 14 days."

We now look over the records of a few of the bookings of the El Rey, Alhambra, Garfield and Granada theaters. Kindly let us explain right here one thing about these bookings: The first run double feature bill as played in key situations. The writer has never found yet where subsequent independent runs can ever book them together, as run in the first run chain situations in the L. A. territory. We can understand how Fox West Coast can play a big percentage picture with a big Warner release, as heretofore they enjoyed a flat rental deal on Warner product and it may be possible that they enjoy an opportunity to convert one feature to a flat rental basis on other product. You, of course, understand we are only discussing the top allocated percentage pictures as played together on one program.

"Juarez" 1st run Alhambra Thea. 3 days-Garfield 7 days, day and date July 23 to 29 inclusive. El Rey 20c, Oct. 1 to 4th; Granada 20c, Oct. 15, 3 days. "Kid From Kokomo" Alhambra thea. 1st run Aug. 2 to 5th. El Rey 20c, Oct. 12 to 14th. Granada 20c, Oct. 20th. "Young Mr. Lincoln" and "Dr. Kildare" Alhambra 1st run, July 16 to 18th, move over to Garfield July 19 to 22nd. El Rey, 20c. "Young Mr. Lincoln" Sept. 24-26, and "Dr. Kildare" Sept. 21-23. Granada 20c. "Young Mr. Lincoln" Oct. 29-31. "Dr. Kildare" Oct. 6-7th. When the El Rey played "Dr. Kildare" we find the second feature is "Tarzan Finds a Son," which played the Alhambra July 15-18th.

Here's A Move-Over For The Books To Record

We would be amiss in our reporting of events as we find them, if we did not tell you of the fastest move-over of a program we have ever encountered in the U.S. The El Rey 20c, moved its advertised show, over to the Alhambra 35c, the other night, which



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

was playing first run "Five Little Peppers" and the "Fighting Gringo." The El Rey's program consisted of three features, "King Kong" (no cut) "Gorilla" and "The Raven" at 20c. The overflow was so big that the El Rey ticket holders were instructed to go over to the Alhambra, where their tickets would be honored and the three El Rey features would be run off there, which was done.

Now the question arises, did the public see five features for 35c, or was the house cleared before the showing of the El Rey features. If we had the "Five Little Peppers" and "The Gringo" booked, we would want to know that important fact, if the features above mentioned played continuous with the El Rey features, then all the clearance schedules governing this first run key situation, were violated in the spots zoned off in Alhambra, and can be cancelled without penalty.

The local managers when questioned about possible copyright infringements, referring to the El Rey, were very reticent to say the least. Frankly, we don't know whether Mr. Edwards had permission from the distributors to move over to the Alhambra the three features in question, or not. But it does bring out one important fact. WHERE IS THIS MOVE-OVER EVIL GOING TO STOP?

So we will be ready to pick you up next week and we are going to visit one of the most historical mission cities in Southern California. It will be interesting. "I promise you."

The Radio Reporter: COVERS RADIO PROGRAMS OF INTEREST TO FILM PEOPLE IN THE STYLE OF PICTURE REVIEWS

Rounding Up Odds and Ends of a Radio Week

GEORGE JESSEL'S program is laying its eggs by the dozens these days. . . . And George is too clever a trouper to be struggling with the material he is using. . . . Maybe the seat of the problem is that George is trying to provide all the material himself, and is straining too much at the task. . . . Chief objection to a home-body in the San Fernando Valley is that the material seems to be written by the gang at Lindy's for Broadway consumption, instead of for the nation-wide customers of the sponsors product. . . . At any rate, they even allowed Henry Armetta a sure-fire under almost any circumstances—on screen or in person—to die like a dog last Friday night. . . . And when Henry dies, there must be something wrong. . . . An over-long commercial announcement doesn't help either.

Chase and Sanborn Miss Fast-Stepping Don Ameche

The past Sunday's Bergen-McCarthy et al program, gives evidence that the absence of Don Ameche slows the pace. . . . This is really no criticism of Nelson Eddy, who took over the master of ceremonies chores, because Eddy is not trained or gaited for the ad lib feeling that an MC must use, and the speed-it-up atmosphere. . . . His attempts to pace it are not helped by the fact that the commercial announcements have become so long, listeners have learned they have time to turn off to some distant football score without missing any of the entertainment. . . . In his own field, Eddy put over some rousing song numbers in his top style. . . . But saviour of the program was Clark Gable in the playlet. . . . He seemed to have entered the studio with some pep the others missed, and strangely, sold the Gable personality over the radio so strongly that a listener could visualize him. . . . All the Gable material was good, too, and the playlet one of the best the program has presented. . . . Bergen needs some new formulae, it's getting so Charlie McCarthy has to laugh at his own jokes to get the studio audience started. . . . Probably Edgar is just coasting until Mortimer Snerd provides the new angles.

The Screen Guild Holds Up Its Own With Playlet

Plays on the radio are a problem. . . . They can sell in socko fashion to the audience in the studio, and fall flatter than duds to the audience a thousand miles away. . . . Part of the trouble is due to the same worry that besets picture-makers: How are you going to be sure of getting your customer in at the START of the play, and how on earth is he going to enjoy it if he hasn't heard the premise and establishing speeches? . . . THE RADIO REPORTER believes the answer may be in having the sponsors encourage the younger script writers who would be told to forget stage technique, screen tricks, and even

Buck Benny Being Bucked By His Material

It was The Radio Reporter's opinion that Jack Benny's second program of the new season was one of his best. . . . We heard of differences of opinion on the first. . . . But we will stand by our guns on the second. . . . So it is with regret that we feel the necessity to report that Jack's material last week was not up to his own ability to deliver. . . . In fact, Jack and Mary Livingstone carried the shows on their innate ability to sell personality and good cheer. . . . The writers strained so hard that they may have given too much of the period to Andy Devine. . . . And, Andy, is like corned beef. . . . You

The Grouch Club Has Ned Sparks For Guest Star

It was a good idea for The Grouch Club, that clever local idea that built itself into a national, to invite Ned Sparks, the screen's prize sour-puss, to be the guest star last week. . . . This was an encore engagement, so maybe they plan to make Ned a fixture. . . . The program went off okay, with Sparks in his usual form. . . . You have to either enjoy Ned, or pass him by. . . . Grouch Club addicts probably enjoyed him, though the records must record that Ned never reaches heights of hilarity, nor descends to lows. . . . He hits a Ned Sparks average, and that's what he did last Sunday. . . . Leon Leonardi's music stood out noticeably. . . . Let not this brief sermon conclude without a brickbat to the sponsor who is making the commercials too long, too dreary, and too obvious. . . . You can't sell a product to adults with a high school freshman approach.

The Radio Reporter

The Box Office Digest introduces to you: **THE RADIO REPORTER.**

So we will tell about him:

In association with the late Frank "Spec" Woods on the famous, and theatrically revered **DRAMATIC MIRROR**, he wrote the first **REVIEWS** of motion pictures. It was back in those Vitagraph days, just ahead of the David Griffith Biograph days, when no one with a sense of the theater in him, would condescend to admit that those strips of moving celluloid were worthy of anything called a review.

The motion picture-radio problem has become so intertwined that **The Digest** has decided it is time to cover radio much as pictures are covered. But **The Digest** is primarily a picture paper. So it has no desire to invade the radio field, or clutter its pages with radio angles of no interest to picture box offices.

So **THE RADIO REPORTER** will confine his surface treatment of the week's high spots in radio to those programs which concern the intimate interests of picture people — whether producers, agents, players, writers, or exhibitors.

And so we give you: **THE RADIO REPORTER.**

literary devices, while they create a new, fast, ten-minute playlet technique for the radio. . . . But all this is aside from what we started out to talk about, The Screen Guild program of the last week. . . . The material could be checked up as "okay but not so hot." . . . But thanks to the players, it came over as above ordinary entertainment. . . . They were of the brand of troupers who seem to know their stuff in any medium. . . . Their names? . . . Oh, yes, Robert Montgomery, Adolphe Menjou, Binnie Barnes, and that gal-of-all-work, Hedda Hopper. . . . They sold the program. . . . The balance of the program rated okay, with a special orchid to the commercial announcement which was effective because it was short and to the point.

can take just so much, and then your palate craves for something to wash it down.

Orson Wells In His Own Particular Niche

Since Orson Wells is now in the picture business, or at least in RKO's hair, we suppose that he comes under the list of **THE RADIO REPORTER'S** assignments to cover programs of interest to picture folk. . . . Orson's last Sunday show, an ear-version of "The Magnificent Amberson," was up to his usual standard. . . . In fact, if we tell you that Walter Huston had the lead, we don't have to proceed to tell you that it was good. . . . And, of course, there was Orson, himself. . . . On the whole a program that registered very effectively.

FIELD MAN DISCUSSES

(Continued from Page 10)

It was the expressed opinion of most of the attending exhibitors at the meeting, that if the rest of the industry would follow the lead of Metro and Warners, in letting the buying bars down, and mean and stick to it, that the Main Street crowd would come to the defense of the big boys, who so cruelly ignored them in the past.

Hundreds of cases of clearance, dependent second runs, where the chain operated theaters, were being investigated, and these cases have been prepared for the Government's perusal. Several situations near at hand were discussed, where even in small towns, the producer owned theatres bought second run, shelved it, so that they could freeze out the small independent theatre operator. Many instances were shown your correspondent, under pledge of silence, until the MPTOA has all the evidence ready to turn over to the authorities.

If my twenty-five years in every department of this industry has taught me anything, it says that it is high time the Big Boys got wise to themselves, and remember that it is the boys who fight in the trenches who win wars, not the white collar chaps who stay at home and wave the flag.

Announcing . . .

The Box Office Digest's

NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY

★ THE MOST USEFUL working tool ever devised by a publication for the service of production, exhibition, and distribution.

★ IN ALPHABETICAL FORM, a New Year's Summary of all the pictures of the past season — their advance preview notices, their DIGEST box office estimates, their opening key city figures, their current box office rating, the important production credits.

★ ALL IN ONE COMPACT PACKAGE arranged with the convenience of a WEBSTER INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY.

★ ALL AT YOUR ELBOW, in production executive office, in exchange, or in theater box office.

★ THE DIGEST'S NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY is in preparation now by our staff. . . . It will be issued, when most handy, just at the turn of the New Year—January.

Will We Accept Advertising?

Of course we will. . . . We will be after it. . . . But only on the basis of delivering to workers in the industry representation in the most important working tool ever devised by a picture publication. . . . THE NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY will be put to work by its readers, on a day in and day out job; it will go to work for its advertisers on the same basis.



ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
The Rains Came	FOX	165
Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Illywood Cavalcade	FOX	155
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	152
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
Babes In Arms	MGM	150
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130

The Real G. I. Y	UA	129
Bean Geste	PAR	128
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
The Roaring Twenties	WAR	127
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	124
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Day a Day	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
Thunder About	MGM	116
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average.)	WAR	192
Midnight	WAR	111
Okla!onna Kid	WAR	111
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	108
In Name Only	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Eternally Yours	UA	103
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	100
Tailspin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Intermezzo	UA	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91

St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Naughty But Nice	WAR	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Espionage Agent	WAR	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
These Glamour Girls	MGM	84
Angels Wash Their Faces	MGM	83
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	139
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardy's Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	123

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Jamaica Inn	PAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	103
Golden Boy	COL	102

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	98
Maisie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	91
Blackmail	MGM	91
Esc and Furlions	MGM	91
One Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Naughty But Nice	WAR	87
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Espionage Agent	WAR	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
These Glamour Girls	MGM	84
Angels Wash Their Faces	MGM	83
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82

Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	80
Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX	80
Fall Confession	RKO	78
Devil's Island	WAR	78
The Witness Vanishes	UNIV	77

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C.

FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D.

BELOW \$100,000

What A Life	PAR	98
U-Boat 29	COL	97

Blackwell's Island WAR 77
 Pardon Our Nerve FOX 77
 The Day The Bookies Went RKO 76
 You Can't Get Away With Murder WAR 76
 Flight at Midnight REP 75
 Inside Story FOX 75
 Pacific Liner RKO 75
 Man They Couldn't Hang COL 75
 Hawaiian Nights UNIV 74
 Two Bright Boys UNIV 74
 Chan in Treasure Island FOX 74
 Mystery of the White Room UNIV 73
 Boy Slaves RKO 73
 Disharred PAR 73
 Missing Daughters COL 73
 Blondie Takes Vacation RKO 72
 The Spellbinder RKO 72
 It Could Happen To You FOX 72
 King of Chinatown PAR 72
 Society Lawyer MGM 72
 Persons in Hiding PAR 72
 Society Smugglers UNIV 72
 Mr. Moto's Last Warning FOX 72
 Twelve Crowded Hours RKO 72
 Ex-Champ UNIV 72
 The Escape FOX 72
 Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase WAR 72
 Nancy Drew, Reporter WAR 71
 Pirates of the Skies UNIV 71
 Sorority House RKO 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter WAR 71
 Mystery of the White Room UNIV 71
 The Girl and the Gambler RKO 71
 Quick Millions FOX 71
 Blind Alley COL 71
 Million Dollar Legs PAR 71
 Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 71
 Those High Grey Walls COL 71
 Stop, Look and Love FOX 70
 Unexpected Father UNIV 70
 Island of Lost Men PAR 70
 Chasing Danger FOX 70
 Unmarried PAR 70
 Romance of the Redwoods COL 70
 Winner Take All FOX 70
 Big Town Car UNIV 70
 On Trial WAR 70
 Torchy Blane in Chinatown WAR 70
 Ambush PAR 70
 They Made Her A Spy RKO 70
 Torchy For Mayor WAR 70
 The Girl From Mexico RKO 70
 Within the Law MGM 70
 Grand Jury Secrets PAR 70
 Bulldog Drummond's Bride PAR 70
 Death of a Champion PAR 70
 Cowboy Quarterback WAR 70

Some Like It Hot PAR 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police PAR 69
 Everybody's Baby FOX 69
 No Place To Go WAR 68
 News Is Made At Night FOX 68
 The Family Next Door UNIV 68
 The Saint Strikes Back RKO 68
 Undercover Doctor PAR 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger Island FOX 68
 Adventures of Jane Arden WAR 68
 Almost A Gentleman RKO 68
 Fitzer Dugan RKO 68
 The Saint in London RKO 68
 For Love of Money UNIV 68
 The Man They Couldn't Hang COL 68
 Forgotten Woman UNIV 68
 Lone Wolf Spy Hunt COL 67
 Conspiracy RKO 67
 Playing With Dynamite WAR 67
 A Woman Is A Judge COL 66
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation FOX 66
 Code of the Streets UNIV 66
 Beauty for the Asking RKO 66
 Sudden Money PAR 66
 They Asked For It UNIV 66
 The Wate Case GB 66
 Boy Trouble PAR 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'Connor MGM 65
 Secret Service of the Air WAR 65
 Tell No Tales MGM 65
 Conspiracy RKO 65
 They All Come Out MGM 64
 Exile Express UN 64
 Sweepstakes Winner WAR 64
 5,000 Enemies MGM 63
 Night Work PAR 61
 The Kid From Texas MGM 60

Cafe Society PAR 81
 King of the Underworld WAR 81
 Dancing Co-ed MGM 81
 Here I Am A Stranger FOX 80
 Under Pup UNIV 80
 Arizona Wildcat FOX 80
 The Gorilla FOX 80
 I'm From Missouri PAR 79
 The Sun Never Sets UNIV 79
 The Girl Downstairs MGM 79
 Never Say Die PAR 78
 Winter Carnival UA 77
 The Lady's From Kentucky PAR 77
 Prison Without Bars UA 77
 Let Us Live COL 77
 Coast Guard COL 76
 S.000 A Touchdown PAR 75
 The Lady Vanishes FOX 75
 Boy Friend FOX 75
 Indianapolis Speedway WAR 75
 Adventures of Sherlock Holmes FOX 74
 Charlie Chan in Honolulu FOX 74
 Fisherman's Wharf RKO 74
 Mutiny on the Blackhawk UNIV 73
 Rio UNIV 72
 Bridal Suite MGM 72
 The Jones Family in Hollywood FOX 72

I Stole A Million UNIV 71
 The Lady and the Mob COL 71
 The Magnificent Fraud PAR 71
 Back Door To Heaven PAR 70
 King of the Turf UA 70
 One Third of a Nation PAR 70
 Clouds Over Europe COL 70
 Stronger Than Desire MGM 70
 They Shall Have Music UA 70

Whispering Enemies COL 75
 Homicide Bureau COL 71
 Mysterious Mr. Wong MONO 71
 Woman Doctor REP 71
 North of Shanghai COL 71
 Calling All Marines REP 71
 She Married A Cop REP 70
 Hidden Power COL 70
 The Sunset Murder Case GN 70
 Pride of the Navy REP 70
 Tough Kid MONO 70
 Mysterious Miss X REP 70
 Trapped in the Sky COL 70
 Orphan in the Street REP 70

Miracles For Sale MGM 58
 Inspector Hornleigh FOX 54
 This Man Is News PAR 51
 Career RKO 53

Our Leading Citizen PAR 67
 Stolen Life PAR 67
 Hotel Imperial PAR 66
 Zenobia UA 66
 Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64
 Way Down South RKO 64
 Spirit of Culver UNIV 63
 The Flying Irishman RKO 63
 Smiling Along FOX 63
 Climbing High GB 63
 Women in the Wind WAR 62

The Mikado UNIV 77

I Am A Criminal MONO 69
 Fighting Thoroughbreds REP 69
 Gambling Ship UNIV 69
 Convict's Code MONO 69
 Parents On Trial COL 68
 The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew COL 68
 Konga, The Wild Stallion COL 68
 Streets of New York MONO 68
 Inside Information UNIV 68
 I Was A Convict REP 68
 Navy Secrets MONO 68
 Federal Man Hunt REP 68
 Pride of the Bluegrass UNIV 67
 House of Fear UNIV 67
 My Wife's Relatives REP 67
 Long Shot GN 67
 Sabotage REP 67
 Behind Prison Gates COL 66
 Wolf Call MONO 66
 Forged Passport REP 66
 First Offenders COL 66
 Rookie Cop RKO 66
 Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO 66
 Waterfront WAR 66
 Irish Luck MONO 65
 Mickey The Kid REP 65
 The Zero Hour REP 65
 Outside These Walls COL 65
 S. O. S. Tidal Wave REP 65
 Mr. Wong in Chinatown MONO 65
 The Man Who Dared WAR 65
 Mystery Plane MONO 64
 My Son Is A Criminal COL 64
 Code of the Secret Service WAR 64
 Should A Girl Marry? MONO 64
 Everybody's Hobby WAR 63
 Smuggled Cargo REP 63
 Should Husbands Work? REP 63
 Street of Missing Men REP 63
 Star Reporter MONO 63
 Undercover Agent MONO 63
 Boy's Reformatory MONO 63
 Sky Patrol MONO 63
 Panama Lady RKO 62
 Panama Patrol GN 62
 The Girl From Rio MONO 62

Some Like It Hot PAR 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police PAR 69
 Everybody's Baby FOX 69
 No Place To Go WAR 68
 News Is Made At Night FOX 68
 The Family Next Door UNIV 68
 The Saint Strikes Back RKO 68
 Undercover Doctor PAR 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger Island FOX 68
 Adventures of Jane Arden WAR 68
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 Forgotten Woman UNIV 68
 Lone Wolf Spy Hunt COL 67
 Conspiracy RKO 67
 Playing With Dynamite WAR 67
 A Woman Is A Judge COL 66
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation FOX 66
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 Secret Service of the Air WAR 65
 Tell No Tales MGM 65
 Conspiracy RKO 65
 They All Come Out MGM 64
 Exile Express UN 64
 Sweepstakes Winner WAR 64
 5,000 Enemies MGM 63
 Night Work PAR 61
 The Kid From Texas MGM 60

Our Leading Citizen PAR 67
 Stolen Life PAR 67
 Hotel Imperial PAR 66
 Zenobia UA 66
 Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64
 Way Down South RKO 64
 Spirit of Culver UNIV 63
 The Flying Irishman RKO 63
 Smiling Along FOX 63
 Climbing High GB 63
 Women in the Wind WAR 62

The Mikado UNIV 77



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AS

MICKEY MORAN

Management

WM. MORRIS AGENCY, Inc.

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AS

PATSY BARTON

Management

THE ORSATTI AGENCY

"BABES IN ARMS"

Metro  Goldwyn-Mayer

The Box Office
DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 10.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 8, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

“Disputed Passage”
Top Money Picture;
Marx Brothers Strong

SEE PAGE 5

“Drums Along Mohawk”
Solid Money Hit
For Twentieth Century

SEE PAGE 6

Field Men Bring
Exhibitor News
From South and West

SEE PAGE 10-11

●
THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With

"DISPUTED PASSAGE" 115%



Executive Producer
WILLIAM LeBARON



Producer
HARLAN THOMPSON

Novel by
LLOYD C. DOUGLAS

Screenplay
**ANTHONY VEILLER
SHERIDAN GIBNEY**

Film Editor
JAMES SMITH

Photography
WILLIAM C. MELLOR



Director
FRANK BORZAGE

Featured

**KEYE LUKE
JUDITH BARRETT
WILLIAM COLLIER, SR.
GORDON JONES
VICTOR VARCONI
ELISABETH RISDON
BILLY COOK
WILLIAM PAWLEY**



JOHN HOWARD



DOROTHY LAMOUR



AKIM TAMIROFF

DIGEST

TIME OUT FOR SELLING

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

It is difficult to find a ready-to-hand answer as to why theater box offices are decidedly off at this time of the year when they should be doing their most pleasant humming.

And it is a bad dose of medicine to take on top of the castor oil administered by the foreign market situation.

Wishful thinking in anticipation of war orders still remains just "thinking," pending translation into ticket selling.

So we fervently hope that the industry will quickly settle its internal union problems on an around-the-table, give-and-take basis so that the air might be cleared, and our myopic eyes have a better chance of seeing and facing the real problem.

What's the matter with box offices?

* * *

Every picture on the market just now is not a sensational hit, but we think that those whose memories go back over many seasons will agree the general average of available entertainment that is really ENTERTAINMENT is fairly high. Comparable, if not better, than many seasons in your Editor's memory.

Is the competition too tough? From radio, in particular? Or from a wider mass following of sports, both professional and amateur?

If stiff competition is the problem, what are we going to do about it? Do we take it laying down, or have we within us the ability to meet any competition?

Modestly, we venture the thought that the picture business CAN meet competition—and lick it.

But stubbornly, we repeat our frequently expressed opinion, that it will never do so until it cleans its own house.

By means of two steps:

First, take the relationship between distributor and exhibitor out of its present atmosphere of guerilla warfare; second, take the hooley out of Hollywood.

With something accomplished towards those ends, perhaps we can face the enemy—competitive ticket sellers—with that grand old weapon SHOW-MANSHIP.

* * *

It seems almost impossible to conceive of any major industry in the country that exists in such a cat and dog manner as the motion picture.

And it extends into every branch of our work—distributor and theater bickering, circuit chain and independent knifing, production control and creative worker counter-chiseling, it's all dog eat dog, cat eat its tail.

Cannot present conditions prompt us to some steps towards unity? We are all members of the same family.

Then we will get time to get around to that essential—and our greatest strength, if we only exercised it:

SHOWMANSHIP!

* * *

Showmanship such as radio is showing, with the air lanes blanketed by programs and devices to KEEP PEOPLE AT HOME; showmanship such as Darryl Zanuck displayed by finding the correct way to harness radio to ticket selling with his "Drums Along the Mohawk" broadcast.

More accent on entertainment that tempts and teases ticket buyers to leave the fireside; a wet blanket on themes and titles that make it so preferable to sit at home with the radio comic.

More "ROUSING" themes—the sort that made the first great motion picture conversions with "The Birth of a Nation," the type that turned a weak season upside down with "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

Less of the patting-ourselves-on-the-back attitude in Hollywood, and more—even complete—concentration on the primary and fundamental job of luring people from comfortable homes to go out and BUY THEATER TICKETS; to, perchance, again induce them to return to that good old "go to the movies" habit. Which means less activity on the production of things WE like, and bearing down on production of things the common people MIGHT like.

Then, having made an article intended for popular consumption, rather than our own pate-de-foi-gras palate, follow through with concentrated showmanship merchandising, hooraw, ballyhoo, whatever you want to call it—BUT SELL.

Which means less of the urge to cut publicity and exploitation staffs, to trim ad budgets, at the first faint shadow of a crisis. No department store ever pulled itself out of the red by boarding up window displays.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	15 Releases.....	99
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	44 Releases.....	95
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	39 Releases.....	94
4. Paramount	44 Releases.....	87
5. Warner Brothers	43 Releases.....	86
6. RKO-Radio	31 Releases.....	80
7. Universal	31 Releases.....	78
8. Columbia	30 Releases.....	77
9. Republic	20 Releases.....	70
10. Monogram	18 Releases.....	66
11. Grand National	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases.....	65

The Highlighter: GIVES THE ONCE OVER TO WEEK NOT PARTICULARLY EXCITING IN PICTURE NEWS

There is every indication that the turn of the New Year will give the industry new life with a succession of road shows. . . . Already set are Zanuck's "The Blue Bird," with Shirley Temple resplendent in Technicolor, Radio's "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," and—of course—the billion dollar baby, "Gone With the Wind." . . . The Highlighter likes the idea of roadshows coming back into the limelight. . . . The big campaigns, the national ballyhoo, make for increased "motion picture consciousness" that helps all ticket-selling. . . . In The Highlighter's opinion the benefits all along the line far counteract the drawback of delayed revenue from general selling. . . . But it takes a real picture and a real campaign to put a roadshow over for full effect nowadays. . . . We have allowed the public to get out of the habit; we have almost trained them to wait "just a few weeks longer and save a dollar" for the picture to break at the favored circuit house.

IATSE Maneuvering Guilds Into A Ticklish Spot

Wiley Bill Bioff's handling of the request by the producers that the IATSE unions relinquish their recently won 10 per cent wage increase, is rapidly maneuvering the creative guilds—directing, writing, and acting—into a spot. . . . Recently the actors had to call upon the Herculean arms of Bioff to settle one of their own internal squabbles, and he did so, with due thanks expressed. . . . Now Bioff is in a spot to say, "Well, if the producers want us to sit around a table and compromise on a give and take basis, why pick on the technical workers? Why not get enough chairs to let all groups drawing payroll checks sit in at the confab?" . . . All of which sounds reasonable. . . . The Guilds utilize their strength through association with the AFL, when needed, which makes it pretty embarrassing to cross over to the other side of the street when Bioff approaches suggesting a chat. . . . Other reports along the labor front find the studio painters willing to mark time pending a general get-together, while the Film Editors Guild thumbs down a union with the IATSE groups. . . . Having other things on his mind just now, Bioff hasn't brought his whip out for use on the editors.

Is George Schaefer Due For The Last Welles Laugh?

Wonder what truth there is in the underground report that the boys have been snickering prematurely at George Schaefer, prexy of Radio, because of his blanket commitment for heavy production dough to Orson Welles as a one-man army—producer, author, director, and writer. . . . There are those in New York who whisper that heavy private capital is backing Welles, spending every nickle that

4 Features "Going Up"

Was Now

1. Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.....	COL.....	152.....	163
2. Hollywood Cavalcade.....	FOX.....	155.....	158
3. U-Boat 29.....	COL.....	97.....	100
4. Pack Up Your Troubles.....	FOX.....	80.....	82

will be spent, and that the only responsibility canny George is taking is for the distribution—at the usual terms. . . . Sounds reasonable, when one considers the years of film trading on the George Schaefer record. . . . What a box office sound there is in that Hollywood Reporter story that Frank Capra and Robert Riskin are dickering for a Ronald Colman starring appearance as their first independently made picture. . . . Roll out the plush carpet, boys, for the ticket buyers. . . . Monogram reports a modest profit—but a profit—for the first six months of 1939. Ray Johnston and his boys are doing an efficient job—East and West—going their own way on an even keel, and without too much worrying about the bigger fellows and their colossal headaches.

Ballyhoo Booming On The Atlantic Coast Front

The East certainly got its share of showmanship last week, with 20th Century-Fox covering upper New York like a November blizzard for "Drums Along The Mohawk," and Warners turning staid Philadelphia into a county fair carnival for "Elizabeth and Essex." . . . Governors, mayors, sheriffs and plain ordinary cops were a dime a dozen for both stunts, though Zanuck must be reported one up on the Warner freres, since he didn't stop with a single city event, but took in a handful covering the entire Mohawk Valley. . . . Nice publicity break for Towne and Baker in that corking Dionne quintuplet short when Alexander Woolcott presents the youngsters with copies of "Swiss Family Robinson." . . . Louella Parsons embarking on a six week personal appearance tour, accompanied by a group of young stars. . . . Louella has more courage than most column-

8 Features "Going Down"

Was Now

1. The Real Glory.....	UA.....	129.....	115
2. Jamaica Inn.....	PAR.....	112.....	101
3. Eternally Yours.....	UA.....	103.....	100
4. Intermezzo.....	UA.....	98.....	95
5. On Your Toes.....	WAR.....	102.....	87
6. Blackmail.....	MGM.....	91.....	87
7. Angels Face Their Faces.....	WAR.....	83.....	80
8. The Witness Vanishes.....	UNIV.....	77.....	74

ists. . . . Why worry about the headaches of the picture business, when the New York World's Fair can shrug its shoulders nonchalantly while reporting a twenty-three million dollar loss. . . . The rumors tell us that David Butler has a winner in his Kay Kyser picture, "That's right—You're Wrong." . . . Lew Landers, one of the up and coming young directors, returns to the Universal fold to do "Honeymoon Deferred." . . . Norman Foster, no slouch of an actor, who carved himself a niche as a director this past year, winds up his 20th-Fox contract.

Ben Goetz To The Side-Lines Until Health Recovered

Ben Goetz, who set something of an all-time record as a production chief for MGM in Great Britain, guiding three productions through for a 1000% batting average in the Hit League, turned down a tempting offer to take an executive berth at the Culver City plant, preferring to heed the medicos who tell him that he needs a few months rest in the desert to recuperate fully from the operation which laid him low immediately on his return from London. . . . Ben is one of the industry's really capable big shots, and with it all, one of the most popular, so here's rooting for a speedy return to the business desk. . . . You've got to hand it to Earl Hammons for doggedness. . . . He's still plugging away at that job of putting Grand National back in circulation, and he has weathered about everything from bunions to a world war. . . . Sounds like the makings of another Zanuck epic in the purchase by 20th Century-Fox of Zane Grey's last novel, "Western Union." . . . And what a whale of a set-up for exploitation cooperation. . . . Orson Welles has discovered some good things in Hollywood, commissioning Herman Mankiewicz to do several dramatizations for his ether series, which the MGM ace will turn out while recovering from the ether of his recent hospital sojourn. . . . Sam Goldwyn is rolling on location with "The Westerner," next William Wyler subject which shapes up big with Gary Cooper for the marquee. . . . This is the opus formerly known as "The Outlaw," and later "Vinegaroon." . . . Twentieth show a twenty-nine week profit of over three million. . . . Off a bit from the previous period, but no bad, boys and girls, not bad. . . . Dore Schary, one of the screen's top writing craftsmen, and young enough to make safe the prophecy of bigger things to come, renews his contract at MGM. . . . Which shows that with all the talk of retrenchment here and retrenchment there, the boys who have the goods to deliver can still find a

(Continued on Page 5)

The Box Office: REPORTS "DISPUTED PASSAGE" TOP PICTURE WITH MARX BROTHERS ALSO STRONG

PARAMOUNT--I Release

In a period when national box office averages are spotty—very good in certain industrial centers picking up because of war angles, very poor in others, and over the average much below what some good attractions would normally gross, it is interesting to watch what Paramount is doing with "Disputed Passage," a depiction of the Lloyd C. Douglas novel, published with all the ballyhoo background of Cosmopolitan Magazine.

The picture is holding at a healthy average of 115%; doing much better in many spots where its background values are being exploited. It will pick up, for the simple reason that it is an intelligent, sincere picturization of what Douglas fans—you might call them fanatics—expect of their idol.

Credit for this goes to Harlan Thompson, producer, who did not allow "movie" temptations to lure him from giving them Douglas as they want Douglas. Sharing the credit is a straight line directorial job by Frank Borzage, and an increased opportunity for that rapidly growing favorite John Howard, who shares top honors with Dorothy Lamour.

Lloyd Douglas' offerings have a consistent record as box office winners, as witness "Green Light," and "Magnificent Obsession," so this one should continue to hold its own as it travels to subsequent runs; its present rating being remarkably good considering a comparatively reasonable production cost.

MGM--I New Release

MGM also hits in the money making class this week with the new Marx Brothers picture, "AT THE CIRCUS," which on its first openings is doing fairly well at a 112% average. While this is not as strong as many of the former Marx Brothers comedies, still it is satisfactory considering the general off conditions throughout the country today, with the exception of New York, the only location where business has really been good since the opening of the World's Fair.

As there are so many heavy melodramas on the market today, "AT THE CIRCUS" will be a life-saver for many bookers in spots to lighten up the situation. The picture itself rates as one of the most hilarious of the Marx offerings.

FOX--2 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has two new releases this week, neither of which are of any particular importance, as one is just a weak programmer, while the second is an English importation.

Fox's latest programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit is entitled "HEAVEN WITH A BARBED WIRE FENCE," which is just getting by at a 71% average. While this picture

*Of Five New Releases in the Past Week.
Two Rated Over 100%, and Three
Were Below The Mark.*

is quite entertaining, still it is entirely lacking in marquee names, and thus will have to be double billed with a much stronger box office picture.

The featured cast includes Jean Rogers, Raymond Walburn, Marjorie Rambeau, Glen Ford, and Eddie Collins. Ricardo Cortez directed.

IT'S IN THE WORKS!

The Box Office Digest's NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY—the most efficient working tool ever devised for all branches of this industry.

In compact form—with dictionary clarity—all the essential facts that the showman or picture worker needs about every picture currently in circulation.

The box office angles and figures; the reviewer's thoughts. All wrapped up in a handy package.

P.S.: The advertising pages will be working for our friends day in and day out because it is the sort of working tool that will be used day in and day out.

Fox's second release this week is another of the Robert Kane English-made pictures, "SHIPYARD SALLY." Gracie Fields, who is starred, rates as the third most popular box office favorite in England, and yet she has such a small following over here that on its first bookings, "SHIPYARD SALLY" is only averaging around 68%, which is about the same as Gracie's last two pictures released through Fox, "We're Going To Be Rich" and "Smiling Along."

However, this comedy drama of the great Scotch shipyards and docks will probably fill in as satisfactory entertainment on the lower half of the average double bill, particularly in the "nabes" and even more so in sea part towns and cities. Monty Banks, who

5 New Features Not in Last Issue		We Est.
1. Disputed Passage	PAR.....115.....	110
2. At The Circus	MGM.....112.....	115
3. Heaven With Barbed Wire Fence.....	FOX..... 71.....	70
4. Shipyard Sally	FOX..... 68.....	70
5. Everything's On Ice	RKO..... 67.....	65

has been responsible for the Gracie Fields productions of the past two or three years, also directed this one.

RKO--I New Release

Sol Lesser's attempt to give Sonja Henie a little ice skating competition by introducing his new six year old starlet, Irene Dare, has not so far proved very successful, for in her first starring picture, "EVERYTHING'S ON ICE," the figures are exceptionally weak at a 67% average.

In introducing little Irene Dare to stardom, producer Sol Lesser overlooked the two most important essentials. First, a new star should be introduced to the public with a cast of big marquee names to help put her over, and second a terrific national publicity exploitation and advertising campaign is very important, which in this case was definitely absent.

However, as the picture was made on short money, the results may be satisfactory from a box office angle as far as Mr. Lesser is concerned, as he is resigning his RKO releasing set-up and forming a new organization with Ernst Lubitsch, which will produce big "A" attractions for the United Artists program.

Irene Dare is exceptionally clever on skates and has plenty of personality, so much so that if a major producer picked up this young lady's option (in case Mr. Lesser doesn't) she might be built into a fairly big box office name. Jackie Coogan, Shirley Temple, and other child stars made their biggest successes at about her age.

The featured cast is headed by Roscoe Karns, Edgar Kennedy, Lynne Roberts, Eric Linden, and Bobby Watson. Erle C. Kenton directed for Principal Picture—RKO release.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

market place. . . . Flash! Did you see the New York reports that gave the Friday, Saturday business on "Drums Along The Mohawk?" . . . Our word to The Digest office is a powerful bit of testimony as to selling value of that nation-wide broadcast. . . . The picture opened at a top figure around \$9000, something to crow about in any man's picture league. . . . Ordinarily our tables of expectations in the office here would indicate that a hit would move up about \$3000 additional on the Saturday date. Instead, after the broadcast, the picture leap-frogged \$6000. . . . There's a slice of the radio expense back already. . . . Multiply it. . . . Cards coming in from the preview sneaks out of town on "Of Mice and Men" are hot—really hot. . . . Looks as though Roach has a humdinger.

'Drums Along the Mohawk' Set For Big Money

20th CENTURY FOX

(The Digest Estimates 150%)

Exec. Producer... Darryl F. Zanuck
Asso. Producer... Raymond Griffith
Director John Ford
Story by Walter D. Edmonds
Screenplay: Lamar Trotti, Sonya Levien.

Stars: Claudette Colbert, Henry Fonda.

Featured: Edna May Oliver, Eddie Collins, John Carradine, Dorris Bowden, Jessie Ralph, Arthur Shields, Robert Lowery, Roger Imhof, Francis Ford, Ward Bond, Kay Linaker, Russell Simpson, Spencer Charters, Si Jenks, J. Ronald Pennick, Arthur Aylesworth, Chief Big Tree, Charles Tannen, Paul McVey, Elizabeth Jones, Beulah Jones, Clarence Wilson, Lionel Pape, Edwin Maxwell, Robert Greig, Clara Blandick.

Photographer Bert Glennon
Color Photographer: Ray Rennahan.

Music Alfred Newman

Art Director: Richard Ray, Mark Lee.

Film Editor..... Robert Simpson

Time 100 minutes

Give Darryl Zanuck a best-selling novel whose title has been drummed into the ears of many more thousands than ever read novels, have it a novel with a patriotic theme, assign John Ford to the direction, then dress it all in the glories of Technicolor—and the answer should be pretty obvious.

If you need any further assurance about the correctness of the answer, we might add that the picture closes on a shot of the Star Spangled Banner.

"Drums Along the Mohawk" is a showman's job, from conception as a possible picture, to execution by director, writers and players. It may be said that there is no more story than the fact that a bride and bridegroom set out for the wilderness—it was located in upper New York state in those days—and before the last foot of celluloid has unwound, they have fought Indians, more Indians, and quite a few British.

That's the strength of the story. It's simplicity. Plus the class touches in handling, evident on every side. A simple, lowdown story of what might happen to your son, and my daughter, if they left the echoing wedding bells this afternoon, and had to set out unaided into a wilderness, to make a home.

Maybe there could have been more plot; but we do not know

what bigger plot there is than the birth of these United States. That is what the picture has.

We need lose little space on the story, because we have probably told it to you already—the boy and the girl who set out for wide open spaces where a man makes his own home, the things that happen to them, in physical danger from Indian and Tory enemies, in mental danger from conflicting viewpoints.

We have seldom seen a better performance from Claudette Colbert; and we don't expect to see a feminine star who responds so gloriously to the beauties of Technicolor. We regretfully cast a negative vote for Henry Fonda, who may have been what the author and the scripters wanted, but whose part would have helped both box office and audience appeal in more positive hands.

Since we have dropped into parenthetical remarks, we might express our humble opinion that Fonda is still playing the same whining part, picture after picture, and in "Drums Along the Mohawk" is still the younger brother of Jesse James to us.

Edna May Oliver gets the top support in the entirely excellent supporting cast. Beloved Miss Oliver gets a part into which she

can pour all of her skill, and she makes the most of it.

There are a few spots in the middle of the picture where it seems too slow; your reviewer's opinion is that the spots could have been aided if it was not so necessary to let Colbert carry the burden, while the character given Fonda was so negative. (Things happen to him; instead of his making things happen.)

Top treat of a showman's job of picture-making is the Technicolor photography by Ray Rennahan, so a bow to that veteran of the magentas, reds, and what other hues you may have.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Go to town. Be careful of near-hipbrow critics who may tell you it is only "American history." Remember what J. P. Morgan—or was it John D. Rockefeller?—said: "NEVER SELL THE UNITED STATES SHORT." Previewed November 2nd.

'Llano Kid' Combines Music With Western Background

PARAMOUNT

The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer Harry Sherman
Director E. D. Venturini
Screenplay Wanda Tuchock
Based on "Double-Dyed Deceiver

er O. Henry
Star Tito Guizar

Featured: Gale Sondergaard, Alan Mowbray, Jane Clayton, Emma Dunn, Minor Watson, Chris Martin, Carlos de Valdez, Anna Demetrio, Gleen, Tony Roux.

Photographer Russell Harlan
Film Editor..... Sherman A. Rose
Time 69 minutes

Harry Sherman took an O. Henry yarn—and from what source could one find better?—then gave this picture a cast that measures above most major B's and compares with anything any producer could do for the story; Dan Venturini directed it with skill for a combination of music with straight-line western.

It all results as a very satisfactory piece of entertainment. Tito Guizar is the melody; Sherman and Venturini provide what action and chases they can squeeze

in between songs; an humble fellow named O. Henry supplied the story frame-work: Wanda Tuchock made it a script.

We wish they had changed the title, unless they just intended to make it for South America. Right here in Southern California, no less than four persons have asked us in the past week how to pronounce "Llano." What they will do to this title in Brooklyn will be something for Noah Webster's bones to worry about.

To get back to the picture: Tito Guizar is personable, and can sell his songs. (Our "Radio Reporter" tells us that his broadcasts have a solid and loyal support that is not to be ignored.) Troupers with the skill and assured capability of Alan Mowbray and Gale Sondergaard play the next most important parts. Chris Martin, Emma Dunn, and Minor Watson are among others who hold their end up in any budget.

The story? Well, it seems that there was a Mexican Robin Hood

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Drums Along the Mohawk' is a triumph of color and beauty. Rarely, since color came into pictures, has its use had such opportunities as in this production, and 20th-Fox has gone the limit on it. But aside from the color and its great scenic investitures, the picture has little to offer aside from sterling performances by its stars, Claudette Colbert and Henry Fonda, in parts that required every ounce of their abilities and the fine hand of John Ford to make them interesting."

VARIETY: "'Drums Along the Mohawk' is powerfully and vividly dramatic entertainment telling the tale of pioneer American home-making and nation building along the colonial frontier. The story has been put together with masterly craftsmanship, beautifully emblazoned in Technicolor, superbly directed on a keynote of grim reality and sincerity and played with haunting impressiveness. And underpinning these excellent results, spelling smash hit, is production care and showman's care of inspirational calibre by Darryl F. Zanuck and his aides."

CURRENT REVIEWS

		We Est.
1. Drums Along The Mohawk	FOX	150
2. First Love	UNIV	135
3. Remember	MGM	110
4. Blondie Brings Up Baby	COL	80
5. The Llano Kid	PAR	75

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER. "As a picture, 'The Llano Kid' itself is no great shakes. The story is good and has an excellent twist, but both script and direction are stodgily uninspired."

VARIETY: "'Founded on O. Henry's 'Double-Dyed Deceiver,' and given the added benefit of songs by Tito Guizar, 'The Llano Kid' reaches screen as an entertaining programmer."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

HARLAN
THOMPSON

Producer

Now in Production

"Road To Singapore"



"DISPUTED PASSAGE"

'First Love' Again Presents Deanna Durbin In Hit

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer Joe Pasternak
 Director Henry Koster
 Screenplay: Bruce Manning, Lionel Houser.
 Star Deanna Durbin
 Featured: Robert Stack, Helen Parrish, Eugene Palette, Lewis Howard, Leatrice Joy, June Storey, Frank Jenks, Kathleen Howard, Thurston Hall, Marcia Mae Jones, Samuel S. Hinds, Doris Lloyd, Charles Coleman, Jack Mulhall, Mary Treen, Dorothy Vaughan, Lucille Ward.
 Photographer Joseph Valentine
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Film Editor Bernard Burton
 Time 84 minutes

Straight, unadulterated, and even accented Cinderella. "First Love" takes rank with the best of the Deanna Durbin pictures, and continues that remarkable young lady's consistent record of successes. Joe Pasternak, her screen god-father, and producer of all her pictures, maintains that sensational thousand per cent batting average.

As indicated by its title, "First Love" marks a step into near-maturity for Deanna. But it is a gentle step, and a sweet one, there is no shock. Deanna's first "serious" romance is played opposite a very pleasing, and wholesome, newcomer, Robert Stack; it is guided, directed, written and played by people who know their Cinderella-lovers. In shorter phrases, Deanna takes the important hurdle in stride, all her aides are really aides.

Bruce Manning, associated with so many Durbin successes, and this time teamed with Lionel Houser, unblushingly give us Cinderella—even to the slipper—and then writes it with such charm that the world seems better as you emerge from the theater. Deanna is an orphan—maybe you guessed that—and on her graduation from one of those finishing schools, takes up residence at the home of the wealthy uncle who has absent-mindedly financed her education.

Eugene Palette is the uncle, seen in a repressed snort and grunt part that is one of the best jobs he has done. Leatrice Joy—what a treat to see her again—is Palette's flibberty-gibbet wife. Helen Parrish, a "Cinderella-sister" old meanie, and Louis Howard a very effective Greek chorus who is so indolent he can hardly move his left leg to get out of the way of his right appendage.

Robert Stack enters the scene. Oh, it is all so simple that we should not bother repeating it, we suppose. But it is all so delight-

ful that a reviewer just feels tempted to go on. To wind it up quickly, we will tell you that Cinderella—pardon, Deanna—views her love from afar, falls heavily, goes through misunderstandings, and eventually gets her man—er, pardon again, we mean her Prince Charming.

We have given an indication of our liking for the cast supporting the star, we can conclude with a word for veteran Joe Valentine, who handled the photography. Valentine, who has consistently scored with his handling of the star, had no easy task, because Deanna is growing day by day, and no pre-conceived plans of lighting and angle-selection will work from one picture to the next.

'Remember?' More Entertaining Than Title Suggests

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Producer Milton Bren
 Director Norman McLeod
 Story and screenplay: Corey Ford, Norman McLeod.
 Stars: Robert Taylor, Greer Garson, Lew Ayres.
 Featured: Billie Burke, Reginald Owen, George Barbier, Henry Travers, Richard Carle, Laura Hope Crews, Sara Haden, Sig Rumann, Halliwell Hobbes, Paul Hurst.
 Photographer George Folsay
 Musical Score Edward Ward
 Film Editor Harold Kress
 Time 82 minutes

The sappy title is going to hurt the box office draw of this picture, which is a shame, because it is a prize package of entertainment. The critics may hurt it too, because it is too healthily on the zany side for the fellows who think in terms of anything but audience values.

The title you cannot help; and forget the highbrow critics. "Remember?" kept a preview audience laughing its head off while the critics griped; it will do the same for you. Sell the stars, and Leo the Lion; sell anything, but give your audiences a chance to see and hear it.

Norman McLeod, who brought "Topper" to the screen, together with his producer chief, Milton Bren, have again given us laughs. That's what we need in these days. Robert Taylor, playing with elastic freedom in a light part, does one of the smoothest jobs of his career. Lew Ayres is his usual personable self. Greer Garson, who scored for American audiences in "Goodbye, Mr. Chips,"

proves herself a comedienne of ability. The gal cannot be blamed for the foolish profile angles that are injurious, nor for introductory scenes in a make-up that is far from pleasant. Some of the critics harp on the phrase that Miss Garson was miscast; your reviewers' sole query is whether they expect a talented artiste to go on playing Mrs. Chips for the rest of her life.

Suffice it to say, that the photography gives us a new, but just as sweet, Deanna. The song numbers given the star are on the classical and semi-classical side, in keeping with the taste of the production, and delivered by Miss Durbin as one might expect. There was no legitimate spot for a "pop" number, so wiley Joe Pasternak did not attempt to make one. Jack Otterson's art direction gives the picture a glittering atmosphere of quality.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Joyous entertainment that will safely hit your standard figures on Deanna Durbin. Previewed October 31st.

The story is slow in getting under way, to establish a basis for farce hilarity that builds the later reels up to high points. Starting out as a typical triangle yarn, with Lew Ayres losing his fiancée to his best friend, Robert Taylor, on the eve of his own wedding, the note of originality comes in a reverse triangle twist. Instead of becoming the embittered wrong corner of the triangle, Ayres remains the sardonic best friend, and when he sees the Taylor-Gar-

son marriage going on the rocks, puts to work a chemical discovery that destroys all memory of recent happenings. Thus, for the second half of the picture, Taylor and Miss Garson go through a fantastic reiteration of their original love scenes, their elopement, etc., with farce complications galore growing out of the fact that, though they don't know it, they have actually been married for six months.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The parade of Joe Pasternak, Henry Koster and Deanna Durbin continues its onward march, further and further up the ladder of entertainment, striking pay dirt for Universal and the picture business with each step. Certainly a winning combination in all its pictures, which now include 'First Love'."

VARIETY: "For the sixth successive time Deanna Durbin and the creative talents which shape her film destiny click with a smash piece of money entertainment. And 'First Love' is probably the most crucial of all the vehicles this brilliant Universal singing star has graced in that it marks the transition from the adolescent state to that of young womanhood involved in a first semi-grownup heart affair."

Support is excellent, with troupers who responded nobly to Norman McLeod's skill at building up and timing the topper on gags. Billie Burke gets the stand-out opportunity in the support, with McLeod taming her ebullience to a bit more repression than usual—and welcome it is.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: With that title, you will have to

(Continued on Page 11)

Latest 'Blondie' Maintains Pace of Series

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Robert Sparks
 Director Frank Strayer
 Based upon Chic Young's comic strip.
 Screenplay: Gladys Lehman, Richard Flournoy.
 Story: Robert Chapin, Karen De Wolf, Richard Flournoy.
 Stars: Penny Singleton, Arthur Lake, Larry Simms, Daisy.
 Featured: Danny Mummert, Jonathan Hale, Robert Middlemass, Olin Howard, Fay Helm, Peggy Ann Garner, Roy Gordon, Grace

Stafford, Helen Jerome Eddy, Irving Bacon.

Photographer Henry Freulich
 Music Director M. W. Stoloff
 Film Editor Otto Meyer
 Time 67 minutes

Columbia is well into its stride with this "Blondie" series, with the result that "Blondie Brings Up Baby" rates as top hole entertainment. Many will list it as the best of the series, because the blend of legitimacy in story and

(Continued on Page 10)

KATE SMITH'S SPECIAL PROGRAM "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK" TOPS RADIO WEEK

Kate Smith and "Drums" A Great Combination

Kate Smith's cross-country jaunt for a special "Drums Along the Mohawk" broadcast grabbed plenty of newspaper space, then the program came through like a million dollars to back up the anticipation. . . . Showmanship sparkled in the set-up arranged by producer Bill Bacher and in all the personalities presented. . . . Kate Smith we can take for granted—and she was at her best. . . . But the highlight was the intelligent presentation of the brief "Drums of the Mohawk" story. . . . It was a good job of radio writing in its combination of actual dialogue from the picture script and effective "bridges" to span the time jumps. . . . Claudette Colbert can emote for our money on the screen or from the loud speaker. . . . Ted Collins has acquired a neat smoothness of delivery, welcome in contrast to so many announcers who seem to be laboring so hard THE RADIO REPORTER feels sorry for them.

Edward Arnold Clicks In "Good News" M.C. Spot

Edward Arnold, taking over at the Master of Ceremonies post on the Good News program, got off to a fine start, and also held his end up in the playlet with the chief "Dead Ender," Billy Halop. . . . Fannie Brice continues to be the sparkplug of this air period, and the producers know it, for she bounces in and out and back again every other minute. . . . Connie Boswell's one song was effective. . . . Meredith Wilson came up with some of his fine arrangements to hold up the musical side. . . . The commercials were of average length, on the edge of being too long, but Warren Hull has a delivery that sugar coats this fact. . . . Here is one actor who should not have been allowed to get away from the movies. . . . Sig Romberg's "American Humoresque" was introduced at last week's show and proved to have all the expected Romberg quality.

Hokey "Silver Screen" Play Saved By John Garfield

The Silver Screen show is into a play that will be in the "continued next week" class. . . . It's a bit on the hokey side, but is

saved by John Garfield, who has the quality of selling the same personality over the air that radio listeners expect to hear from their acquaintance with him on the screen. . . . Conrad Nagle capably handles the commercials, which get high ranking for commercials also on the point of quality and unobtrusiveness.

Grouch Club Hits A New High With Sparks In Stride

It may be only the one man opinion of your RADIO REPORTER, but he feels that last week's Grouch Club program hit the high mark for that unit. . . . Ned Sparks is firmly in his stride now, and the material was above average. . . . And a special orchid for the revamping of the commercial side.

to general satisfaction, with many moments that sparkle. . . . But for a couple of weeks the structure has been such that the playlet allows a let-down at just the wrong time—the finish. . . . After a bubbling three quarters this gives the general impression that all concerned have grown weary as a result of their own exuberance. . . . Jack's program also suffers for home consumption by an excess of the studio audience laughs that always seem most hilarious just at the moments most mystifying to the sit-by-the-firesides.

Mortimer Snerd Competition Peps Up Little Charlie

Bringing in Mortimer Snerd gave Edgar Bergen an opportu-

good craftsman can do with just two characters, "homey" stuff, and two good troupers.

Orson Welles Makes Real Drama of "Hurricane"

What a real showman can do with material was evident in the Orson Welles presentation of "Hurricane." . . . On the screen the latter vehicle was a straight line one-two-three story, made big by John Ford direction, and the rip-roaring climax. . . . But nothing over-heavy in plot. . . . For radio, Welles wasn't satisfied to place all reliance on such a slender thread, and vitamed it into a top-hole drama. . . . His own performance in the Raymond Massey part helped, while Mary Astor stepped gracefully from screen to studio.

Mark Hellinger Gives Lift To Bing Crosby Period

One would think that Bing Crosby's shows were casting for a while, judging by last week's effort, were it not for the fact that the earnest showman Bing Crosby never coasts with his public. . . . Maybe it was just an off-night. . . . However, there was one bright spot, the clear-cut delivery of Mark Hellinger who came aboard the Kraft train to a discussion about the hectic days covered by his story "The Roaring Twenties." . . . Hellinger can stand return engagements on the air. . . . The Charlies Butterworth-Crosby routine suffered due to the material. . . . Joan Bennett is just as cold on the lanes as on the screen. . . . The gal always seems so-o-o tired.

Odds and Ends Of The Week's Shows

THE RADIO REPORTER got crossed up with flu on the day of the last Bob Hope broadcast so he will have to wait a week to catch up with that bubbling personality. . . . George Fischer's Saturday night intimacies are catching on and should build a following, but he is running in tough luck in a news way because recent weeks just haven't been presenting the right blurbs.

The Radio Reporter

Thanks the many in pictures and radio who welcomed his debut in *The Digest* last week . . .

And particularly the many who came through with constructive suggestions to increase the department's interest.

Frankly . . . THE RADIO REPORTER is not yet set on a permanent style of presentation, so he is wide open for your ideas.

And he will be grateful.

which made it easy to take, and therefore most likely more beneficial to the sponsor.

Screen Guild Show Has Good Playlet

With James Stewart, Edward Arnold and Loretta Young doing the trouping the Screen Guild session presented a playlet, "Going My Way," that was a good job of ether-writing craftsmanship. . . . Good performances helped, too, of course. . . . Stewart and Arnold were tops, as was to be expected, and the pleasant surprise is the development of Loretta Young's air personality. . . . The gal registers. . . . THE RADIO REPORTER still rates the commercials on this program among the models.

Jack Benny Program Needs Build Up To Climax

Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone continue to carry their show

ity to freshen up his material with new slants, and the threatened competition also apparently frightened Charlie McCarthy, for the latter's brief appearance was above par. . . . Last week's show marked the bow-out of Nelson Eddy after his long service in the cause of coffee. . . . And, incidentally, Eddy's farewell engagement showed him working with greater ease in the master of ceremonies part than in previous weeks. . . . Report has it that the high Eddy stipend was the reason prompting plans to revamp the show. . . . Though it is not likely that Rudy Vallee comes any too cheaply. . . . Funny angle, though, will probably find Rudy Vallee getting less money per show than his protege and discovery, Charlie McCarthy. . . . But at any rate the family will be together again for a while. . . . Jackie Cooper and Gene Lockhart put over a playlet like the troupers they are, and the playlet itself was the highlight in radio writing. . . . It proved what a

Exhibitors In the Carolinas Living In Paradise Free From Internal Bickering Says Maurice Ridge



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Charlotte, N. C., November 3.—There is a Santa Claus—there is a film man's paradise—there are church going exhibitors and there is a place in this cockeyed industry where "Peace On Earth, Good Will Toward Men" abounds, and everybody is happy. "Believe It Or Not." It's in the Charlotte, North Carolina film territory.

This is the South. Chivalry is still rampant. The inhabitants are folks. Existing for the joy of living supercedes quest for gold. This is Saturday. Football is king. Charlotte is as devoid of people as Paris in an air raid. They are all at the Duke-Georgia Tech game at Atlanta. Every exhibitor, film man, even district managers, who could get a ducat is there. This is the way they go about things down here.

Mike Kinsey, who is the Publix partner, is as popular with the independents as Charley McCarthy is with the kids of the country. Mike is at the head of about a hundred theatres in the Carolinas. Your investigator has talked to every exchange manager in Charlotte and scores of independent exhibitors, the head of the M.P.T. O.A. (no Allied here), and nary a word inimical to the chain operation could be found. No oppression from the big boys is in evidence. It's the only spot between here and the Pacific ocean where this condition apparently exists.

Carolina Twin Organizations Really On The Job

And these exhibitors have an organization down here that is a humdinger. They all belong, that is about 90 percent of them, including Mike Kinsey, who is on the board, but with only a minority vote. They will soon meet for the next meeting, the first week

in December. Three days of it, and there are a number of knotty problems coming up. But they expect to settle them in their own way, without leaving acrimony in the wake of their get-together. It's one for all and all for one. They know now who the new president is going to be. There is a reason for this man's ascendancy. South Carolina has some inimical legislation coming up. The boys more numerous up here in North Carolina know this. A prexy from down there will have more weight in the state of John C. Calhoun, than their neighbor. The boys here are going to his support, and en masse.

Double billing is as scarce in this section as carpet baggers. Give-aways, bank nite, cash nites, dishes and other free inducements just don't exist. They run shows for entertainment, and the people are satisfied with them. Few Sunday shows in North Carolina, but none in South Carolina. However, there is a movement on here in Charlotte, to get a modified Sunday opening. Tom Little, who is of noted political prestige here, at the head of a small up state chain, although having no theatres in this city of Charlotte is leading the fight for Sunday opening here. It will benefit the Publix-Kinsey owned theatres; but he is helping. That is this section in action.

An evidence of how well they work together down here is found in the fact that Charley Piquet of Pinehurst, was 17 years the prexy of their group. Now they change every year, alternating between North and South Carolina. Of course everybody in organization work in the United States knows Charley Piquet.

When we inquired how they get along so well together, the folks all were amazed to understand why exhibitors and exchange men all over the country did not do likewise. The only reply we could think of was to suggest that greed, selfishness and a lack of understanding, as well as a lack of real neighborliness, such as is so apparent down South might be some of the reasons.

In confidence, one exchange manager showed the writer his contract register, on this year's new business. EVERY ONE OF THE CONTRACTS WERE THE SAME. That is, the same number

of pictures on top percentage. The same number of the lower bracket percentage, and the same number of flat rentals. "We have taken the racket out of our business," was all this branch manager would say. Maybe this is one of the reasons there is so much unanimity of opinion, operation, and confidence among this industry's representatives down Carolina way.

West Virginia Exhibitor Socked On Bank Nite Ruling

Bluefield, W. Va., Nov. 1st.—These old boys down here in West Virginia, around Williamson, where the Hatfield-McCoy clansmen fought it out for a decade across the Tug River, don't fool when they go to bank nite, or rather when they register for it. Recently one of these mountaineers signed on the dotted line, and received his number, hoping to draw down the thousand dollars that the exhibitor hung up. He did not go every time, but on one occasion, when he had to tend to the duties on the farm, his number was called. Of course under the rules of the drawing, he was just out of luck.

'Blondie' Maintains Pace of Series

(Continued from Page 8)

laugh value in hokum gags is exceptionally well handled. Producer Robert Sparks and director Frank Strayer are well into a well oiled groove, with able assistance from the writers assembled—in quantity.

Good old family audience hokum is the springboard for the plot—the decision to send Baby Dumplings off to school. You can see the natural opportunities in that premise and you are only guessing half of the many the script writers have devised. Baby Dumpling gets his first black eye, loses the inimitable canine, Daisy, to the dog catchers, becomes a Santa Claus miracle worker to a crippled girl who has ransomed Daisy from the city pound. Meanwhile, and in the midst of all the hectic problems, the plot causes Dagwood to lose his job, and then succeeds in getting it back for him.

Arthur Lake and Penny Singleton, who seem to have been born to play the characters of Dagwood and Blondie created by Chick

He didn't think so. Got a lawyer and went to law about it. Claimed the pot of gold. The jury agreed with him, and the theatre had to pay double that night. It's now a court record in West Virginia. The boys who have large bank nites, so they can take in enough to pay their weekly film rentals at these advanced war time prices, are now doing a West Virginia interpretation of the jitterbug, big apple and other contortions of the terpsichore.

If this court record stands in West Virginia, when the exhibitor takes it to the court of last resort, there will be helltopay in that state where bank nite flourishes like cactus on the desert. Other leading exhibitors are now conferring with the losing folks in Williamson over the best way to solve this problem.

One exhibitor in this state told the writer that he frequently takes in \$1500.00 on bank nite. His carry-overs frequently run up to \$3000.00. "At least these radio programs down here in these mountains are not going to 'whup' me," he thundered when discussing how to extract quarters from the coal miners in his section.

Young, turn in fine jobs, and of course the tyke, Larry Simms, and his pal, Danny Mummert, can not be neglected for mention.

Frank Strayer's direction takes full advantage of the comic strip license allowed by the subject, gives the picture its veneer of legitimacy, and keeps it moving. That last—the pace—is what makes it entertainment.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Corking family fare. Okay for the top spot where the series has followers, a life-saver for the balancing spot with many a program. Previewed November 3rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Columbia's 'Blondie Brings Up Baby' keeps up the standard set by Producer Robert Sparks in his previous 'Blondie' pictures, and will continue to please the followers of Chic Young's cartoon characters."

VARIETY: "Assuming entertainment quality beyond the scope of those contained in its predecessors, 'Blondie Brings Up Baby' is far and away the best edition of the Columbia group. Intermingling human element with its comedy, is a programmer that will delight the family trade."

The Box Office
DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 10.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 8, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

“Disputed Passage”
Top Money Picture;
Marx Brothers Strong

SEE PAGE 5

“Drums Along Mohawk”
Solid Money Hit
For Twentieth Century

SEE PAGE 6

Field Men Bring
Exhibitor News
From South and West

SEE PAGE 10-11

●
THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED
●

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With
"DISPUTED PASSAGE" 115%



Executive Producer
WILLIAM LeBARON



Producer
HARLAN THOMPSON

Novel by
LLOYD C. DOUGLAS

Screenplay
**ANTHONY VEILLER
SHERIDAN GIBNEY**

Film Editor
JAMES SMITH

Photography
WILLIAM C. MELLOR



Director
FRANK BORZAGE

Featured

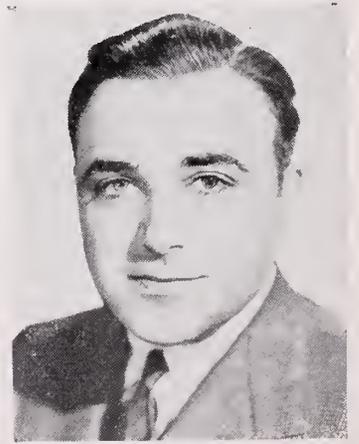
**KEYE LUKE
JUDITH BARRETT
WILLIAM COLLIER, SR.
GORDON JONES
VICTOR VARCONI
ELISABETH RISDON
BILLY COOK
WILLIAM PAWLEY**



JOHN HOWARD



DOROTHY LAMOUR



AKIM TAMIROFF

TIME OUT FOR SELLING

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

It is difficult to find a ready-to-hand answer as to why theater box offices are decidedly off at this time of the year when they should be doing their most pleasant humming.

And it is a bad dose of medicine to take on top of the castor oil administered by the foreign market situation.

Wishful thinking in anticipation of war orders still remains just "thinking," pending translation into ticket selling.

So we fervently hope that the industry will quickly settle its internal union problems on an around-the-table, give-and-take basis so that the air might be cleared, and our myopic eyes have a better chance of seeing and facing the real problem.

What's the matter with box offices?

* * *

Every picture on the market just now is not a sensational hit, but we think that those whose memories go back over many seasons will agree the general average of available entertainment that is really ENTERTAINMENT is fairly high. Comparable, if not better, than many seasons in your Editor's memory.

Is the competition too tough? From radio, in particular? Or from a wider mass following of sports, both professional and amateur?

If stiff competition is the problem, what are we going to do about it? Do we take it laying down, or have we within us the ability to meet any competition?

Modestly, we venture the thought that the picture business CAN meet competition—and lick it.

But stubbornly, we repeat our frequently expressed opinion, that it will never do so until it cleans its own house.

By means of two steps:

First, take the relationship between distributor and exhibitor out of its present atmosphere of guerilla warfare; second, take the hooy out of Hollywood.

With something accomplished towards those ends, perhaps we can face the enemy—competitive ticket sellers—with that grand old weapon SHOW-MANSHIP.

* * *

It seems almost impossible to conceive of any major industry in the country that exists in such a cat and dog manner as the motion picture.

And it extends into every branch of our work—distributor and theater bickering, circuit chain and independent knifing, production control and creative worker counter-chiseling, it's all dog eat dog, cat eat its tail.

Cannot present conditions prompt us to some steps towards unity? We are all members of the same family.

Then we will get time to get around to that essential—and our greatest strength, if we only exercised it:

SHOWMANSHIP!

* * *

Showmanship such as radio is showing, with the air lanes blanketed by programs and devices to KEEP PEOPLE AT HOME; showmanship such as Darryl Zanuck displayed by finding the correct way to harness radio to ticket selling with his "Drums Along the Mohawk" broadcast.

More accent on entertainment that tempts and teases ticket buyers to leave the fireside; a wet blanket on themes and titles that make it so preferable to sit at home with the radio comic.

More "ROUSING" themes—the sort that made the first great motion picture conversions with "The Birth of a Nation," the type that turned a weak season upside down with "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

Less of the patting-ourselves-on-the-back attitude in Hollywood, and more—even complete—concentration on the primary and fundamental job of luring people from comfortable homes to go out and BUY THEATER TICKETS; to, perchance, again induce them to return to that good old "go to the movies" habit. Which means less activity on the production of things WE like, and bearing down on production of things the common people MIGHT like.

Then, having made an article intended for popular consumption, rather than our own pate-de-foi-gras palate, follow through with concentrated showmanship merchandising, hooraw, ballyhoo, whatever you want to call it—BUT SELL.

Which means less of the urge to cut publicity and exploitation staffs, to trim ad budgets, at the first faint shadow of a crisis. No department store ever pulled itself out of the red by boarding up window displays.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	15 Releases	99
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	44 Releases	95
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	39 Releases	91
4. Paramount	44 Releases	87
5. Warner Brothers	43 Releases	86
6. RKO-Radio	31 Releases	80
7. Universal	31 Releases	78
8. Columbia	30 Releases	77
9. Republic	20 Releases	70
10. Monogram	18 Releases	66
11. Grand National	4 Releases	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases	65

The Highlighter: GIVES THE ONCE OVER TO WEEK NOT PARTICULARLY EXCITING IN PICTURE NEWS

There is every indication that the turn of the New Year will give the industry new life with a succession of road shows. . . . Already set are Zanuck's "The Blue Bird," with Shirley Temple resplendent in Technicolor, Radio's "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," and—of course—the billion dollar baby, "Gone With the Wind." . . . The Highlighter likes the idea of roadshows coming back into the limelight. . . . The big campaigns, the national ballyhoo, make for increased "motion picture consciousness" that helps all ticket-selling. . . . In The Highlighter's opinion the benefits all along the line far counteract the drawback of delayed revenue from general selling. . . . But it takes a real picture and a real campaign to put a roadshow over for full effect nowadays. . . . We have allowed the public to get out of the habit; we have almost trained them to wait "just a few weeks longer and save a dollar" for the picture to break at the favored circuit house.

IATSE Maneuvering Guilds Into A Ticklish Spot

Wiley Bill Bioff's handling of the request by the producers that the IATSE unions relinquish their recently won 10 per cent wage increase, is rapidly maneuvering the creative guilds—directing, writing, and acting—into a spot. . . . Recently the actors had to call upon the Herculean arms of Bioff to settle one of their own internal squabbles, and he did so, with due thanks expressed. . . . Now Bioff is in a spot to say, "Well, if the producers want us to sit around a table and compromise on a give and take basis, why pick on the technical workers? Why not get enough chairs to let all groups drawing payroll checks sit in at the confab?" . . . All of which sounds reasonable. . . . The Guilds utilize their strength through association with the AFL, when needed, which makes it pretty embarrassing to cross over to the other side of the street when Bioff approaches suggesting a chat. . . . Other reports along the labor front find the studio painters willing to mark time pending a general get-together, while the Film Editors Guild thumbs down a union with the IATSE groups. . . . Having other things on his mind just now, Bioff hasn't brought his whip out for use on the editors.

Is George Schaefer Due For The Last Welles Laugh?

Wonder what truth there is in the underground report that the boys have been snickering prematurely at George Schaefer, prexy of Radio, because of his blanket commitment for heavy production dough to Orson Welles as a one-man army—producer, author, director, and writer. . . . There are those in New York who whisper that heavy private capital is backing Welles, spending every nickle that

4 Features "Going Up"

Was Now

1. Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.....	COL.	152	163
2. Hollywood Cavalcade.....	FOX	155	158
3. U-Boat 29.....	COL.	97	100
4. Pack Up Your Troubles.....	FOX	80	82

will be spent, and that the only responsibility canny George is taking is for the distribution—at the usual terms. . . . Sounds reasonable, when one considers the years of film trading on the George Schaefer record. . . . What a box office sound there is in that Hollywood Reporter story that Frank Capra and Robert Riskin are dickering for a Ronald Colman starring appearance as their first independently made picture. . . . Roll out the plush carpet, boys, for the ticket buyers. . . . Monogram reports a modest profit—but a profit—for the first six months of 1939. Ray Johnston and his boys are doing an efficient job—East and West—going their own way on an even keel, and without too much worrying about the bigger fellows and their colossal headaches.

Ballyhoo Booming On The Atlantic Coast Front

The East certainly got its share of showmanship last week, with 20th Century-Fox covering upper New York like a November blizzard for "Drums Along The Mohawk," and Warners turning staid Philadelphia into a county fair carnival for "Elizabeth and Essex." . . . Governors, mayors, sheriffs and plain ordinary cops were a dime a dozen for both stunts, though Zanuck must be reported one up on the Warner freres, since he didn't stop with a single city event, but took in a handful covering the entire Mohawk Valley. . . . Nice publicity break for Towne and Baker in that corking Dionne quintuplet short when Alexander Woolcott presents the youngsters with copies of "Swiss Family Robinson." . . . Louella Parsons embarking on a six week personal appearance tour, accompanied by a group of young stars. . . . Louella has more courage than most column-

8 Features "Going Down"

Was Now

1. The Real Glory.....	UA	129	115
2. Jamaica Inn.....	PAR	112	101
3. Eternally Yours.....	UA	103	100
4. Intermezzo.....	UA	98	95
5. On Your Toes.....	WAR	102	87
6. Blackmail.....	MGM	91	87
7. Angels Face Their Faces.....	WAR	83	80
8. The Witness Vanishes.....	UNIV	77	74

ists. . . . Why worry about the headaches of the picture business, when the New York World's Fair can shrug its shoulders nonchalantly while reporting a twenty-three million dollar loss. . . . The rumors tell us that David Butler has a winner in his Kay Kyser picture, "That's right—You're Wrong." . . . Lew Landers, one of the up and coming young directors, returns to the Universal fold to do "Honeymoon Deferred." . . . Norman Foster, no slouch of an actor, who carved himself a niche as a director this past year, winds up his 20th-Fox contract.

Ben Goetz To The Side-Lines Until Health Recovered

Ben Goetz, who set something of an all-time record as a production chief for MGM in Great Britain, guiding three productions through for a 1000% batting average in the Hit League, turned down a tempting offer to take an executive berth at the Culver City plant, preferring to heed the medicos who tell him that he needs a few months rest in the desert to recuperate fully from the operation which laid him low immediately on his return from London. . . . Ben is one of the industry's really capable big shots, and with it all, one of the most popular, so here's rooting for a speedy return to the business desk. . . . You've got to hand it to Earl Hammons for doggedness. . . . He's still plugging away at that job of putting Grand National back in circulation, and he has weathered about everything from bunions to a world war. . . . Sounds like the makings of another Zanuck epic in the purchase by 20th Century-Fox of Zane Grey's last novel, "Western Union." . . . And what a whale of a set-up for exploitation cooperation. . . . Orson Welles has discovered some good things in Hollywood, commissioning Herman Mankiewicz to do several dramatizations for his ether series, which the MGM ace will turn out while recovering from the ether of his recent hospital sojourn. . . . Sam Goldwyn is rolling on location with "The Westerner," next William Wyler subject which shapes up big with Gary Cooper for the marquee. . . . This is the opus formerly known as "The Outlaw," and later "Vinegaroon." . . . Twentieth show a twenty-nine week profit of over three million. . . . Off a bit from the previous period, but no bad, boys and girls, not bad. . . . Dore Schary, one of the screen's top writing craftsmen, and young enough to make safe the prophecy of bigger things to come, renews his contract at MGM. . . . Which shows that with all the talk of retrenchment here and retrenchment there, the boys who have the goods to deliver can still find a
(Continued on Page 5)

The Box Office: REPORTS "DISPUTED PASSAGE" TOP PICTURE WITH MARX BROTHERS ALSO STRONG

PARAMOUNT--I Release

In a period when national box office averages are spotty—very good in certain industrial centers picking up because of war angles, very poor in others, and over the average much below what some good attractions would normally gross, it is interesting to watch what Paramount is doing with "Disputed Passage," a depiction of the Lloyd C. Douglas novel, published with all the ballyhoo background of Cosmopolitan Magazine.

The picture is holding at a healthy average of 115%; doing much better in many spots where its background values are being exploited. It will pick up, for the simple reason that it is an intelligent, sincere picturization of what Douglas fans—you might call them fanatics—expect of their idol.

Credit for this goes to Harlan Thompson, producer, who did not allow 'movie' temptations to lure him from giving them Douglas as they want Douglas. Sharing the credit is a straight line directorial job by Frank Borzage, and an increased opportunity for that rapidly growing favorite John Howard, who shares top honors with Dorothy Lamour.

Lloyd Douglas' offerings have a consistent record as box office winners, as witness "Green Light," and "Magnificent Obsession," so this one should continue to hold its own as it travels to subsequent runs; its present rating being remarkably good considering a comparatively reasonable production cost.

MGM--I New Release

MGM also hits in the money making class this week with the new Marx Brothers picture, "AT THE CIRCUS," which on its first openings is doing fairly well at a 112% average. While this is not as strong as many of the former Marx Brothers comedies, still it is satisfactory considering the general off conditions throughout the country today, with the exception of New York, the only location where business has really been good since the opening of the World's Fair.

As there are so many heavy melodramas on the market today, "AT THE CIRCUS" will be a life-saver for many bookers in spots to lighten up the situation. The picture itself rates as one of the most hilarious of the Marx offerings.

FOX--2 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has two new releases this week, neither of which are of any particular importance, as one is just a weak programmer, while the second is an English importation.

Fox's latest programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit is entitled "HEAVEN WITH A BARBED WIRE FENCE," which is just getting by at a 71% average. While this picture

*Of Five New Releases in the Past Week,
Two Rated Over 100%, and Three
Were Below The Mark.*

is quite entertaining, still it is entirely lacking in marquee names, and thus will have to be double billed with a much stronger box office picture.

The featured cast includes Jean Rogers, Raymond Walburn, Marjorie Rambeau, Glen Ford, and Eddie Collins. Ricardo Cortez directed.

IT'S IN THE WORKS!

The Box Office Digest's **NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY**—the most efficient working tool ever devised for all branches of this industry.

In compact form—with dictionary clarity—all the essential facts that the showman or picture worker needs about every picture currently in circulation.

The box office angles and figures; the reviewer's thoughts. All wrapped up in a handy package.

P.S.: The advertising pages will be working for our friends day in and day out because it is the sort of working tool that will be used day in and day out.

Fox's second release this week is another of the Robert Kane English-made pictures, "SHIPYARD SALLY." Gracie Fields, who is starred, rates as the third most popular box office favorite in England, and yet she has such a small following over here that on its first bookings, "SHIPYARD SALLY" is only averaging around 68%, which is about the same as Gracie's last two pictures released through Fox, "We're Going To Be Rich" and "Smiling Along."

However, this comedy drama of the great Scotch shipyards and docks will probably fill in as satisfactory entertainment on the lower half of the average double bill, particularly in the "nabes" and even more so in sea part towns and cities. Monty Banks, who

5 New Features Not in Last Issue		We Est.
1. Disputed Passage	PAR	115 110
2. At The Circus	MGM	112 115
3. Heaven With Barber Wire Fence	FOX	71 70
4. Shipyard Sally	FOX	68 70
5. Everything's On Ice	RKO	67 65

has been responsible for the Gracie Fields productions of the past two or three years, also directed this one.

RKO--I New Release

Sol Lesser's attempt to give Sonja Henie a little ice skating competition by introducing his new six year old starlet, Irene Dare, has not so far proved very successful, for in her first starring picture, "EVERYTHING'S ON ICE," the figures are exceptionally weak at a 67% average.

In introducing little Irene Dare to stardom, producer Sol Lesser overlooked the two most important essentials. First, a new star should be introduced to the public with a cast of big marquee names to help put her over, and second a terrific national publicity exploitation and advertising campaign is very important, which in this case was definitely absent.

However, as the picture was made on short money, the results may be satisfactory from a box office angle as far as Mr. Lesser is concerned, as he is resigning his RKO releasing set-up and forming a new organization with Ernst Lubitsch, which will produce big "A" attractions for the United Artists program.

Irene Dare is exceptionally clever on skates and has plenty of personality, so much so that if a major producer picked up this young lady's option (in case Mr. Lesser doesn't) she might be built into a fairly big box office name. Jackie Coogan, Shirley Temple, and other child stars made their biggest successes at about her age.

The featured cast is headed by Roscoe Karns, Edgar Kennedy, Lynne Roberts, Eric Linden, and Bobby Watson. Erle C. Kenton directed for Principal Picture—RKO release.

HIGHLIGHTS

(Continued from Page 4)

market place. . . . Flash! Did you see the New York reports that gave the Friday, Saturday business on "Drums Along The Mohawk?" . . . Our word to The Digest office is a powerful bit of testimony as to selling value of that nation-wide broadcast. . . . The picture opened at a top figure around \$9000, something to crow about in any man's picture league. . . . Ordinarily our tables of expectations in the office here would indicate that a hit would move up about \$3000 additional on the Saturday date. Instead, after the broadcast, the picture leap-frogged \$6000. . . . There's a slice of the radio expense back already. . . . Multiply it. . . . Cards coming in from the preview sneaks out of town on "Of Mice and Men" are hot—really hot. . . . Looks as though Roach has a humdinger.

'Drums Along the Mohawk' Set For Big Money

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 150%)

Exec. Producer...Darryl F. Zanuck
Asso. Producer...Raymond Griffith
DirectorJohn Ford
Story byWalter D. Edmonds
Screenplay: Lamar Trotti, Sonya Levien.

Stars: Claudette Colbert, Henry Fonda.

Featured: Edna May Oliver, Eddie Collins, John Carradine, Dorris Bowden, Jessie Ralph, Arthur Shields, Robert Lowery, Roger Inhof, Francis Ford, Ward Bond, Kay Linaker, Russell Simpson, Spencer Charters, Si Jenks, J. Ronald Pennick, Arthur Aylesworth, Chief Big Tree, Charles Tannen, Paul McVey, Elizabeth Jones, Beulah Jones, Clarence Wilson, Lionel Pape, Edwin Maxwell, Robert Greig, Clara Blandick.

PhotographerBert Glennon

Color Photographer: Ray Rennahan.

MusicAlfred Newman

Art Director: Richard Ray, Mark-Lee.

Film Editor.....Robert Simpson

Time100 minutes

Give Darryl Zanuck a best-selling novel whose title has been drummed into the ears of many more thousands than ever read novels, have it a novel with a patriotic theme, assign John Ford to the direction, then dress it all in the glories of Technicolor—and the answer should be pretty obvious.

If you need any further assurance about the correctness of the answer, we might add that the picture closes on a shot of the Star Spangled Banner.

"Drums Along the Mohawk" is a showman's job, from conception as a possible picture, to execution by director, writers and players. It may be said that there is no more story than the fact that a bride and bridegroom set out for the wilderness—it was located in upper New York state in those days—and before the last foot of celluloid has unwound, they have fought Indians, more Indians, and quite a few British.

That's the strength of the story. It's simplicity. Plus the class touches in handling, evident on every side. A simple, lowdown story of what might happen to your son, and my daughter, if they left the echoing wedding bells this afternoon, and had to set out unaided into a wilderness, to make a home.

Maybe there could have been more plot; but we do not know

what bigger plot there is than the birth of these United States. That is what the picture has.

We need lose little space on the story, because we have probably told it to you already—the boy and the girl who set out for wide open spaces where a man makes his own home, the things that happen to them, in physical danger from Indian and Tory enemies, in mental danger from conflicting viewpoints.

We have seldom seen a better performance from Claudette Colbert; and we don't expect to see a feminine star who responds so gloriously to the beauties of Technicolor. We regretfully cast a negative vote for Henry Fonda, who may have been what the author and the scripters wanted, but whose part would have helped both box office and audience appeal in more positive hands.

Since we have dropped into parenthetical remarks, we might express our humble opinion that Fonda is still playing the same whining part, picture after picture, and in "Drums Along the Mohawk" is still the younger brother of Jesse James to us.

Edna May Oliver gets the top support in the entirely excellent supporting cast. Beloved Miss Oliver gets a part into which she

CURRENT REVIEWS		We Est.
1. Drums Along The Mohawk	FOX	150
2. First Love	UNIV	135
3. Remember	MGM	110
4. Blondie Brings Up Baby	COL	80
5. The Llano Kid	PAR	75

can pour all of her skill, and she makes the most of it.

There are a few spots in the middle of the picture where it seems too slow; your reviewer's opinion is that the spots could have been aided if it was not so necessary to let Colbert carry the burden, while the character given Fonda was so negative. (Things happen to him; instead of his making things happen.)

Top treat of a showman's job of picture-making is the Technicolor photography by Ray Rennahan, so a bow to that veteran of the magentas, reds, and what other hues you may have.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Go to town. Be careful of near-highbrow critics who may tell you it is only "American history." Remember what J. P. Morgan—or was it John D. Rockefeller?—said: "NEVER SELL THE UNITED STATES SHORT." Previewed November 2nd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Drums Along the Mohawk' is a triumph of color and beauty. Rarely, since color came into pictures, has its use had such opportunities as in this production, and 20th-Fox has gone the limit on it. But aside from the color and its great scenic investitures, the picture has little to offer aside from sterling performances by its stars, Claudette Colbert and Henry Fonda, in parts that required every ounce of their abilities and the fine hand of John Ford to make them interesting."

VARIETY: "Drums Along the Mohawk' is powerfully and vividly dramatic entertainment telling the tale of pioneer American home-making and nation building along the colonial frontier. The story has been put together with masterly craftsmanship, beautifully emblazoned in Technicolor, superbly directed on a keynote of grim reality and sincerity and played with haunting impressiveness. And underpinning these excellent results, spelling smash hit, is production care and showman's care of inspirational calibre by Darryl F. Zanuck and his aides.

'Llano Kid' Combines Music With Western Background

PARAMOUNT

The Digest Estimates 75%)

ProducerHarry Sherman
DirectorE. D. Venturini
ScreenplayWanda Tuchock
Based on "Double-Dyed Deceiver"O. Henry
StarTito Guizar
Featured: Gale Sondergaard, Alan Mowbray, Jane Clayton, Emma Dunn, Minor Watson, Chris Martin, Carlos de Valdez, Anna Demetrio, Gleen, Tony Roux.
PhotographerRussell Harlan
Film Editor.....Sherman A. Rose
Time69 minutes

Harry Sherman took an O. Henry yarn—and from what source could one find better?—then gave this picture a cast that measures above most major B's and compares with anything any producer could do for the story; Dan Venturini directed it with skill for a combination of music with straight-line western.

It all results as a very satisfactory piece of entertainment. Tito Guizar is the melody; Sherman and Venturini provide what action and chases they can squeeze

in between songs; an humble fellow named O. Henry supplied the story frame-work; Wanda Tuchock made it a script.

We wish they had changed the title, unless they just intended to make it for South America. Right here in Southern California, no less than four persons have asked us in the past week how to pronounce "Llano." What they will do to this title in Brooklyn will be something for Noah Webster's bones to worry about.

To get back to the picture: Tito Guizar is personable, and can sell his songs. (Our "Radio Reporter" tells us that his broadcasts have a solid and loyal support that is not to be ignored.) Troupers with the skill and assured capability of Alan Mowbray and Gale Sondergaard play the next most important parts. Chris Martin, Emma Dunn, and Minor Watson are among others who hold their end up in any budget.

The story? Well, it seems that there was a Mexican Robin Hood

who was on the first step toward a firing squad, only to be saved by a couple of conniving meanies, Sondergaard and Mowbray. Lots of things happen, numerous songs are sung, and, of course, you know what O. Henry titled his completed story: "Double-Dyed Deceiver." That tells you where the romantic Robin Hood and the heavies ended up.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory program fare, and good entertainment; but not aimed very high in marquee value. Previewed October 30th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER. "As a picture, 'The Llano Kid' itself is no great shakes. The story is good and has an excellent twist, but both script and direction are stodgily uninspired."

VARIETY: "Founded on O. Henry's 'Double-Dyed Deceiver,' and given the added benefit of songs by Tito Guizar, 'The Llano Kid' reaches screen as an entertaining programmer."

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

HARLAN
THOMPSON

Producer

Now in Production

"Road To Singapore"



"DISPUTED PASSAGE"

'First Love' Again Presents Deanna Durbin In Hit

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer Joe Pasternak
 Director Henry Koster
 Screenplay: Bruce Manning, Lionel Houser.
 Star Deanna Durbin
 Featured: Robert Stack, Helen Parrish, Eugene Pallette, Lewis Howard, Leatrice Joy, June Storey, Frank Jenks, Kathleen Howard, Thurston Hall, Marcia Mae Jones, Samuel S. Hinds, Doris Lloyd, Charles Coleman, Jack Mulhall, Mary Treen, Dorothy Vaughan, Lucille Ward.
 Photographer Joseph Valentine
 Art Director Jack Otterson
 Film Editor Bernard Burton
 Time 84 minutes

Straight, unadulterated, and even accented Cinderella. "First Love" takes rank with the best of the Deanna Durbin pictures, and continues that remarkable young lady's consistent record of successes. Joe Pasternak, her screen god-father, and producer of all her pictures, maintains that sensational thousand per cent batting average.

As indicated by its title. "First Love" marks a step into near-maturity for Deanna. But it is a gentle step, and a sweet one, there is no shock. Deanna's first "serious" romance is played opposite a very pleasing, and wholesome, newcomer, Robert Stack; it is guided, directed, written and played by people who know their Cinderella-lovers. In shorter phrases, Deanna takes the important hurdle in stride, all her aides are really aides.

Bruce Manning, associated with so many Durbin successes, and this time teamed with Lionel Houser, unblushingly give us Cinderella—even to the slipper—and then writes it with such charm that the world seems better as you emerge from the theater. Deanna is an orphan—maybe you guessed that—and on her graduation from one of those finishing schools, takes up residence at the home of the wealthy uncle who has absent-mindedly financed her education.

Eugene Pallette is the uncle, seen in a repressed snort and grunt part that is one of the best jobs he has done. Leatrice Joy—what a treat to see her again—is Pallette's fliberty-gibbet wife. Helen Parrish, a "Cinderella-step-sister" old meanie, and Louis Howard a very effective Greek chorus who is so indolent he can hardly move his left leg to get out of the way of his right appendage.

Robert Stack enters the scene. Oh, it is all so simple that we should not bother repeating it, we suppose. But it is all so delight-

ful that a reviewer just feels tempted to go on. To wind it up quickly, we will tell you that Cinderella—pardon, Deanna—views her love from afar, falls heavily, and eventually gets her man—er, pardon again, we mean her Prince Charming.

We have given an indication of our liking for the cast supporting the star, we can conclude with a word for veteran Joe Valentine, who handled the photography. Valentine, who has consistently scored with his handling of the star, had no easy task, because Deanna is growing day by day, and no pre-conceived plans of lighting and angle-selection will work from one picture to the next.

'Remember?' More Entertaining Than Title Suggests

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Producer Milton Bren
 Director Norman McLeod
 Story and screenplay: Corey Ford, Norman McLeod.
 Stars: Robert Taylor, Greer Garson, Lew Ayres.
 Featured: Billie Burke, Reginald Owen, George Barbier, Henry Travers, Richard Carle, Laura Hope Crews, Sara Haden, Sig Rumann, Halliwell Hobbes, Paul Hurst.
 Photographer George Folsey
 Musical Score Edward Ward
 Film Editor Harold Kress
 Time 82 minutes

The sappy title is going to hurt the box office draw of this picture, which is a shame, because it is a prize package of entertainment. The critics may hurt it too, because it is too healthily on the zany side for the fellows who think in terms of anything but audience values.

The title you cannot help; and forget the highbrow critics. "Remember?" kept a preview audience laughing its head off while the critics griped; it will do the same for you. Sell the stars, and Leo the Lion: sell anything, but give your audiences a chance to see and hear it.

Norman McLeod, who brought "Topper" to the screen, together with his producer chief, Milton Bren, have again given us laughs. That's what we need in these days. Robert Taylor, playing with elastic freedom in a light part, does one of the smoothest jobs of his career. Lew Ayres is his usual personable self. Greer Garson, who scored for American audiences in "Goodbye, Mr. Chips,"

proves herself a comedienne of ability. The gal cannot be blamed for the foolish profile angles that are injurious, nor for introductory scenes in a make-up that is far from pleasant. Some of the critics harp on the phrase that Miss Garson was miscast; your reviewers' sole query is whether they expect a talented artiste to go on playing Mrs. Chips for the rest of her life.

The story is slow in getting under way, to establish a basis for farce hilarity that builds the later reels up to high points. Starting out as a typical triangle yarn, with Lew Ayres losing his fiancée to his best friend, Robert Taylor, on the eve of his own wedding, the note of originality comes in a reverse triangle twist. Instead of becoming the embittered wrong corner of the triangle, Ayres remains the sardonic best friend, and when he sees the Taylor-Gar-

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Joyous entertainment that will safely hit your standard figures on Deanna Durbin. Previewed October 31st.

son marriage going on the rocks, puts to work a chemical discovery that destroys all memory of recent happenings. Thus, for the second half of the picture, Taylor and Miss Garson go through a fantastic reiteration of their original love scenes, their elopement, etc., with farce complications galore growing out of the fact that, though they don't know it, they have actually been married for six months.

Support is excellent, with troupers who responded nobly to Norman McLeod's skill at building up and timing the topper on gags. Billie Burke gets the stand-out opportunity in the support, with McLeod taming her ebullience to a bit more repression than usual—and welcome it is.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The parade of Joe Pasternak, Henry Koster and Deanna Durbin continues its onward march, further and further up the ladder of entertainment, striking pay dirt for Universal and the picture business with each step. Certainly a winning combination in all its pictures, which now include 'First Love'."

VARIETY: "For the sixth successive time Deanna Durbin and the creative talents which shape her film destiny click with a smash piece of money entertainment. And 'First Love' is probably the most crucial of all the vehicles this brilliant Universal singing star has graced in that it marks the transition from the adolescent state to that of young womanhood involved in a first semi-grownup heart affair."

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: With that title, you will have to

(Continued on Page 11)

Latest 'Blondie' Maintains Pace of Series

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Producer Robert Sparks
 Director Frank Strayer
 Based upon Chic Young's comic strip.
 Screenplay: Gladys Lehman, Richard Flournoy.
 Story: Robert Chapin, Karen De Wolf, Richard Flournoy.
 Stars: Penny Singleton, Arthur Lake, Larry Simms, Daisy.
 Featured: Danny Mummert, Jonathan Hale, Robert Middlemass, Olin Howard, Fay Helm, Peggy Ann Garner, Roy Gordon, Grace

Stafford, Helen Jerome Eddy, Irving Bacon.

Photographer Henry Freulich
 Music Director M. W. Stoloff
 Film Editor Otto Meyer
 Time 67 minutes

Columbia is well into its stride with this "Blondie" series, with the result that "Blondie Brings Up Baby" rates as top hole entertainment. Many will list it as the best of the series, because the blend of legitimacy in story and

(Continued on Page 10)

KATE SMITH'S SPECIAL PROGRAM "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK" TOPS RADIO WEEK

Kate Smith and "Drums" A Great Combination

Kate Smith's cross-country jaunt for a special "Drums Along the Mohawk" broadcast grabbed plenty of newspaper space, then the program came through like a million dollars to back up the anticipation. . . . Showmanship sparkled in the set-up arranged by producer Bill Bacher and in all the personalities presented. . . . Kate Smith we can take for granted—and she was at her best. . . . But the highlight was the intelligent presentation of the brief "Drums of the Mohawk" story. . . . It was a good job of radio writing in its combination of actual dialogue from the picture script and effective "bridges" to span the time jumps. . . . Claudette Colbert can emote for our money on the screen or from the loud speaker. . . . Ted Collins has acquired a neat smoothness of delivery, welcome in contrast to so many announcers who seem to be laboring so hard THE RADIO REPORTER feels sorry for them.

Edward Arnold Clicks In "Good News" M.C. Spot

Edward Arnold, taking over at the Master of Ceremonies post on the Good News program, got off to a fine start, and also held his end up in the playlet with the chief "Dead Ender," Billy Halop. . . . Fannie Brice continues to be the sparkplug of this air period, and the producers know it, for she bounces in and out and back again every other minute. . . . Connie Boswell's one song was effective. . . . Meredith Wilson came up with some of his fine arrangements to hold up the musical side. . . . The commercials were of average length, on the edge of being too long, but Warren Hull has a delivery that sugar coats this fact. . . . Here is one actor who should not have been allowed to get away from the movies. . . . Sig Romberg's "American Humoresque" was introduced at last week's show and proved to have all the expected Romberg quality.

Hokey "Silver Screen" Play Saved By John Garfield

The Silver Screen show is into a play that will be in the "continued next week" class. . . . It's a bit on the hokey side, but is

saved by John Garfield, who has the quality of selling the same personality over the air that radio listeners expect to hear from their acquaintance with him on the screen. . . . Conrad Nagle capably handles the commercials, which get high ranking for commercials also on the point of quality and unobtrusiveness.

Grouch Club Hits A New High With Sparks In Stride

It may be only the one man opinion of your RADIO REPORTER, but he feels that last week's Grouch Club program hit the high mark for that unit. . . . Ned Sparks is firmly in his stride now, and the material was above average. . . . And a special orchid for the revamping of the commercial side,

to general satisfaction, with many moments that sparkle. . . . But for a couple of weeks the structure has been such that the playlet allows a let-down at just the wrong time—the finish. . . . After a bubbling three quarters this gives the general impression that all concerned have grown weary as a result of their own exuberance. . . . Jack's program also suffers for home consumption by an excess of the studio audience laughs that always seem most hilarious just at the moments most mystifying to the sit-by-the-firesides.

Mortimer Snerd Competition Peps Up Little Charlie

Bringing in Mortimer Snerd gave Edgar Bergen an opportu-

good craftsman can do with just two characters, "homey" stuff, and two good troupers.

Orson Welles Makes Real Drama of "Hurricane"

What a real showman can do with material was evident in the Orson Welles presentation of "Hurricane." . . . On the screen the latter vehicle was a straight line one-two-three story, made big by John Ford direction, and the rip-roaring climax. . . . But nothing over-heavy in plot. . . . For radio, Welles wasn't satisfied to place all reliance on such a slender thread, and vitaminized it into a top-hole drama. . . . His own performance in the Raymond Massey part helped, while Mary Astor stepped gracefully from screen to studio.

Mark Hellinger Gives Lift To Bing Crosby Period

One would think that Bing Crosby's shows were casting for a while, judging by last week's effort, were it not for the fact that the earnest showman Bing Crosby never coasts with his public. . . . Maybe it was just an off-night. . . . However, there was one bright spot, the clear-cut delivery of Mark Hellinger who came aboard the Kraft train to a discussion about the hectic days covered by his story "The Roaring Twenties." . . . Hellinger can stand return engagements on the air. . . . The Charlies Butterworth-Crosby routine suffered due to the material. . . . Joan Bennett is just as cold on the lanes as on the screen. . . . The gal always seems so-o-o tired.

Odds and Ends Of The Week's Shows

THE RADIO REPORTER got crossed up with flu on the day of the last Bob Hope broadcast so he will have to wait a week to catch up with that bubbling personality. . . . George Fischer's Saturday night intimacies are catching on and should build a following, but he is running in tough luck in a news way because recent weeks just haven't been presenting the right blurbs.

The Radio Reporter

Thanks the many in pictures and radio who welcomed his debut in The Digest last week . . .

And particularly the many who came through with constructive suggestions to increase the department's interest.

Frankly . . . THE RADIO REPORTER is not yet set on a permanent style of presentation, so he is wide open for your ideas.

And he will be grateful.

which made it easy to take, and therefore most likely more beneficial to the sponsor.

Screen Guild Show Has Good Playlet

With James Stewart, Edward Arnold and Loretta Young doing the trouping the Screen Guild session presented a playlet, "Going My Way," that was a good job of ether-writing craftsmanship. . . . Good performances helped, too, of course. . . . Stewart and Arnold were tops, as was to be expected, and the pleasant surprise is the development of Loretta Young's air personality. . . . The gal registers. . . . THE RADIO REPORTER still rates the commercials on this program among the models.

Jack Benny Program Needs Build Up To Climax

Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone continue to carry their show

ity to freshen up his material with new slants, and the threatened competition also apparently frightened Charlie McCarthy, for the latter's brief appearance was above par. . . . Last week's show marked the bow-out of Nelson Eddy after his long service in the cause of coffee. . . . And, incidentally, Eddy's farewell engagement showed him working with greater ease in the master of ceremonies part than in previous weeks. . . . Report has it that the high Eddy stipend was the reason prompting plans to revamp the show. . . . Though it is not likely that Rudy Vallee comes any too cheaply. . . . Funny angle, though, will probably find Rudy Vallee getting less money per show than his protege and discovery, Charlie McCarthy. . . . But at any rate the family will be together again for a while. . . . Jackie Cooper and Gene Lockhart put over a playlet like the troupers they are, and the playlet itself was the highlight in radio writing. . . . It proved what a

Exhibitors In the Carolinas Living In Paradise Free From Internal Bickering Says Maurice Ridge



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Charlotte, N. C., November 3.—There is a Santa Claus—there is a film man's paradise—there are church going exhibitors and there is a place in this cockeyed industry where "Peace On Earth, Good Will Toward Men" abounds, and everybody is happy. "Believe It Or Not." It's in the Charlotte, North Carolina film territory.

This is the South. Chivalry is still rampant. The inhabitants are folks. Existing for the joy of living supercedes quest for gold. This is Saturday. Football is king. Charlotte is as devoid of people as Paris in an air raid. They are all at the Duke-Georgia Tech game at Atlanta. Every exhibitor, film man, even district managers, who could get a ducat is there. This is the way they go about things down here.

Mike Kincey, who is the Publix partner, is as popular with the independents as Charley McCarthy is with the kids of the country. Mike is at the head of about a hundred theatres in the Carolinas. Your investigator has talked to every exchange manager in Charlotte and scores of independent exhibitors, the head of the M.P.T. O.A. (no Allied here), and nary a word inimical to the chain operation could be found. No oppression from the big boys is in evidence. It's the only spot between here and the Pacific ocean where this condition apparently exists.

Carolina Twin Organizations Really On The Job

And these exhibitors have an organization down here that is a humdinger. They all belong, that is about 90 percent of them, including Mike Kincey, who is on the board, but with only a minority vote. They will soon meet for the next meeting, the first week

in December. Three days of it, and there are a number of knotty problems coming up. But they expect to settle them in their own way, without leaving acrimony in the wake of their get-together. It's one for all and all for one. They know now who the new president is going to be. There is a reason for this man's ascendancy. South Carolina has some inimical legislation coming up. The boys more numerous up here in North Carolina know this. A prexy from down there will have more weight in the state of John C. Calhoun, than their neighbor. The boys here are going to his support, and en masse.

Double billing is as scarce in this section as carpet baggers. Give-aways, bank nite, cash nites, dishes and other free inducements just don't exist. They run shows for entertainment, and the people are satisfied with them. Few Sunday shows in North Carolina, but none in South Carolina. However, there is a movement on here in Charlotte, to get a modified Sunday opening. Tom Little, who is of noted political prestige here, at the head of a small up state chain, although having no theatres in this city of Charlotte is leading the fight for Sunday opening here. It will benefit the Publix-Kincey owned theatres; but he is helping. That is this section in action.

An evidence of how well they work together down here is found in the fact that Charley Piquet of Pinehurst, was 17 years the prexy of their group. Now they change every year, alternating between North and South Carolina. Of course everybody in organization work in the United States knows Charley Piquet.

When we inquired how they get along so well together, the folks all were amazed to understand why exhibitors and exchange men all over the country did not do likewise. The only reply we could think of was to suggest that greed, selfishness and a lack of understanding, as well as a lack of real neighborliness, such as is so apparent down South might be some of the reasons.

In confidence, one exchange manager showed the writer his contract register, on this year's new business. EVERY ONE OF THE CONTRACTS WERE THE SAME. That is, the same number

of pictures on top percentage. The same number of the lower bracket percentage, and the same number of flat rentals. "We have taken the racket out of our business," was all this branch manager would say. Maybe this is one of the reasons there is so much unanimity of opinion, operation, and confidence among this industry's representatives down Carolina way.

West Virginia Exhibitor Socked On Bank Nite Ruling

Bluefield, W. Va., Nov. 1st.—These old boys down here in West Virginia, around Williamson, where the Hatfield-McCoy clansmen fought it out for a decade across the Tug River, don't fool when they go to bank nite, or rather when they register for it. Recently one of these mountaineers signed on the dotted line, and received his number, hoping to draw down the thousand dollars that the exhibitor hung up. He did not go every time, but on one occasion, when he had to tend to the duties on the farm, his number was called. Of course under the rules of the drawing, he was just out of luck.

'Blondie' Maintains Pace of Series

(Continued from Page 3)

laugh value in hokum gags is exceptionally well handled. Producer Robert Sparks and director Frank Strayer are well into a well oiled groove, with able assistance from the writers assembled—in quantity.

Good old family audience hokum is the springboard for the plot—the decision to send Baby Dumplings off to school. You can see the natural opportunities in that premise and you are only guessing half of the many the script writers have devised. Baby Dumpling gets his first black eye, loses the inimitable canine, Daisy, to the dog catchers, becomes a Santa Claus miracle worker to a crippled girl who has ransomed Daisy from the city pound. Meanwhile, and in the midst of all the hectic problems, the plot causes Dagwood to lose his job, and then succeeds in getting it back for him.

Arthur Lake and Penny Singleton, who seem to have been born to play the characters of Dagwood and Blondie created by Chick

He didn't think so. Got a lawyer and went to law about it. Claimed the pot of gold. The jury agreed with him, and the theatre had to pay double that night. It's now a court record in West Virginia. The boys who have large bank nites, so they can take in enough to pay their weekly film rentals at these advanced war time prices, are now doing a West Virginia interpretation of the jitterbug, big apple and other contortions of the terpsichore.

If this court record stands in West Virginia, when the exhibitor takes it to the court of last resort, there will be helltopay in that state where bank nite flourishes like cactus on the desert. Other leading exhibitors are now conferring with the losing folks in Williamson over the best way to solve this problem.

One exhibitor in this state told the writer that he frequently takes in \$1500.00 on bank nite. His carry-overs frequently run up to \$3000.00. "At least these radio programs down here in these mountains are not going to 'whup' me," he thundered when discussing how to extract quarters from the coal miners in his section.

Young, turn in fine jobs, and of course the tyke, Larry Simms, and his pal, Danny Mummert, can not be neglected for mention.

Frank Strayer's direction takes full advantage of the comic strip license allowed by the subject, gives the picture its veneer of legitimacy, and keeps it moving. That last — the pace — is what makes it entertainment.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Corking family fare. Okay for the top spot where the series has followers, a life-saver for the balancing spot with many a program. Premiered November 3rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Columbia's 'Blondie Brings Up Baby' keeps up the standard set by Producer Robert Sparks in his previous 'Blondie' pictures, and will continue to please the followers of Chic Young's cartoon characters."

VARIETY: "Assuming entertainment quality beyond the scope of those contained in its predecessors, 'Blondie Brings Up Baby' is far and away the best edition of the Columbia group. Intermingling human element with its comedy, is a programmer that will delight the family trade."

Nichols Continues Jaunt Into Wilds of Southern California and Runs Into Some Interesting Figures

Hollywood, Nov. 5.—Come on folks, the old gas buggy is rarin' to go—we're bound for the home of Ramona—the oldest town in Southern California, San Gabriel. With a grape vine, six feet in diameter, and one hundred sixty-eight years old; still bearing fruit. Its chief points of interest are the San Gabriel Mission founded 1771; and the Mission Playhouse.

In the latter historical background, one James Edward Jr. had his start in this great business of ours. Smiling Michael Rosenberg, of Principal Theatres, was James' landlord and holder of the master lease on the then Mission Theater. This was along about the years 1928 to 1929 A. D. Now, dear readers, you will be interested to know, as we were, just how Mr. Edwards got his start; but we will have to leave the James biography till a later date.

Stop with us and have a chat with the only independent exhibitor in San Gabriel. Mr. Ote Lewis is the name, and he operates the beautiful Mission Playhouse, the pride of the natives hereabout. Made famous, as you will remember, by that laureate, John Steven McGroarty, in his productions of the Mission Play. What a setting for previews and art gatherings. You Hollywood producers are overlooking something, and right at your back doors. Nowhere in the country will you find a more perfect setting for the showing of pictures.

Going Back Into Alhambra Theater History

So as to give you the proper focus and to throw more light on the San Gabriel Valley theater situation, we will have to cut back to Alhambra again and find out how Mr. Lewis got his start. Ote started the old Alhambra theatre, now known as the Granada, in 1919, and later on the New Alhambra theatre. He sold his 50 per cent interest in the Alhambra Amusement Co. to Mr. Edwards Jr. in 1932. At the time of the sale of the Alhambra theatre by Mr. Lewis to Mr. Edwards, the Alhambra Amusement Co. was in a pooling arrangement with the El Rey theatre, operated by Mike Rosenberg and Sol Lesser of Principal Theatres. Mr. Lewis stated at this time he had 50 per cent of the Alhambra Amusement Co.

The other 50 per cent of this corporation was split between two groups. Principal Theaters 49 per cent of it, with Fox West Coast retaining 51 per cent. At this time Ote tells us a 5 per cent booking and administration charge was collected by Principal. It is still not known what Fox-West Coast received for buying the pictures.

While Mr. Lewis was operating the Alhambra Amusement Co. in Alhambra, Mr. Edwards was operating the Mission, now Monterey theatre, at Monterey Park. Now let's look at the clearance schedule between Mr. Lewis at Alhambra and Mr. Edwards at Monterey Park. The Alhambra theatre charged 40c admission and 20c for children. The Monterey, 25c, which played fourteen days after the Alhambra, and in some cases less. We in the business will agree that this was a very fair clearance for Mr. Edwards. It is important to keep this fact in mind; as we find now the situations are reversed, with Mr. Edwards having the Alhambra at 35c and the Monterey at 30c. Mr. Lewis at the Mission Playhouse charges 25c. These two last named theatres are exactly 2.5 miles apart. To the tourist, Alhambra, Monterey Park and San Gabriel, might as well be all one city as far as he would know.

Lewis Faces Problem Of Getting Product

Mr. Lewis took over the operation of the Mission Playhouse Aug. 27, 1932, and had every reason to believe he would be able to get product, especially after his long association with Principal. But he was to learn very quickly, that being in with Principal Theaters and being in opposition to them, was a horse of another color. So he tells us he was only able to buy Paramount and a few independents. He had opened at 25c; but due to failure to obtain good product, he had to resort to price cutting, even going at times to 10c. 1933-34 was a little better; Warners, MGM sold him 28 days after Alhambra, immediately after the Monterey, both breaking at 25c. In 1935-36 all companies sold him 21 days after Alhambra at 25c.

Now before we go any further; let's examine the zoning and clearance schedule, as written in

the Blue Book put out by Fox-West Coast and the White Book, or NRA schedule, for the L.A. territory. White and Blue Book are identical in this case. Alhambra city, 7 days after Pasadena (first run closing) at 35c. Monterey Park 14 days after Alhambra (first run closing) at 30c. San Gabriel, 21 days after Alhambra (first run closing) at 25c. Let's see how the exchange hookers interpret the above schedules and whether or not the traveling auditors from the Home Offices in New York, are blind or just plain dumb. Let's look over a few exchange cut-off cards.

Here's The Present Valley Set-Up On Clearance

Tower Theatre, Fox-West Coast, Pasadena, Sept. 19-21. "Hotel for Women."

Alhambra, Garfield, J. Edwards Jr., Alhambra, Sept. 20, 35c. "Hotel for Women."

Monterey, J. Edwards Jr., Monterey Park, Oct. 14, 30c. "Hotel for Women."

Strand Theatre, Fox-West Coast, Pasadena, Sept. 13-18. "Unexpected Father."

Alhambra, Garfield, J. Edwards Jr., Alhambra, Sept. 20-23, 35c. "Unexpected Father."

Monterey, J. Edwards Jr., Monterey Park, Oct. 1-4, 30c. "Unexpected Father."

Strand, Fox-West Coast, Pasadena, Sept. 24-26. "Star Maker."

Garfield, J. Edwards Jr., Alhambra, Sept. 27-30, 35c. "Star Maker."

United Artists, Fox-West Coast, Pasadena, Feb. 15-21. "Chan in Honolulu."

Alhambra, J. Edwards Jr., Alhambra, March 8-11, 35c. "Chan in Honolulu."

Monterey, J. Edwards Jr., Monterey Park, March 15-21, "Chan in Honolulu."

Because one of the important necessities of an exhibitor is advertising his pictures to his patrons, it seems that the only way in which San Gabriel can sell his theatre goes is to secure a direct dating from Pasadena of equal availability following Alhambra according to zoning and clearance books.

Mr. Lewis advises us that he gets out a printed program, two



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

weeks in advance of showing. Now, how in the name of common sense, in light of the above booking records, can Mr. Lewis enjoy a 21-day clearance? In other words the record shows that the Principal Theatres are booking the Mission Playhouse, without charge. They play day and date with Pasadena and book in sequence two dates, known only to themselves and the exchanges. When this information gets to the daily press, then Mr. Lewis can get out his programs. Mr. Lewis states he can obtain no information from the exchanges regarding these bookings of Principal Theatres. Join us next week and we will go down and see Charley Gay's Lion Farm at El Monte and we can all roar. Exhibitors and animals.

'Remember?' Good

(Continued from Page 8)

do something about the marquee and the ads. Sell the stars, and a night of crazy laughter. Taylor fans will like him, after you get them in. Previewed November 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Remember' is far below the MGM standard of entertainment and quite foreign to the MGM production idea, as that studio generally goes to bat on a picture with a story—it may be good or bad, but nevertheless a story. 'Remember' has none at all, which accounts for it missing in almost every department save a situation here or there that's quite funny, and some very excellent photography.

VARIETY: "Amusing sophisticated farce developed along unusual lines is this fantastic triangular love tale. 'Remember' should fare well at the wicket and posts an excellent first production credit for Milton Breen in the Metro fold."

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
The Rains Came	FOX	165
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	163
Dodge City	WAR	158
Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	156
The Women	MGM	156
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
Babes In Arms	MGM	150
Union Pacific	PAR	145

Kentucky	FOX	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Bean 'n' Geste	PAR	128
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
The Roaring Twenties	WAR	121
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	124
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120

Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
The Real Glory	UA	115
At The Circus	MGM	113
Thunder Afloat	MGM	112
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	192
Midnight	WAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	108
In Name Only	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
Eternally Yours	UA	100
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	100

Tailspin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Intermezzo	UA	95
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91

St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
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Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	139
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	135
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardy's Ride High	MGM	130

Dark Victory	WAR	128
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Disputed Passage	PAR	115
Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daugbter	WAR	106
Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	103

Golden Boy	COL	102
Jamaica Inn	PAR	101

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	98
What A Life	PAR	98
Mane For Women	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Round of the Bakervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	91
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90

Fas tand Furious	MGM	89
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Blackmail	MGM	87
On Your Toes	WAR	87
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Espionage Agent	WAR	84

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

U-Boat	29	COL	100
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Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80

Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82
Café Society	PAR	81
King of the Underworld	WAR	81
Dancing Co-ed	MGM	81
Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR	80
Here I Am A Stranger	FOX	80
Arizona Wildcat	FOX	80
The Gorilla	FOX	80
I'm From Missouri	PAR	79
The Sun Never Sets	UNIV	79
The Girl Downstairs	MGM	79
Under Pup	UNIV	78
Never Say Die	PAR	78
Winter Carnival	UA	77
The Lady's From Kentucky	PAR	77
Prison Without Bars	UA	77
Let Us Live	COL	77
Coast Guard	COL	76
\$1,000 A Touchdown	PAR	75
The Lady Vanishes	FOX	75
Boy Friend	FOX	75
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR	75
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV	75
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	FOX	74
Fisherman's Wharf	RKO	74
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	FOX	72
Bridal Suite	MGM	72
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX	72
I Stole A Million	UNIV	71
The Lady and the Mob	COL	71
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR	71
Rio	UNIV	70
Back Door To Heaven	PAR	70
King of the Turf	UA	70
One Third of a Nation	PAR	70
Clouds Over Europe	COL	70
Stronger Than Desire	MGM	70
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	77
The Day The Bookies Went	RKO	76
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Flight at Midnight	REP	75
Inside Story	FOX	75
Pacific Liner	RKO	75
The Witness Vanishes	UNIV	74
Two Bright Boys	UNIV	74
Chan in Treasure Island	FOX	74
Boy Slaves	RKO	73
Disbarred	PAR	73
Missing Daughters	COL	73
Blondie Takes Vacation	COL	73
Hawaiian Nights	UNIV	72
The Spellbinder	RKO	72
It Could Happen To You	FOX	72
King of Chinatown	PAR	72
Society Lawyer	MGM	72
Persons in Hiding	PAR	72
Society Smugglers	UNIV	72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning	FOX	72
Twelve Crowded Hours	RKO	72
Ex-Champ	UNIV	72
The Escape	FOX	72
Nancy Drew, Reporter	WAR	71
Pirates of the Skies	UNIV	71
Sorority House	RKO	71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter	WAR	71
Mystery of the White Room	UNIV	71
The Girl and the Gambler	RKO	71
Quick Millions	RKO	71
Blind Alle	COL	71
Million Dollar Legs	PAR	71
Charlie Chan in Reno	COL	71
Those High Grey Walls	COL	71
Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase	WAR	70
Full Confession	RKO	70
Stop, Look and Love	FOX	70
Unexpected Father	UNIV	70
Island of Lost Men	PAR	70
Chasing Danger	FOX	70
Unmarried	PAR	70
Romance of the Redwoods	COL	70
Winner Take All	COL	70
Big Town Car	FOX	70
On Trial	UNIV	70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown	WAR	70
Ambush	PAR	70
They Made Her A Spy	RKO	70
Torchy For Mayor	WAR	70
The Girl From Mexico	RKO	70
Within the Law	MGM	70
Grand Jury Secrets	PAR	70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride	PAR	70
Cowboy Quarterback	WAR	70
Some Like It Hot	PAR	69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
Death of a Champion	PAR	68
No Place To Go	WAR	68
News Is Made At Night	FOX	68
The Family Next Door	UNIV	68
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	68
Undercover Doctor	PAR	68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island	FOX	68
Adventures of Jane Arden	WAR	68
Almost A Gentleman	RKO	68
Fixer Dugan	RKO	68
The Saint in London	RKO	68
For Love or Money	UNIV	68
Forgotten Woman	UNIV	68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt	COL	67
Conspiracy	RKO	67
Playing With Dynamite	WAR	67
A Woman Is A Judge	COL	66
Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation	FOX	66
Code of the Streets	UNIV	66
Beauty for the Asking	RKO	66
Sudden Money	PAR	66
They Asked For It	UNIV	66
The Ware Case	GB	66
Boy Trouble	PAR	65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor	MGM	65
Secret Service of the Air	WAR	65
Tell No Tales	MGM	65
Conspiracy	RKO	65
They All Come Out	MGM	64
Exile Express	GN	64
Sweepstakes Winner	WAR	64
6,000 Enemies	MGM	63
Night Work	MGM	63
The Kid From Texas	PAR	61
Miracles For Sale	MGM	60
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	54
This Man Is News	PAR	54
Career	RKO	53

Whispering Enemies	COL	75
Homicide Bureau	COL	71
Mysterious Mr. Wong	MONO	71
Woman Doctor	REP	71
North of Shanghai	COL	71
Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence	FOX	71
Calling All Marines	REP	70
She Married A Cop	REP	70
Hidden Power	COL	70
The Sunset Murder Case	GN	70
Pride of the Navy	REP	70
Tough Kid	MONO	70
Mysterious Miss X	REP	70
Trapped in the Sky	COL	70
Orphan in the Street	REP	70
I Am A Criminal	MONO	69
Fighting Thoroughbreds	REP	69
Gambling Ship	UNIV	69
Convict's Code	MONO	69
Parents On Trial	COL	68
The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew	COL	68
Konga, The Wild Stallion	COL	68
Streets of New York	MONO	68
Inside Information	UNIV	68
I Was A Convict	REP	68
Navy Secrets	MONO	68
Federal Man Hunt	REP	68
Pride of the Bluegrass	REP	68
House of Fear	UNIV	67
My Wife's Relatives	REP	67
Long Shot	GN	67
Subotage	REP	67
Behind Prison Gates	COL	66
Wolf Call	MONO	66
Forged Passport	REP	66
First Offenders	COL	66
Rookie Cop	RKO	66
Wanted by Scotland Yard	WAR	66
Waterfront	MONO	66
Irish Luck	MONO	65
Mickey The Kid	REP	65
The Zero Hour	REP	65
Outside These Walls	COL	65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave	REP	65
The Man Who Dared	MONO	65
Mystery Plane	MONO	64
My Son Is A Criminal	COL	64
Code of the Secret Service	WAR	64
Should A Girl Marry?	MONO	64
Everybody's Hobby	MONO	64
Smuggled Cargo	REP	63
Should Husbands Work?	REP	63
Street of Missing Men	REP	63
Star Reporter	MONO	63
Undercover Agent	MONO	63
Boy's Reformatory	MONO	63
Sky Patrol	RKO	62
Panama Lady	RKO	62
Panama Patrol	GN	62
The Girl From Rio	MONO	62

Buildup Drummond's Secret Police	PAR	69
Everybody's Baby	FOX	69
Death of a Champion	PAR	68
No Place To Go	WAR	68
News Is Made At Night	FOX	68
The Family Next Door	UNIV	68
The Saint Strikes Back	RKO	68
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Sweepstakes Winner	WAR	64
6,000 Enemies	MGM	63
Night Work	MGM	63
The Kid From Texas	PAR	61
Miracles For Sale	MGM	60
Inspector Hornleigh	FOX	54
This Man Is News	PAR	54
Career	RKO	53

Our Leading Citizen	PAR	67
Stolen Life	PAR	67
Hotel Imperial	PAR	66
Zenobia	UA	66
Gracie Allen Murder Case	PAR	64
Way Down South	RKO	64
Spirit of Culver	UNIV	63
The Flying Irishman	RKO	63
Smiling Along	FOX	63
Climbing High	GB	63
Women in the Wind	WAR	62
They Shall Have Music	UA	70
The Mikado	UNIV	77

MARX BROTHERS

GROUCHO
CHICO
HARPO

Metro  Goldwyn-Mayer

"AT THE CIRCUS"

The Box Office
DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 11.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 15, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

Are We Getting
All the B. O. Money
We Should From Hits?

SEE PAGE 3

“Drums Along Mohawk”
Tops Week’s Releases
For Twentieth-Fox

SEE PAGE 5

New “Thin Man”
and Paul Muni Picture
Lead Week’s Previews

SEE PAGES 8-9

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
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THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week 20th CENTURY-FOX Wins With
"DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK" 153 %



Vice-President in Charge of Production
DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer
RAYMOND GRIFFITH



Director
JOHN FORD



CLAUDETTE COLBERT



HENRY FONDA



Featured Players:

EDDIE COLLINS
JOHN CARRADINE
JESSIE RALPH
KAY LINAKER

Photographer:

BERT GLENNON, A.S.C.

Screenplay by:

LAMAR TROTTI
SONYA LEVIEN

Based on Novel by:

WALTER D. EDMONDS

Film Editor:

ROBERT SIMPSON



EDNA MAY OLIVER

DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

ZANUCK ROLLS THE DRUMS

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

At the outbreak of European troubles and their repercussions on our picture industry at home, Your Editor was fairly quick on the trigger with the suggestion on this page that one important aid in a possible time of stress would be BETTER MILKING of real attractions.

A few weeks later our Field Man, Maurice Ridge, forwarded some pertinent advice to exhibitors along this same line from the lips of M. A. Lightman, veteran exhibitor and organization leader.

Last week Your Editor stepped forward with the humble suggestion that maybe this was the moment to "Take Time Out For Selling," it being his thought that we should hurry through a settlement of internal squabbles and concentrate on SHOWMANSHIP.

We are going to need it. And how!

* * *

So this week Your Editor is not at all averse to turning over his own choice space and twelve point type to an open letter written by Darryl Zanuck to Si Fabian, of the picture pioneer Fabians, the Fabians of First National's foundations, of so many years in Eastern circuit operation.

Zanuck never pulls his punches, so it is not surprising that he does not do so in an open letter, even if he has not chosen a puny target in Si Fabian.

But the letter is really not written to Mr. Fabian, rather, to all exhibitors ready to face with open minds the problems that beset production today. And when we say "production" we mean the manufacture of the product that must keep turnstiles clicking.

To keep the ball rolling on the SHOWMANSHIP theme, we reprint the letter without comment. Next week, in his own modest way, Your Editor hopes to pull a few words from the dictionary that will give added impetus to the rallying cry:

"Now is the time for all good men and true to come to the aid of SHOWMANSHIP."

* * *

"The letter, dated November 11th, is herewith given to you in full:

"Dear Mr. Fabian:

"It has just been called to my attention that you grossed \$6812 at your Proctor's Theater in Schenectady and that you pulled the picture after the sixth day despite the fact that 'Drums Along the Mohawk' in six days grossed more than 'Hollywood Cavalcade,' 'Stanley and Livingstone,' 'The Rains Came,' and even more than 'Alexander's Ragtime Band,' which was the biggest grossing picture of last year from any company. More remarkable is the fact that 'Drums Along the Mohawk' grossed more in six days than 'Alexanders' Ragtime Band' grossed in seven days.

"It is incredible to think any exhibitor possibly could be so short-sighted as to pull out a big picture when it is still making excellent money, thereby depriving his own theaters of additional revenue and consequently cutting the fair return to Hollywood. If 'Drums Along the Mohawk' had shown a tendency to peter out during its run, there might be some slight justification, but the fact remains that the six day run did much more business than did the seven days on 'Alexander's Ragtime Band,' a picture that grossed over \$3,000,000 in America alone.

"Mr. Fabian, do you realize that we at the studio cooperated with you in opening at your theater, in sending you personalities for the opening engagement? Do you realize there is a war in Europe and that we, the producers and distributors, face a tremendous loss in foreign revenue? Do you realize that already, because of currency deflation and frozen currency in the foreign market, we have lost in Europe almost one-third of our last year's gross, and that there is no indication of what may come along these lines, with each day some new government placing financial restrictions on us and forcing us to realize more and more that we must depend only on America for our revenue?"

"Do you realize, Mr. Fabian, that the cost of producing moving pictures is double what it was eighteen months ago? Do you realize that labor today today receives a higher percentage of payment on each individual production than do the stars themselves, and that cost of building material and equipment make it impossible for us to produce a big picture subject (Continued on Page 4)

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	.....15 Releases	.....97
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	.....45 Releases	.....96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	.....39 Releases	.....91
4. Paramount	.....44 Releases	.....86
5. Warner Brothers	.....45 Releases	.....86
6. RKO-Radio	.....32 Releases	.....81
7. Universal	.....33 Releases	.....79
8. Columbia	.....32 Releases	.....77
9. Republic	.....21 Releases	.....69
10. Monogram	.....18 Releases	.....66
11. Grand National	.....4 Releases	.....66
12. Gaumont British	.....2 Releases	.....65

The Highlighter: TALKS ON LABOR PROBLEMS AND THEN SKIRTS AROUND THE LIVE NEWS OF THE WEEK

Chief Hollywood highlights of the week have, of course, concerned the cross-fire of letters about salaries, war problems, etc., between technicians, producers, creators, and side-line experts. . . . Naturally, it is easy to say that it is too bad such things have to happen. The industry, and those who work in it and live by it, is beset with a plenitude of external problems these days, without being flooded with a deluge of internal worries. . . . But we think it is also the part of wisdom for side-line experts to refrain from doing the quarterbacking just now. . . . There are too many cross-currents not clearly understood from the side-lines. . . . And there is one phase of such kibitzing that always gets The Highlighter peeved. . . . It is the attitude adopted by many on any occasion when joint industry cooperation is suggested, that we of the picture business never enter such discussions with sincerity. . . . You know what The Highlighter means, the feeling that "the other fellow" always enters the sessions with a knife up his sleeve, a hidden ace in his trouser cuff, a smile on his face and guile in his heart. . . . That's why most of industry's attempts at family cooperation are stymied before we get off the tee.

The Age of Miracles Is Not Past

Let's forget the family bickering and go to more cheerful thoughts. . . . To one that proves this is still a grand and glorious industry, with a pot at the end of the rainbow for anyone who can climb it. . . . If you had asked any hard-boiled Hollywood veteran a few months ago if it were still possible in the picture business for an individual to make a picture of class with his own money, and without a pre-set distribution contract, and get anywhere—well, you know what the answer would have been. . . . If you had said that the individual in question had more than \$100,000 of his own money to spend, you would have been told that the body could be found directly south of the flock of buzzards flying over Hollywood and Vine. . . . If you had added that the same party was a minister, the total would have been too much for any veteran to assimilate. . . . Well, that just happened. . . . The Rev. James K. Friedrich came to Hollywood from the Mid-West with an idea. . . . His sincerity must have abashed the vultures, for he rounded up a sincere and really capable production organization. . . . The result: "The Great Commandment," which your Digest Reviewer is happy to remember he praised at its preview. . . . The climax: Darryl Zanuck has purchased the picture, lock, stock and barrel, plans to re-make it into an epic, has given the producer an immediate profit, has taken over the cooperation of most of the members of Mr. Fredrick's organization, will pay a percentage of the profits on the new picture, and most importantly, will bring it to the screen with FIDELITY to the sincere honesty of the

4 Features "Going Up"

Was Now

1. Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	163	167
2. Babes In Arms	MGM	150	153
3. Island of Lost Men	PAR	70	73
4. The Saint In London	RKO	68	70

mid-western dominie's picture. . . . A man, and an idea. . . . That's a lot better recipe than building a mouse-trap, apparently.

New York Steamed Up About Picture Production

There's a funny angle about the high-pressure campaign that is being put on by Mayor LaGuardia, of New York, to return production activity to that city. . . . Everyone with a memory and experience knows that, with all due consideration to matters of climate, equally important for the fade-out on production in Gotham was the union labor problem. . . . It had many ramifications, a limited supply of highly trained technicians, a back-breaking burden of overtime charges, and dictates as to the number of workers, whether necessary or not. . . . So the boys chased their bread and butter to Hollywood. . . . Now the Mayor wants it back. . . . And the request is made at a time when the Coast is having its own labor troubles. . . . But they can never equal the freak ruling spree on which New York embarked some ten years ago, because there is permanent employment out here, there are fairly permanent groups of technicians, the boys do not have to make each stray picture pay through the nose for a year's income. . . . We are afraid the Mayor has tackled a tough job. With or without all the banks that line Fifth Avenue, with or without Ben Hecht and George Jessel, or a half dozen others who find the Hollywood grade a steep one. . . . Banks eventually insist on making money; exhibitors and patrons insist on getting entertainment geared to tastes further west of Broadway than Eighth Avenue. . . . And poor "Little Old New York" just doesn't seem to have the oomph.

Jogging Around The Studio Corners

Looks as though two young stars are stepping along a safe path this year—Lana Turner at MGM and Linda Darnell at Twentieth Century. . . . Both continue to deliver with

6 Features "Going Down"

Was Now

1. In Name Only	RKO	108	102
2. Jamaica Inn	PAR	101	97
3. Eternally Yours	UA	100	95
4. Intermezzo	UA	95	91
5. Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	91	87
6. On Your Toes	WAR	87	82

improved opportunities, both are now being groomed for the best of chances. . . . It's pleasant to observe the steps when "A Star Is Born." . . . Sounds like money when we read that Zanuck will splash big on his new version of "Down To The Sea In Ships," and that his chief aide—remember "Alexander?"—Harry Joe Brown, will handle the production reins. . . . Henry Gingsberg resigns from the Selznick-International vice-presidency to embark on plans of his own after a vacation. . . . Dan O'Shea steps into the spot, moving up from Secretary. . . . From the side-lines it looks as though Jock Whitney and S-I are pulling in the belt in many directions to await the return of a few of those many millions on "Gone With The Wind." . . . Death struck twice within twenty-four hours, and cost the industry two of its best-liked figures: Lois Weber, the veteran whose name will bring many a reminiscence to exhibitors; George Nichols, one of the most promising of the younger generation of directors, just scheduled for his best year. . . . All who knew them—and that counts the industry over all the years of its history—feel the shock and the loss.

Zanuck Rolls the Drums

(Continued from Page 3)

at a reasonable price?

"Mr. Fabian, if the exhibitors of America do not realize these very important matters and do not prepare to do their share in encouraging and aiding us of the studios, then it is going to be a sorry day for the exhibitors of America. If producers find that they cannot at least break even, then, naturally, they cannot be expected to take the fabulous financial gambles we are taking today. If the rest of the American exhibitors pull any picture when it is doing legitimately fine business, then, in my opinion, they will be cutting their own throats because the producers are eventually going to come to the realization that they will have to depend upon smaller, lower price pictures, as it is impossible to take the gamble without fullest cooperation from every exhibitor and theatre manager in the nation.

"Mr. Fabian, there is no conceivable excuse for your action, and I am writing you this open letter in the hope that it will awaken response from exhibitors and that moving pictures worthy of extended engagements will be given same, so that they will be permitted to earn for you and for us every dollar that they can in your territory so that a proper share of that money can be returned to Hollywood to be used to make other pictures just as fine and fitting as 'Drums Along the Mohawk'.

"Sincerely,

"Regards,

"DARRYL ZANUCK."

The Box Office: 'DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK' BEATING LOUD AT BOX OFFICE; 'FIRST LOVE' ALSO STRONG

FOX--1 New Release

Twentieth Century-Fox again takes top honors by winning the Honor Box this week with the top grossing picture, "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK," 153%. Following the national Kate Smith broadcast on "DRUMS" from Hollywood, the picture opened strongly across the nation and is now playing holdover weeks in the majority of cases, with many promises of third weeks.

This Technicolor epic of early American frontier days (1776-77) was adapted from Walter D. Edmonds' novel of the same name. Claudette Colbert and Henry Fonda are co-starred. Among the more important featured players are Edna May Oliver, Eddie Collins, John Carradine, and Roger Imhof. John Ford handled the outstanding direction.

Exhibitors should by all means plan to give this one extra playing time, for besides the big cast and outstanding Technicolor scenes (for which the company went over 2,000 miles to location), it has been backed by a terrific exploitation campaign and will undoubtedly be heavily endorsed by P.T.A.'s. for the picture is also highly inspirational and educational, with all of the early colonial props, wardrobes, and settings in their natural colors.

UNIVERSAL--2 New Ones

Universal Pictures have two new releases this week, one the new Deanna Durbin, and the other just a fair programmer.

Miss Durbin's latest is "FIRST LOVE," which has opened in several key city engagements and is doing pretty well at a 121% average, although this is below what we had estimated it and a great deal below the business that the previous Durbin pictures have done. It is hard to state off-hand why "FIRST LOVE" is not doing better business. It is true that business is off at least 10%, but possibly a new formula is needed for Miss Deanna to compete with the epics.

For the first time, Miss Durbin has a leading man, Robert Stack, who carries the honors very well. Helen Parrish is again prominently featured in a meany role, very reminiscent of Barbara Hutton. Eugene Pallette, Samuel S. Hinds, June Storey and Marcia Mae Jones are featured. Leatrice Joy, after a long absence from the screen, returns in "FIRST LOVE," as Deanna's very affected mother.

Joe Pasternak, who has been responsible for the young Miss Durbin's career, produced "FIRST LOVE."

Universal's second release this week is a fairly good programmer entitled "CALL A MESSENGER," which is just getting by at a 70% average. The Little Tough Guys and two of the Dead End Kids, Billy

*Of Nine New Releases in the Past Week,
Three Rated Over 100% One Came
Through Fair; Six Were
Very Weak.*



Halop and Huntz Hall, are featured, with Robert Armstrong and Mary Carlisle portraying the romantic leads. Buster Crabbe, Victory Jory and Anne Nagel are in the supporting cast.

This one will make a good supporting feature on the average double bill, but it is not drawing very well on its own. The picture itself is quite entertaining, but evidently the

That popular team that scored so heavily in "Stagecoach." Claire Trevor and John Wayne, is again re-united in "ALLEGHENY UPRISING." Other important featured players are Brian Donlevy, George Sanders, Robert Barrett, and Eddie Quillan.

Warners--2 New Ones

Warner Brothers have two new programmers from the Bryan Foy unit this week, neither of any special importance because of the weak casts.

"ON DRESS PARADE," 76%, which is the finale for the Dead End Kids, as far as Warners are concerned, is the best of the two new releases. Although the Dead End Kids have been on the marquee many times during the past two years, their value in first run houses is nil, while they still have a fair draw in the "nabes." John Litel, Frankie Thomas and Cissie Loftus are featured. William Clemmens directed.

Warners' second programmer is another racketeer picture, "SMASHING THE MONEY RING," 68%, with Ronald Reagan, Margot Stevenson, and Eddie Foy, Jr. Terry Morse directed.

COLUMBIA--2 New Releases

Columbia Pictures have two new releases this week, one a program picture and the other a new Joe E. Brown comedy.

This new Joe E. Brown picture is his first under his new Columbia contract, "BEWARE SPOOKS," which is just getting by at around 73%. A few years ago, Joe E. Brown was a definite "A" attraction, but now his following has dropped off to the point where his pictures will have to be run as the "B" feature, with a big "A" attraction.

Supporting Brown are Mary Carlisle, George Lewis, and Clarence Kolb. Robert Sparks produced and Ed Sedgwick directed.

Columbia's second release is another programmer from the Irving Briskin unit, "SCANDAL SHEET," 68%, which is just another filler. Otto Kruger, Ona Munson, and Eddie Norris are featured. Ralph Cohn supervised and Nick Grinde directed.

REPUBLIC--1 Release

Republic's new release this week is a very weak programmer, "JEEPERS CREEPERS," which is only averaging 62%. So you had better book this one on a bank night, or with a big percentage picture.

The Weaver Brothers and Elviry are featured, along with Roy Rogers, so this one will probably do better in the stick houses wherever the radio program is popular.

Watch for . . . The Digest's New Year's Summary

public has had enough Little Tough Guys and Dead End Kids. Ken Goldsmith produced and Arthur Lubin directed.

RKO--1 New Release

RKO-Radio Pictures have one new release this week, "ALLEGHENY UPRISING" (sold to exhibitors as "Allegheny Frontier"), which has opened up quite well, taking all current business into consideration, at a 112% average. This story, too, like "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK," is the story of our early colonies in the days of '76, and the uprising of the settlers against the English and their allied Indian tribes. Producer-writer Wolfson hashed out a rather weak story, but Director Bill Seiter made the best of his material, and accordingly exhibitors will probably get satisfactory results in most situations.

9 New Releases Not In Last Issue

		% We Est.	
1. Drums Along The Mohawk	FOX	153	150
2. First Love	UNIV	121	130
3. Allegheny Uprising	RKO	112	115
4. On Dress Parade	WAR	76	75
5. Beware Spooks	COL	76	75
6. Call A Messenger	UNIV	70	75
7. Scandal Sheet	COL	68	70
8. Smashing The Money Ring	WAR	68	70
9. Jeepers Creepers	REP	62	65

Stromberg Clicks With 'Another Thin Man' For MGM

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 145%)

Producer.....Hunt Stromberg
Director.....W. S. Van Dyke II
Screenplay: Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett.

Original Story.....Dashiell Hammett
Stars: William Powell, Myrna Loy
Featured: Virginia Grey, Otto Kruger, C. Aubrey Smith, Ruth Hussey, Nat Pendleton, Patric Knowles, Tom Neal, Phyllis Gordon, Sheldon Leonard, Don Costello, Harry Bellaver, William A. Poulson, Muriel Hutchinson, Abner Biberman, Marjorie Main, Asta, Renne & Stella.
Photographers: Oliver T. Marsh, William Daniels.

Musical Score.....Edward Ward
Art Directors: Cedric Gibbons, John S. Detlie, Edwin B. Willis.
Film Editor.....Fredrick Y. Smith
Time105 minutes

We do not need to be the seventh son of a prophet to tell you that there is a vast cash audience awaiting the return of William Powell to the screen, that this audience wishes for nothing more than the return in a "Thin Man" vehicle with Myrna Loy at his side.

That's the cash situation. It is as sure as shootin'. So now we can add that the entertainment values are also there. Barring some slowness in spots that the producer has probably caught already, it measures up in full stride with the other "Thin Man" episodes. (The picture was previewed in 105 minutes; you will probably find it more brief for regular release.)

But it will still be "Powell-Loy and the Thin Man" for your marquees, an exceptional supporting cast to put over a fine writing job, and a neat evening of entertainment. Producer Hunt Stromberg knows his audiences, he plays on their desire to laugh or thrill or chill with a veteran's hand. He spots every role in a picture with someone who is apt to do one of those stand-out jobs. He slips in such audience baiters as an Asta, and, in this case, a gurgling infant.

The infant is a new arrival in the Powell-Loy family since the "Thin Man" last met his public. Combined with Asta he has many delightful moments. The problem is presented by C. Aubrey Smith, who is being blackmailed, and who calls in his friend, Powell. Before the action unwinds there have been three killings, almost everyone in the cast has been under suspicion—even the "Thin Man" himself—the police have plodded their weary way, and in the end Powell, with aid from Myrna has wrapped the case up.

It is a good script and story, perhaps a little too good in the sense that there is so much plot as to result in the slow moments already mentioned.

The stars are in their elements. Support is highlighted by the progress shown by this Muriel Hutchinson girl, who must be taken into calculations from now on. Nat Pendleton gets some good spots, with that grand character trouper, Marjorie Mann, coming in for top honors in a landlady role.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: You know what you can do with another "Thin Man"—or, "Another Thin Man"—without our advice. They will relish in it as it is, but like it even better if it is

'Day-Time Wife' Riot of Classy Comedy

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 130%)

Producer.....Darryl F. Zanuck
Asso. Producer.....Raymond Griffith
Director.....Gregory Ratoff
Screenplay: Art Arthur, Robert Harari.

Story.....Rex Taylor
Stars: Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell.

Featured: Warren William, Binnie Barnes, Wendy Barrie, Joan Davis, Joan Valerie, Leonid Kinskey, Mildred Gover, Renie Riano.

Photographer.....Peverell Marley
Film Editor.....Francis Lyons
Time71 minutes

Bubbling and frothy, contagious in its merriment, "Day Time Wife," without aiming at epic proportions, will be one of the best appreciated audience treats of the year.

Of course the story formula is old, the wife who sets out to learn for herself what this mysterious attraction is possessed by day-time wives, i.e., secretaries, for otherwise loving hubbies.

It is the skill in craftsmanship that makes the entertainment. From guidance in production by Darryl Zanuck, through the script, the direction and the playing it is what might be called a "happy" event.

Aside from a general report of the picture's entertainment excellent chief point of interest lies in its returning Tyrone Power for a welcome interlude to the type of debonair role which brought him over the first big screen hurdles in "Love Is News" and the further proof that this Linda Darnell girl is no accident. She measures up to her biggest opportunity to date: she will definitely go places.

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Another Thin Man	MGM.....145
2. Daytime Wife	FOX.....130
3. We Are Not Alone	WAR.....130
4. Reno	RKO.....80
5. The Covered Trailer	REP.....70
6. The Escape	FOX.....70

down under the hundred minute mark when you play it. Previewed November 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Picture marks Powell's return to the screen after a long absence, and to commemorate occasion, Metro has provided him with his silversheet helpmeet with a Dashiell Hammett 'Thin Man' yarn that tops either of the two previous mystery comedy vehicles provided the pair."

REPORTER: "The return to the screen of William Powell teamed with Myrna Loy in another Thin Man yarn, is enough to spell heavy box office. But when, as in this instance, the combination is supported by a story which measures up to the original 'Thin Man,' a sparkling script, splendid performance in every role under the most facile and deft of direction, it means a smash hit and that's what 'Another Thin Man' is."

The story? Oh, yes. Well, it seems that Power is the office busy young husband so engrossed in his business that he forgets the niceties of life a husband should always remember, even his wedding anniversary. Linda is the gal who, prodded by oft-divorced Binnie Barnes, decides to do something about.

Her choice is to go out in the world and find out by first hand experience just what it is that secretaries have and she isn't displaying. Suave Warren William is the boss who introduces her to the facts of business life. Wendy Barrie is the Power secretary at the root of the whole trouble.

From that premise a fast-moving, hilarious farce develops. The players, one and all, are at home with that trouping skill of real troupers that delights in real lines to deliver, smart situations to wriggle in and out of, and the comforting assurance that they are delivering in the most difficult of mediums—farce.

Gregory Ratoff, with "Hotel for Women," and "Intermezzo"

not so far behind in memory, is setting himself a fast pace in this type of screen delight. For the sake of jaded audiences, may he live long and prosper.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: An exploitation theme, a teasing cast for the ads, a fine show after they come. Balance its bookings betwixt and between some of the epics and tragedies, and they'll bless you for it. Previewed November 10th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The virtues of this comedy lie in its frequently sparkling laugh lines and the deft handling of its situations which make it Gregory Ratoff's smoothest directorial effort to date . . . the script is as fresh as the story is antique, the picture is delightfully played at a fast pace as broad farce, provides a multitude of laughs and, on this basis, it should click handsomely at the box office."

VARIETY: "Light, though clever story, thoroughly seasoned with sparkling dialog, provides an excellent foundation for 'Day-Time Wife,' as gay a farce as silversheet audiences have been offered in many a day."

The Fastest Growing Paper
in the Industry

The Box Office DIGEST

Warner's 'We Are Not Alone' Impressive Picture

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 130%)

ProducerHal B. Wallis
Associate Producer.....Henry Blanke
DirectorEdmund Goulding
Novel by.....James Hilton
Screenplay: James Hilton, Milton
Krimms.

StarPaul Muni

Featured: Jane Bryan, Flora Robson, Raymond Severn, Una O'Connor, Henry Daniell, Montagu Love, James Stephenson, Stanley Logan, Cecil Kellaway, Alan Napier, Ely Malyon, E. E. Clive, Douglas Scott, Crauford Kent, May Beatty, Billy Bevan, Holmes Herbert, John Powers, Colin Kenny, Ethel Griffies.

PhotographerTony Gaudio

Musical Score.....Max Steiner

Musical Director Leo F. Forbstein

Art Director.....Carl Jules Weyl

Film Editor.....Warren Low

Times110 minutes

It is difficult to imagine that "We Are Not Alone," on the strength of its superb production quality, and on the automatic draw of the Paul Muni name, will not be a box office winner. A healthy winner. Muni audiences certainly have never paid their many dollars to enter theatres where they expected Laurel and Hardy antics.

But it is necessary to let the exhibitor know that this is a "class" picture—that is, a subject to place properly in his booking and his exploitation. "Mr. Chips," "The Citadel," and others of possibly similar rating, have set the standard in the past year. The exhibitor needs no further guide than his own knowledge of his own patrons.

As a picture, "We Are Not Alone" is a deft—even masterful—piece of work. Executive Producer Hal Wallis took his courage in his hand at the outset when he must have decided, "We will make this James Hilton story for the screen as its readers met it," and he followed through.

He had aces up his sleeve. Director Edmund Goulding, who is at his best retaining the sincerity while punching home this sort of story; Paul Muni, who, without need to resort to freak make-ups, must have been in a player's heaven enacting the part; and he had a surprise, that little gal named Jane Bryan whom The Digest Reviewer has been touting along since "Brother Rat," and even before that.

With associate producer Henry Blanke at the production reins, the combination comes through in marvelous fashion. It is a picture to take home in your memories and think about; there are performances by Muni, Miss Bryan,

Flora Robson, and the entire cast that make life out of celluloid. And since we have mentioned Miss Robson, let us tip exhibitors off to the fact that they will be seeing, and enjoying, this genius of character playing in about every picture she can be squeezed into this next season.

The story is laid in England, which probably explains a slight touch of "Mr. Chips" in the Muni characterization. Muni is the village doctor, with a son to whom he is devoted, Raymond Severn, and a wife whom he must toler-

ate. She, Flora Robson, has her tantrums. Comes the arrival of Jane Bryan, with all the vivacity and new appeal of any Viennese. Then, tragedy, and steps towards the gallows as Muni and Bryan are paying the penalty for a murder they did not commit. And the line—"We are not alone."

Powerful drama; expertly produced.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Not for the morons who just insist on guns and happy endings. But a knockout money-maker where you pull from the great

Muni following, because the picture has the sincerity and class behind it to justify the pull. *Previewed November 7th.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Warners deserve credit for giving such an uncompromising production to a subject that should not, in any sense, have been compromised. Their effort may or may not be rewarded at the box office."

VARIETY: "Drama, beautifully written and enacted, is the pivot upon which 'We Are Not Alone' unwinds to take its place among the year's finest screen presentations."

'Covered Trailer' Standard Higgins Yarn

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

DirectorGus Meins
Original story: Jack Townley, M. Coates Webster.

ScreenplayJack Townley

Featured: James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Mary Beth Hughes, Tommy Ryan, Maurice Murphy, Maude Eburne, Spencer Charters, Tom Kennedy, Hobart Cavanaugh, Pierre Watkin, Frank Rae, Richard Tucker, Willie Best, Walter Fenner.

PhotographerArthur Martinelli

Film Editor.....Ray Snyder

Time63 minutes

This Republic "Higgins Family" group can hold its head up in the "family series" handicap, without ever expecting to finish better than show money, but probably giving its buyers plenty of satisfaction at the pay-off odds.

"The Covered Trailer," latest in the series, again spotlights the Gleasons—Jimmy, Lucile and Russell—with Gus Meins, director, pumping in all the gags that the Stern Brothers ever knew or heard about. Grandpa Harry Davenport does his chore with expected skill.

The picture measures up as good entertainment for the mass family classification at which it is aimed. The story has a good springboard from which to get under way, starting with hectic plans on the part of the family for a South American vacation to be financed by Pa's insurance money. All plans go to pieces when Ma lets the cat out of the bag accidentally and discloses that Pa is only 44 years old, whereas the policy was based on his being 45.

But the Higginses have to hold their chins up before the neighbors so they decide on a sideaway trip with grandpa in his trailer. Trouble starts when the ship on

which they were supposed to have sailed for South America meets with disaster, which gives a crook in Pa's office the idea of making the supposedly departed Gleason responsible for a \$100,000 defalcation.

That's the plot basis. The treatment is broad, and near to slapstick at the end.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay family fare with plenty of laughs.

'The Escape' Okay In Program Formula Class

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

ProducerSol M. Wurtzel

DirectorRicardo Cortez

Original Screenplay: Robert Ellis, Helen Logan.

Featured: Kane Richmond, Amanda Duff, June Gale, Edward Norris, Henry Armetta, Frank Reicher, Scotty Beckett, Leona Roberts, Rex Downing, Jimmy Butler, Jack Carson.

PhotographerEdward Cronjager

Musical Director.....Samuel Kaylin

Time58 minutes

The story of "The Escape" is grooved so lazily in the gangster formula that it cannot be rated as above the praise "satisfactory program entertainment," despite a workmanlike job of direction by Ricardo Cortez and adequate portrayals by the cast.

It is the old "East Side, West Side," type of yarn—contrasting two tenement gamins, one of whom grows up in the uniform of the law as a copper, the other to become a big shop gangster. Clash is accentuated by the fact that the copper plans to marry the gangster's sister. Gangster wants to prevent marriage, even to the point of confessing that it was he who murdered the copper's father. He didn't do it but he

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Republic's 'The Covered Trailer,' is by far the best of the series to date. Its pace is fast and smart, and the production values are, noticeably, a shade above the average in this budget class."

VARIETY: "Family comedy, farced to the hilt, 'The Covered Trailer' starts with a laugh and ends that way. Along the way though, particularly in the finale's long chase, slapstick becomes a bit too forced and would benefit by generous editing."

does plenty other things.

Kane Richmond as the cop, and Edward Norris, as the thug, carry the lead burdens satisfactorily, with Amanda Duff adequate as the love interest. Henry Armetta gets a few opportunities, of which he takes effective advantage.

Ricardo Cortez is consistently stepping along in his directorial skill. So far he has been able to maintain a better pace than the story material given him. But we can't have everything in program bread-and-better pictures.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay bottom of the bill where a tenement-copper-gangster yarn is welcome. *Previewed November 8th.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'The Escape' will not revolutionize the industry nor be entered as a candidate for an Academy award, but it will genuinely entertain and intrigue any audience."

VARIETY: "Originally titled 'East Side, West Side,' this Sol M. Wurtzel gangster picture rates creditable mention, despite fact that its B classification will keep it relegated to the duals, with most potential draw possibilities with action-seeking clientele."

'Reno' Surprise Entertainment From RKO-Radio

RKO
 (The Digest Estimates 80%)
 Producer Robert Sisk
 Director John Farrow
 Story by Ellis St. Joseph
 Screenplay John Twist
 Star Richard Dix
 Featured: Gail Patrick, Anita Louise, Paul Cavanagh, Laura Hope Crews, Louis Jean Heydt, Hobart Cavanaugh, Charles Halton, Astrid Allwyn, Joyce Compton, Frank Faylen, William Haade.
 Photographer J. Roy Hunt
 Film Editor Harry Marker
 Time 73 minutes

A corking above average picture in the "general entertainment" class. "Reno" is another convincing proof of the fact that there is no element of accident in the consistent success of those units at RKO welded together by Lee Marcus, and with such factors as this picture presents in Associate Producer Bob Sisk, Director John Farrow, and Scriptor John Twist.

The boys cannot do it so steadily and so often and have it accident. They do not plow the well known formula forty acres, they have the courage to hit at by-paths of originality, they back it up with workmanship.

"Reno" is a much better picture than its title suggests, because exhibitors know of so many "Reno" hashes that didn't give anything to the screen. But the title is correct, because skilful treatment lifts the picture above the hackneyed into something that is a sort of "small-town-saga." If you can use the word "saga" in connection with a divorce mill.

Richard Dix is the central figure. It is one of the best parts of his career—with some touches of the "Cimarron" strength—and he works hand in hand with Director John Farrow to fine results. Dix, in the story, is first seen in a witness stand situation, of the current year, which gives him an opportunity to go into a retrospect that starts back in the early 1900's.

Then he becomes the youthful law graduate, arriving at a frontier town, and linking his life with that of his adopted home. There are days of prosperity when mines are flourishing, there are days of despair, there's a day of trickery when the smart Dix discovers the legal quirks that will allow him to turn Reno into a divorce mill, and bring happy days back to all his fellows.

Through this skeleton, and clinging closely to its bones, there is a human story. Battles with the menace of giant mining combines, marriage with a girl who can take but not give, eventual happiness in the round-up of the retrospect when he saves his daughter from a disastrous step. Through it all, the lifting note of a city's story. For Reno is now a city, not a frontier town.

Richard Dix has never played to better advantage—must have liked his part and the direction. Nor, in recent years, has he ever been photographed as well. Gail Patrick, who has been getting a rather poor deal on some recent parts, responds to the general inspiration. Then, there is Hobart Cavanaugh, at his best for top spots. For that matter, you can glance over the balance of the supporting cast as listed above and mark an "okay" beside each name.

Your reviewer's opinion of the John Twist script may well be guessed from his enjoyment of the picture. As for John Farrow, all we have to say is that when he gets the opportunity at a big picture which will drop in his lap

one of these days, we hope he doesn't let them give him a lame duck. This Farrow has it on the ball—watch, wait, and listen until you hear us say: "We told you so."

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Far above the quality you are expecting in the bracket in which you bought the picture. Therefore, a possible sleeper. Keep your eyes open, and your booking dates elastic. It will save some epic flops. Previewed Nov. 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Aside from sterling performances by the rest of the cast, Producer Robert Sisk has balanced the ingredients of this production in expert fashion, emerging with a picture that has all the earmarks of class A, even though lacking in top names."

VARIETY: "'Reno' stacks up as entertainment of the first water. In sections of the country where the Richard Dix name is a potent box office lure, picture will enjoy a particularly good following as first attraction on the bill. Other sections will have a strong complement for the most costly features."

Watch for The Digest's

New Year's Summary Issue



It's New . . .



It's Vital . . .



It's Different . . .

The Radio Reporter: Now Starts Giving Percentages; Red Cross Show With Bob Hope Tops This Week

SPECIAL PROGRAM

Red Cross national broadcast on all chains; Bob Hope, master of ceremonies; stars, Connie Boswell, Amos and Andy, Jascha Heifitz, Burns and Allen, John Charles Thomas, Bergen and McCarthy, Jean Hersholt, David Broeckman's orchestra and choristers, with addresses by the President and Red Cross head, Norman Davis.

Rating: Super-plus.

A surprisingly well conceived program for a cause that needed no more than the mention of its name. . . . Bob Hope, almost tops now as an individual radio personality, managed to retain his zip without disturbing the dignity of the cause. . . . He did a great job. . . . And there is no need to choose names from the transcontinental jumps that supplied the support. . . . Beloved Jean put over his sincere message. Amos and Andy cinched their fine period when it was made known that their week's salary—some \$10,000 was going to the cause; Connie Boswell did her part, Edgar Bergen shaped up a benefit act that was good, and all turned in for a fine representation of radio to America.

★ ★ ★

SILVER SCREEN

Master of ceremonies, Conrad Nagel; stars in playlet, John Garfield and Carolyn Wilson.

Rating: 90%.

The second week of this play suffered apparently from rush rehearsing, or maybe the material just wasn't there to stand up for a second week. . . . Garfield holds up the hokum to fair satisfaction and this Miss Wilson strides with him. . . . Maybe she is someone for the talent scouts to check on.

★ ★ ★

GROUCH CLUB

Master of ceremonies, Jack Les-courie; featured, Ned Sparks, Leon Leonardi, Beth Wilson.

Rating: 75%.

After your RADIO REPORTER went to town over the previous week's Grouch Club show, he has

to hide his head this week. . . . It was not entirely the fault of the performers or the material, but there must have been some pantomime active in the studio that threw the players off, and its gags to the wind. They laughed—in the studio—too long at what the listeners thought were the wrong spots, they crashed into lines that listeners thought might be building to some purpose. . . . Someone had better decide whether the Grouch Club is a graduated Amateur Hour, a Ham and Eggs gath-

ing, or a full-blooded competitor with adult programs.

★ ★ ★

SCREEN GUILD

Master of ceremonies, Roger Pryor; stars, Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, Reginald Owen, Jean Hersholt; the playlet, "The Beachcomber."

Rating: 100%.

It is difficult for your RADIO REPORTER to imagine any better written, delivered, or produced condensation of "The Beachcomber" than this program offered. . . . That's the top word for the top spot of the program. . . . The informal "get-together" went over like a million dollars with the studio audience, which could probably see stars making mannikens of themselves, but died like a dog over the air because the ether audience couldn't get the spontaneity but did get the feeling of rehearsals. Program gets a 100% rating because it hit on average with others in the series,

but there is something wrong somewhere. With all the varieties of talent it should not slide through life in a rut. Maybe the change to New York in the next few weeks will inject a few vitamins.

★ ★ ★
JACK BENNY
Master of ceremonies, Jack, in person; aided by the usual troupe of Mary Livingstone, Eddie Anderson, Don Wilson, Phil Harris, and Dennis Day.

in both air adaptations and in punch of presentation carried through at a pace to satisfy his following. . . . Edna May Oliver was a welcome member of the cast. . . . The play was "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd," an Agatha Christie mystery classic, not an ideal selection, but plenty satisfying under Welles playing and direction.

★ ★ ★

CHASE AND SANBORN

Master of ceremonies, Rudy Vallee; stars, Edgar Bergen and Charley McCarthy, along with Mortimer Snerd, Lansing Hatfield and Dorothy Lamour.

Rating: 85%.

Rudy Vallee is too good a showman for the performance he gave radio audiences on this period last week. . . . Maybe it was because Rudy was just a visitor and not the producer, maybe it was just an off-season lull, but the show just didn't seem to get going. . . . Even Charlie and Mortimer seemed affected by the ennui. . . . That veteran of a number of programs, including Signal Oil, Vera Vague—or what-have-you—almost saved the program for coffee. . . . But it still left this listener yawning.

★ ★ ★

KATE SMITH

Master of ceremonies, Ted Collins; star, Kate Smith; guest star, Glenda Farrell; featured, Abbot and Costello.

Rating: 80%.

It is difficult for your RADIO REPORTER to give an eighty per cent rating to a Kate Smith program, but he forgives it in charity because he figures the gang must have been too tired from their double cross-continent trip, or else they didn't have time to plan and set the show. Glenda Farrell and the material given her did not help. Kate's thrilling voice and the Abbot and Costello antics saved the show, but the latter two boys had better dust off some of those old Palace Theater bromides. . . . Too many cheap stations are using the same Joe Millers for a big time program to take the chance on laying the same eggs.

Rating: 105%.

THE RADIO REPORTER jumps Jack Benny's last program in rating even above his usual safe standard, because it was geared back to Benny first principles. . . . Jack and Mary carried the program, with able assistance properly spotted but not over-emphasized. . . . There was a good running gag premise . . . Jack's troublesome tooth . . . and it was the secret of the program's general excellence. . . . There was always something to play with, no impression of grasping for laughs. . . . It was a tight, well-handled program.

★ ★ ★

ORSON WELLES

Star, Orson Welles; producer, etc., Orson Welles featured, Edna May Oliver.

Rating: 95%.

Not the best of the many things that Orson Welles has given to radio, but deserving of a 95 per cent rating because his usual skill

DARRYL F. ZANUCK'S
production of

DAVE ALONE AGAIN

starring

Claudette **COLBER**

with

EDNA MAY OLIVER · EDDIE COLLINS
JESSIE RALPH · ARTHUR SHIELDS

Associate Producer Raymond Griffith

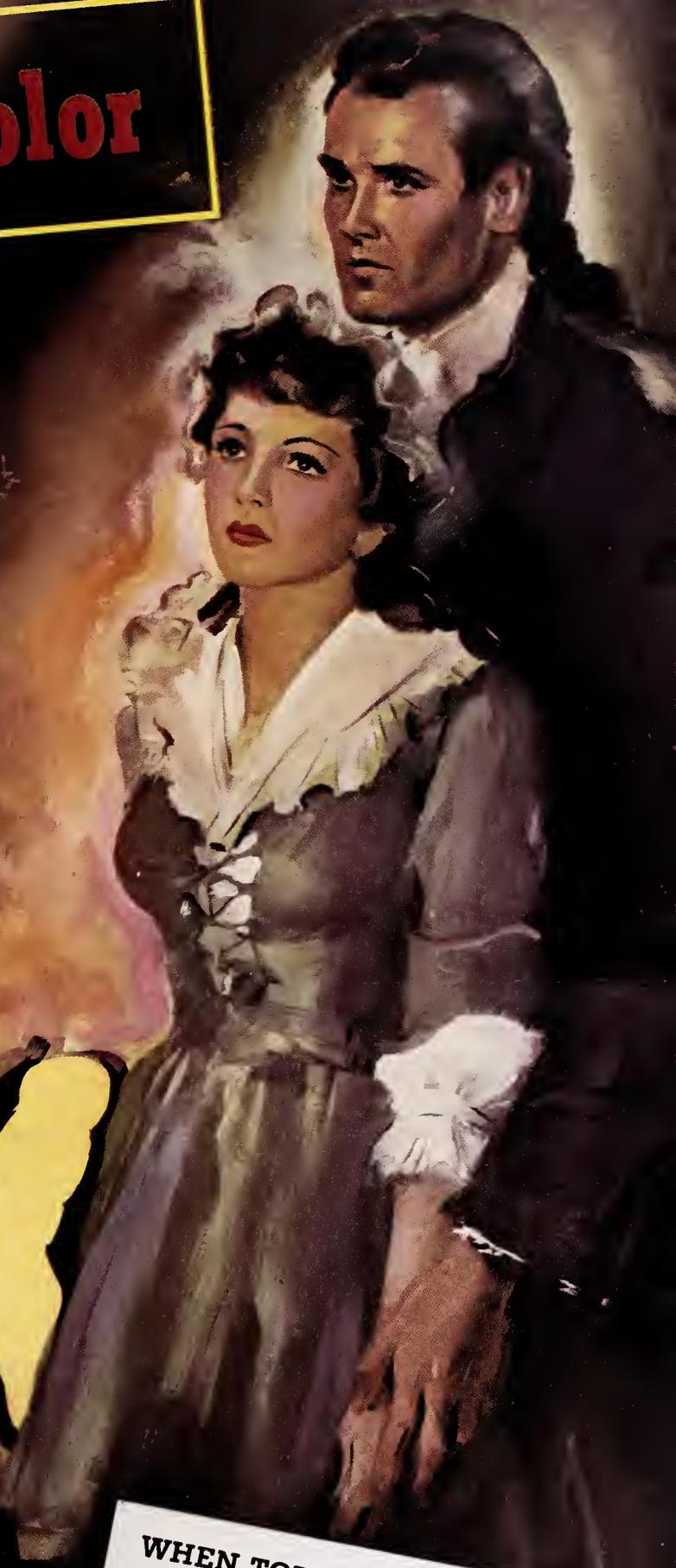
Directed by

in Technicolor

MRS AT THE TOMAHAWK

T · Henry **FONDA**

JOHN CARRADINE · DORRIS BOWDON
ROBERT LOWERY · ROGER IMHOF
Screen play by Lamar Trotti and Sonya Levien
JOHN FORD



WHEN TORCH AND TOMAHAWK
SPREAD THEIR TERROR... AND
FRONTIER WOMEN FOUGHT
BESIDE THEIR MEN! From Walter
D. Edmonds' biggest of all best-sellers
... the great novel of adventure and
romance when America was young!

Nichols Thinks Producers Seeking Top Revenue Should Study Clearance Situation In the Valley



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

Hollywood, Calif., Nov. 13.—Hop in friends, we are going places. And as we pass through the numerous stop and go lights we finally notice the Garfield Theatre at Alhambra on our left. Marquee ablaze with lights announcing "\$1100 free tonight."

We set the speedometer and slowly cruise until we pass the Rosemeade Theatre owned by Mr. J. Edwards, Jr. They announce "\$400 given away." This is in the town of Rosemeade and three miles from the Garfield Theatre. All this time we are passing through lighted business districts, and, to a stranger, all the same city.

We approach El Monte, which is two miles east of Rosemeade and glimpse the beautiful new El Monte Theatre, built and owned by Al Sanborn. A monument to Mr. Sanborn's seventeen years in the exhibition field in this thriving city, and built for permanency and the pride of El Monte citizens.

We, however, don't stop but keep on going and pass on our left three blocks east, the Rialto, built by the Temple Estate in 1922 for and by Mr. Sanborn, who is at present leasing this property from Sol Lesser, of the Plymouth Investment Corporation and an associate in Principal Pictures.

A few minutes more and we arrive at our destination, Five Points, a section in El Monte one mile from the Rialto Theatre.

We now tackle this El Monte problem at its chief source of trouble and we will try to give you a pen picture of just what we found. Here we viewed the Tumbleweed Theatre, operated by

J. Edwards, Jr. Friends, this is a type of architecture that is beyond our scope to describe. It has some eight steel uprights, each jutting up in the air some forty feet, parallel to the sides of the walls, with a peak at a steep elevation in the center. We judged the steel peirs were placed there so that an additional floor could be installed later, possibly for a dance hall or other sport center. It has neither the appearance of permanency nor beauty of the El Monte, but rather something which was thrown together in haste, with but one thought in mind—to get it open as soon as possible. This description is given merely to set the stage for what is to follow, and are your reporter's impressions only.

The San Gabriel Valley situations are as follows: Alhambra, Monrovia, Monterey Park, El Monte, Covina, San Gabriel, Glendora, Azusa, Arcadia, Baldwin Park, Rosemeade, El Serrano, and Five Points, at El Monte. These are all keyed from Pasadena, which is a seven day key off first-run Los Angeles. The towns above are given in sequence as they represent their importance in film revenue to the distributors, with the possible exception of the Tumbleweed. We cannot obtain that data. Your guess is as good as ours.

Here's A Cross-Word Puzzle In Clearance Problems

First we run into a clearance situation that is a pip. We now refer to the Tumbleweed, and its location, which the record shows was chosen with this possible thought in mind—to confuse all present zoning and clearance books and to take advantage of a seemingly technical city limits line, to the disadvantage of distributors and exhibitors alike. We mentioned before the name of Five Points, which means a section where heavy traffic arterial highways converge and cross and carry the thousands of people to and fro in this vast region of citrus, oil, and farming. This is the hub. The old city of El Monte boundary lines consisted of a plot some one and three quarter miles square, which is only a good sized barnyard in Wyoming or Nebraska.

Mr. Edwards contends that he is not in El Monte and that he should enjoy at his twenty-five cent run a twenty-eight day clearance off Pasadena. However, he does not take into consideration the recent ruling of a Los Angeles Superior Court judge that an address two blocks east of his Tumbleweed was judged to be a part of El Monte, regardless of a line drawn between his location and the Rialto, some fifty years ago.

Let's see what the postmaster at El Monte states: "Five Points area has always been served by El Monte CITY CARRIERS, and still is. Five Points is not a post office address and that all mail directed to Five Points will be re-directed," quotes Thomas J. Caffery. Your reporter talked with dozens of business men around Tumbleweed, and they all scoffed at our suggestion they were out in the country, and showed us their newspaper advertising to prove they were doing business as in El Monte. There is an El Monte post office, almost across the street from the Tumbleweed.

One Little Piece Fits Into The Next One

Now if the Tumbleweed is in El Monte, then, according to NRA zoning and all other correlative situations in this territory, such as Bell and Compton, this theatre at twenty-five cents admission is a second run, and should play sixty-three days after first run closing as the El Monte and Rialto are thirty cents respectfully, first run. This kind of situation should be cleared up immediately as it will soon cease to be a Southern California problem and can well become a national issue and a menace to independent exhibitors by affiliated operators.

Now, how does Mr. Edwards substantiate his position in his Tumbleweed situation in light of a letter written by him to one of the local exchange managers, that your reporter read and was presumably sent to all exchange managers by Mr. Edwards? He stated therein to the effect that he considered Temple City, which is three and one half miles from his Rosemeade Theatre with its own post office and municipal government, a part of the town of Rosemeade and he would demand of

them if a theatre went into that situation a zoning of his Rosemeade Theatre.

So we return to the El Monte and Rialto Theatres, and visit with Al Sanborn, and how we revealed in a survey of most complete data on bookings and dating from the first runs in Los Angeles to every situation in the San Gabriel Valley, and they going back some seventeen years.

Some Availability Surprises For Eastern Exhibitors

You exhibitors in other parts of the country who go into the exchanges and set your pictures a month or two in advance; or in Chicago where you receive a printed list of all availabilities each month with definite dates set at your admission price break, think you are hard done by. Follow our story closely from now on, as this can well happen to you.

First, the San Gabriel Valley is served by a preponderance of dinky little weekly newspapers with small circulation. The first asset to successful exhibition is a large newspaper advertising budget. This applies as well to the final revenue the distributor receives from his percentage engagements. To advertise you have to know what picture you are going to run, well in advance of play date. Then how in the hell can you advertise pictures when you are compelled to accept a forty-eight hour notice of availability? You exhibitors in other sections of the country don't laugh. We're going to prove it by records.

We now know that all the San Gabriel Valley is keyed off Pasadena, which is seven days after L.A. first run closing. Let us take a concrete example, there are hundreds like it, and United Artists doesn't do any different than the other major exchanges. "Trade Winds" played the Chinese and State theatres day and date January 11 to 17, first run. L.A. Local exchange booker now receive Fox West Coast booking department orders for a hold date—or on the cuff—for February 5 to 22 first run booking for Pasadena. This ties up a print for seventeen days, allowing ample time for possible move-over from their United Artists
(Continued on Page 17)

"ALLEGHENY UPRISING"

William Seiter

Directed





John Wayne

as Jim Smith

Management
LEO MORRISON
Agency

“ALLEGHENY UPRISING”

“ALLEGHENY UPRISING”

Claire Trevor

as Janie



Management
HARRY WURTZEL
Agency



Field Man Ridge Covers Carolinas Like Blanket; Bringing Exhibitor Facts to Hollywood Creators



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Here's A Slant On Neely Bill Tactics From The Field

Why do Congressmen send garden seed back home?

Why do the Solons at Washington need the Franking of letters?

Why do these folks, who, after all, before they went to Washington were like you and me, just plain people, open their mail, sort it into piles "for and against" certain legislation?

It's simple: Every two years one-third of the House of Representatives is elected. The folks to whom they send the garden seed vote.

The folks to whom they send all sorts of printed matter vote.

The folks who write and wire them vote.

So what?

It's our friend, The Neely Bill.

Just this week, I heard what Senator Reynolds (of the Tobacco Reynolds) thought of the opinion of the folks back home in Carolina.

He was being importuned, so the story goes, to vote against the Neely Bill in the Senate. A group of leading exhibitors was in his office. He showed them a pile of wires from exhibitors back home. Then he turned to another pile of wires, twice as high, from Women's Clubs also back home. "See," he is said to have ejaculated, "The women want it passed" And he is said to have inquired, "what am I to do, with so many folks for it?" The merits of the bill apparently had not soaked in.

Votes, votes, votes, talk loud-est.

How are they to be rounded up, or get evidence of the desire

of the voters back home, so as to impress the nearly 500 solons, who hold in the hollow of their hands, the destiny of this great industry.

Reactions From Prexy Ed.

Kuykendall, of the MPTOA

In discussing this matter recently with Ed Kuykendall, president of the M.P.T.O.A. and several of his Executive Committeemen, a plan was suggested, whereby this question seemed easy of solution. It was this one, and it has been tried and proven here in the Carolinas.

First, divide the country up into sections according to congressional districts. Send out film men, who are familiar with the industry, to thoroughly explain and interpret the implications of the Neely Bill, to every small town exhibitor. How it will effect him, not paying any attention at all to how it will impoverish the producer. Show him how it will put thousands of small exhibitors out of business.

Secondly: Once he is sold, go with him to his Rotary, Kiwanis Club and Chamber of Commerce, and enlist their support.

Third: Go with him to his Club Women, address their organization if necessary, explaining how it will effect their neighbor, the local theatre man.

Fourth: Shoot at a petition with a million names, protesting its passage. That means only 10,000 theatres securing 100 names to such a petition.

Prexy Kuykendall agrees that an intensive campaign on Main Street, with exhibitors in every congressional district in the United States, would turn the trick. He is in thorough accord with carrying the fight right back home from whence these biennial Congressmen come, to get support.

Suggests That Hays Group Get Down To Earth

"What has happened to the astuteness of Charlie Pettijohn and Will Hays?" one old time leader here remarked this week. "Those gentlemen from Indiana, when they were down in Sullivan, their home town knew how to beat the brush, and get support for legislation. Have they grown so fat and rich, so immune to the call of the people, that they think they

can sway Congress with oratory?" was a part of the things he had to say. "It's Charlie Pettijohn's particular job at the head of the legislative department of the Hays organization, to protect this industry from such injury as the Neely Bill will heap upon every part of it," he continued. "They have the means, the nucleus of an organization, to put over a campaign between now and the time Congress votes in the House on the Neely Bill. If the people in Rotary, Kiwanis, The Lions, Chambers of Commerce, Business Men's Clubs and Women's organizations have the results of this bill explained to them, they will rise up in unison to protect their own theatre operators. They may not care a hoot for your film industry in Hollywood. They do care for their own home town industry. When they know how it will cost him, and how it will add to the cost of their own amusement, they will respond."

Concluding, he chortled, "the Solons always hearken to the will of the folks back home, who think the garden seed they send them will grow."

Motion Pictures Presented At Dollar A Head

Pinehurst, N. C., Nov. 11.—In this era of pyrotechnics in showmanship all over the country, it is refreshing to see at least a couple of spots, where motion pictures are shown in an atmosphere that would do credit to Grand Opera, and where the most aesthetic sit and bask in an environment, wholesome and inspiring even to one so unaccustomed to it as to make it relished beyond description.

It is down here in Pinehurst, and it is conducted by the master showman and former leader of the Carolina Exhibitors, Charles Wesley Piquet. Everybody in the industry knows "Charlie Piquet." He headed his fellows in this state of tobacco and cotton mills for almost two decades, and only two years ago, turned the reins over to the leadership of younger men, who had long been soldiers in the ranks he so ably commanded or rather led.

While it is true that Charlie Piquet has a clientele in Pinehurst and Southern Pines that flocks to those resorts in the winter from

the rich homes of the North, it is still apparent that there are thousands of others who never go to Pinehurst, who might be attracted to such shows as he offers for their entertainment. And a dollar is still charged at the gate. A reserved seat is still the order of the day. A selected program is always offered, and his seats are always filled. The show is put on like an opera. The environment is as inspiring. The dignity and poise of the 400 hundred is carried out. His audiences loudly acclaim the manner in which he conducts what in most places is just a "picture show." In Pinehurst it's a performance.

Why Not Try It Out

In The Big Cities?

Just why in cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and a hundred other metropolitan centers, such performances could not be put over for the 400, on a paying basis, for the most select entertainment, and conducted on a forty week basis like the old legitimate, has always been a question in my mind. It certainly would elevate the dignity of the motion picture, especially those productions, that are so worthy of being immortalized. It would make "motion-picture-minded" that great group, which today feel it beneath its dignity in these larger places, just another picture show, no differently presented than the ones their servants see.

Ridge Cites Fine Record

Of Lyle Wilson In Carolinas

Roanoke Ridge, Nov. 12.—Whether the blare of trumpets, proclaiming acrimonious denunciations against the producers and distributors of motion pictures, by the Allied Group, will be as useful in solving the vexing problems of the independent exhibitor, as the quiet line driving exploits of the MPTOA, offers a question for the industry's wise men to answer. Since coming into the old South, investigating the quiet, unostentatious movements of leaders like Prexy Lyle Wilson of the North and South Carolina MPTOA, one questions which line of procedure will ultimately bring order out of chaos; bring cordial relations out of an industry di-

(Continued on Page 17)

Nichols Thinks Producers Should Study Clearance Situation

(Continued from Page 12)

ists Theatre to their Strand or Tower theatres. The F.W.C. booking department doesn't know if this picture will hold up seventeen days or seven days, or if they will find it convenient to switch this print to their situations in Inglewood. They can do this and have. Maybe the manager of the United Artist in Pasadena doesn't like the booking by the F.W.C. office. He decides he wants it to open February 7 to 24. Then things get really messed up right. We find that "Trade Winds" opens on February 1, not as first scheduled, and they close the picture on February 17. Now who gets kicked in the neck for the extra five days? The independent Valley exhibitors have set their availability from the closing date of February 22. They have lock booked their second feature to conform with a "Trade Winds" showing. They want to advertise this U.A. picture, they paid plenty of rental for it. Now they wake up to the fact they could have dated this picture as of February 17. So the clearance on this picture has been moved back an additional five days for subsequent runs by a clever ruse of the F.W.C. booking department.

A Perplexing Situation For Mr. Edwards

How are the Fox West Coast affiliate runs fairing in this deal, in this case namely Mr. Rosenberg and Edwards? Myrl Kavenaugh, booker for Mr. Edwards, could possibly call up Carl Smith, booker for Principal Theatres and ask him to ascertain from the head booker for F. W. C., just when they figure "Trade Winds" will close at Pasadena. You see, Mr. Edwards wants to advertise the picture and realizing the local exchange booker doesn't know what is in F.W.C.'s mind—the exchange booker is only interested in that original closing date set by F.W.C. "on the cuff" of February 22—Mr. Edwards knows it is silly to think he can obtain the desired information from the local exchange.

Now if you were in the spot of an independent exhibitor in this kind of situation, what would you do? Would you take this repeated juggling of dates by F.W.C. and figure your newspaper advertising would off-set your loss of clearance, or watch the daily Pasadena closings and Alhambra ads and work on a forty-eight

hour margin? The Alhambra ads will not help you much, as you cannot find out how long Principal Theatres and Mr. Edwards will play this picture first run. It may open at the Alhambra three days and the old move-over game is pulled again and the Garfield will continue the run another four days. By this time the independent exhibitors who follow Alhambra are ready to shoot themselves, or something.

Who loses by these squirrel in a cage booking tactics? Not the independent exhibitor alone, but you, the producer, who is hollering his head off about the loss of

Ridge Covers The Carolinas Like A Blanket

(Continued from Page 16)

vided into hostile camps; bring a united front against the common enemy, and exalt this motion picture profession to the place of respect and support it so richly deserves. "This industry which wields a greater influence than any other single factor in American life today, deserves to be run by a conservative, co-operative head." is the opinion of Prexy Wilson.

It may be illuminating to exhibitors in other parts of the country to take a peep behind the scenes, and see how the Carolinians operate the exhibitor organization, which boasts of a larger states meeting than is held elsewhere in these United States. Let it be said to begin with that there are men in this North and South Carolina group, who do not always see eye to eye when they go into convention. But when they come out, it's locked step, shoulder to shoulder, radical, conservative, independent and chain operator member and all. It's a united front for another year, against the common political and business foes, wherever they may be.

In the first place, President Lyle Wilson, a younger one of the group, was chosen last year for his independent position; his politically trained mind; his willingness to not only wield a gavel, but take his car and make personal visits to almost every one of the three hundred member's home towns. There was work to do, and bulletins, such as to many Prexies resort to, to scatter their oratory, find little use in his administration.

First, Mr. Wilson found him-

self facing the fight on the Neely Bill. After carefully analyzing it, he realized its implications spelled disaster for most small exhibitors, who he believes would have to live under its terms. So like the circuit riding preacher of these hills of the last century, he took to his task.

the foreign market. THINK IT OVER. We wish to apologize to the New York office traveling representatives when we called them blind or just plain dumb last week. We now know they have no more to say about clearance violations on cut off cards, as it applies to F.W.C., than we have. In fact, we have a sneaking suspicion that the local branch managers have even less to say.

Which now allows us to sum up the San Gabriel picture, with these thoughts in mind: Why do F.W.C. allow their affiliates, Messrs. Rosenberg and Edwards, to violate

the clearance schedules against their own theatre situations, in Pasadena? If there is such a document as a master agreement in New York, what form of commitment does F.W.C. enjoy, on a picture like "Trade Winds," or other major product? What kind of a contract delivers this picture to F.W.C. to be kicked around, played when and where they desire, and at their convenience? The present form of contract which the independent signs allows no such liberties. Would you say "It's because F.W.C. are more honest in their playing reports than the independent exhibitor?"

On To Washington He Travelled For Action

Resolutions and preachments in conventions he believed had but small influence in Washington. Votes for the solons, or rather those who had voted for them back home, spoke infinitely louder than all the silvery tongued orators that might be sent to Washington, and maintained by the Allied Group, under the leadership of Abram Meyers, their paid counsel. So Prexy Wilson first went to each bailiwick, whence came representatives and the states that sent four senators.

These boys back on Main Street were taught what was in store for them, if the Neely Bill should finally get on the statute books. These men at once fired their squirrel rifles toward Capital Hill, and with telling effect, so far as these two states are concerned. Then armed with this elecorate backing, off to Washington he sallied, and delivered his blow to this piece of iniquitous legislation.

But that is not all this year has found Lyle Wilson doing. This state of North Carolina sought to increase the taxes on the industry. Prexy Wilson again at Raleigh was there with the backing of his Main Street crowd, which wields a lot of prestige back home, and

saved the exhibitors from another blow to their business, from the hands of the ever present tax grabbers.

"Mike" Kincey Not A Big Bad Circuit Wolf

Nor does he stop there. In this organization, the representative of Wilby-Public Kincey chain operated theatres, sits as a member. The problems of the independent operators are not barnstormed all over the deep South, but find their place on the convention floor and in directors' meetings. There are the usual problems of clearance, prices, zoning and all the other aches and pains to which the lone wolf is heir.

We cannot close this discussion of how these boys operate down here without paying our respects to "Mike" Kincey. He heads over 100 chain operated theatres. In two weeks' travels all over this state, not once have we heard of any unfair act on the part of this Publix partner, against the smaller or independent exhibitor. "Mike is fair," has been heard a hundred times, where the matter has been discussed.

He is not now nor has he ever been accused of running herd on the small fellow. He does not build, buy product and chase the independent out of business—at least up to now and those who know him best say that while he is tough competition, he observes the rules of the game and never hits below the belt. And there has been no great amount of talk about any Government investigation, in the territory ruled over by Prexy Wilson and "Mike" Kincey.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
M. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	167
The Rains Came	FOX	165
Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Babe In Arms	MGM	153
Drums Along the Mohawk	FOX	153
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	143
Kentucky	FOX	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130

Beau Geste	PAR	126
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	124
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Roaring Twenties	WAR	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander, Graham Bell	FOX	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
The Real Glory	UA	115
At The Circus	MGM	112
Thunder About	MGM	112
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	1021
Allegheeny Uprising	RKO	112
Midnight	PAR	111
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110

Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Popper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeycomb	PAR	102
In Name Only	RKO	102
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	100
Tailspin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Eternally Yours	UA	95
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91
Intermezzo	UA	91

St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	139
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	123
First Love	UNIV	121

Disputed Passage	PAR	112
Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	103
Golden Boy	COL	102

It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	98
Jamaica Inn	PAR	97
Masie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
What A Life	PAR	92
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Fast and Furious	MGM	90
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	87
Blackmail	MGM	87
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
East and Loose	MGM	85
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Espionage Agent	WAR	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84
Four Girls in White	MGM	84
Return of the Cisco Kid	FOX	82

U-Boat	29	COL	93
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Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	78
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

On Your Toes WAR 82
 These Glamour Girls MGM 82
 Cafe Society PAR 81
 King of the Underworld WAR 81
 Dancing Co-ed MGM 81
 Angels Wash Their Faces WAR 80
 Arizona Wildcat FOX 80
 The Gorilla FOX 80
 I'm From Missouri PAR 79
 The Sun Never Sets UNIV 79
 The Girl Downstairs MGM 78
 Here I Am A Stranger FOX 78
 Under Pop UNIV 78
 Never Say Die PAR 78
 Winter Carnival UA 77
 The Lady's From Kentucky PAR 77
 Prison Without Bars UA 77
 Let Us Live COL 76
 Coast Guard COL 76
 \$1,000 A Touchdown PAR 75
 The Lady Vanishes FOX 75
 Boy Friend FOX 75
 Indianapolis Speedway WAR 75
 Mutiny on the Blackhawk UNIV 75
 Charlie Chan in Honolulu FOX 74
 Fisherman's Wharf RKO 74
 Adventures of Sherlock Holmes FOX 72
 Bridal Suite MGM 72
 The Jones Family in Hollywood FOX 72

I Stole A Million UNIV 71
 The Lady and the Mob COL 71
 The Magnificent Fraud PAR 71
 Rio UNIV 70
 Back Door To Heaven PAR 70
 King of the Turf UA 70
 One Third of a Nation PAR 70
 Clouds Over Europe COL 70
 Stronger Than Desire MGM 70

Shipyard Sally FOX 60

Our Leading Citizen PAR 67
 Stolen Life PAR 67
 Hotel Imperial PAR 66
 Zenobia UA 66

Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR 64
 Way Down South RKO 64
 Spirit of Culver UNIV 63
 The Flying Irishman RKO 63
 Smiling Along FOX 63
 Climbing High GB 63
 Women in the Wind WAR 62

Man They Couldn't Hang COL 77
 You Can't Get Away With Murder WAR 76
 On Dress Parade WAR 76
 Flight at Midnight REP 75
 Inside Story FOX 75
 Pacific Liner RKO 75
 The Day The Bookies Wept RKO 74
 The Witness Vanishes UNIV 74
 Two Bright Boys UNIV 74
 Chan in Treasure Island FOX 74
 Boy Slaves RKO 73
 Disbarred PAR 73
 Missing Daughters COL 73
 Blondie Takes Vacation COL 73
 Island of Lost Men PAR 73
 Beware Snooks COL 73
 The Spellbinder RKO 72
 It Could Happen To You FOX 72
 King of Chinatown PAR 72
 Society Lawyer MGM 72
 Persons in Hiding PAR 72
 Society Smugglers UNIV 72
 Mr. Moto's Last Warning FOX 72
 Twelve Crowded Hours RKO 72
 Ex-Champ UNIV 72
 Nancy Drew, Reporter WAR 71
 Pirates of the Skies UNIV 71
 Sorority House RKO 71
 Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter WAR 71
 Mystery of the White Room UNIV 71
 The Girl and the Gambler UNIV 71
 Quick Millions FOX 71
 Blind Alley COL 71
 Million Dollar Legs PAR 71
 Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 71
 These High Grey Walls COL 71
 Hawaiian Nights UNIV 70
 The Escape FOX 70
 Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase WAR 70
 Full Confession RKO 70
 Stop, Look and Love FOX 70
 Unexpected Father UNIV 70
 Chasing Danger FOX 70
 Unmarried PAR 70
 Romance of the Redwoods COL 70
 Winner Take All COL 70
 Big Town Gzar UNIV 70
 On Trial UNIV 70
 Torchy Blane in Chinatown WAR 70
 Ambush PAR 70
 They Made Her A Spy RKO 70
 Torchy For Mayor WAR 70
 The Girl From Mexico RKO 70
 Within the Law RKO 70
 Grand Jury Secrets MGM 70
 Bulldog Drummond's Bride PAR 70
 Cowboy Quarterback PAR 70
 The Saint in London RKO 70
 Call A Messenger UNIV 70

Some Like It Hot PAR 69
 Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police PAR 69
 Everybody's Baby FOX 69
 Death of a Champion PAR 68
 No Place To Go WAR 68
 News is Made At Night FOX 68
 The Family Next Door UNIV 68
 The Saint Strikes Back UNIV 68
 Undercover Doctor PAR 68
 Mr. Moto in Danger Island FOX 68
 Adventures of Jane Arden WAR 68
 Fixer Dugan RKO 68
 For Love or Money UNIV 68
 Forgotten Woman UNIV 68
 Lone Wolf Spy Hunt COL 67
 Conspiracy RKO 67
 Playing With Dynamite WAR 67
 Almost A Gentleman RKO 66
 A Woman Is A Judge COL 66
 Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation FOX 66
 Code of the Streets UNIV 66
 Beauty for the Asking RKO 66
 Sudden Money PAR 66
 The Wate Case UNIV 66
 The Wate Case GB 66
 Boy Trouble PAR 65
 Burn 'Em Up O'Connor MGM 65
 Secret Service of the Air WAR 65
 Tell No Tales MGM 65
 They All Come Out MGM 64
 Exile Express UN 64
 Sweepstakes Winner WAR 64
 5,000 Enemies MGM 63
 Night Work PAR 63
 The Kid From Texas MGM 60
 Miracles For Sale MGM 60

Inspector Hornleigh FOX 54
 This Man Is News PAR 54
 Career RKO 53

Whispering Enemies COL 75
 Homelike Bureau COL 71
 Mysterious Mr. Wong MONO 71
 Woman Doctor REP 71
 North of Shanghai COL 71
 Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence FOX 71

She Married A Cop REP 70
 Hidden Power COL 70
 The Sunset Murder Case CN 70
 Pride of the Navy REP 70
 Tough Kid MONO 70
 Mysterious Miss X REP 70
 Trapped in the Sky COL 70
 Orphan in the Street REP 70

I Am A Criminal MONO 69
 Fighting Thoroughbreds UNIV 69
 Gambling Ship UNIV 69
 Convict's Code MONO 69
 Parents On Trial COL 68
 The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew COL 68
 Streets of New York MONO 68
 Inside Information UNIV 68
 I Was A Convict REP 68
 Navy Secrets MONO 68
 Federal Man Hunt REP 68
 Pride of the Bluegrass RET 68
 Forged Passport MONO 68
 Calling All Marines REP 68
 Smashing The Money Ring WAR 68
 Scandal Sheet COL 68
 House of Fear UNIV 67
 My Wife's Relatives REP 67
 Long Shot UNIV 67
 Sabotage PAR 67
 Pride of the Bluegrass WAR 66
 Behind Prison Gates COL 66
 Wolf Call MONO 66
 Fight Offenders RKO 66
 Rookie Cop COL 66
 Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO 66
 Waterfront WAR 66
 Irish Luck MONO 65
 Mickey The Kid REP 65
 The Zero Hour REP 65
 Outside These Walls COL 65
 S. O. S. Tidal Wave REP 65
 Mr. Wong in Chinatown MONO 65
 The Man Who Dared WAR 65
 Konga, The Wild Stallion COL 64
 Mystery Plane MONO 64
 My Son Is A Criminal COL 64
 Code of the Secret Service WAR 64
 Should A Girl Marry? MONO 64
 Everybody's Hobby UNIV 63
 Smuggled Cargo REP 63
 Should Husbands Work? REP 63
 Street of Missing Men MONO 63
 Star Reporter MONO 63
 Undercover Agent MONO 63
 Boy's Reformatory MONO 63
 Sky Patrol MONO 62
 Panama Lady RKO 62
 Panama Patrol CN 62
 The Girl From Rio MONO 62
 Jeepers Creepers REP 62

SIDNEY TOLER



AS

CHARLIE CHAN

"CITY IN DARKNESS"
Now Playing

GRAUMAN'S CHINESE and
LOEW'S STATE

Under Contract to
20th CENTURY-FOX

Management
BILL WOOLFENDEN
Bank of America Building
Beverly Hills



The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 12.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 22, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

Bette Davis Tops
Week With
"Elizabeth and Essex"

SEE PAGE 5

Editor Advises:
"Milk Hit Pictures"
But "Let's All Help"

SEE PAGE 3

Extra!
Exhibitor Writes in
Praise of Sales Exec!

SEE PAGES 12-13

●
THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED
●

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **WARNER BROS.** Win With
"ELIZABETH AND ESSEX" 140 %



Vice-Pres. In Charge of Production
JACK WARNER



Executive Producer
HAL B. WALLIS



Director
MICHAEL CURTIZ



Associate Producer
ROBERT LORD



BETTE DAVIS



ERROL FLYNN



OLIVIA De HAVILLAND



From the Play by

MAXWELL ANDERSON

Screenplay

NORMAN REILLY RAINES

AENES MacKENZIE

Photographer

SOL POLITO

Featured

DONALD CRISP

ALAN HALE

RALPH FORBES

VINCENT PRICE

HENRY STEPHENSON

JAMES STEPHENSON



DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

MILK THE HITS--BUT!

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

"Milk the hits" is an easy phrase to say, and so near to an axiom of business procedure for the picture industry in these troublesome days that it hardly needs expression.

"But how should we milk the hits?" is a question that is more difficult to answer.

Your Editor will first tackle some of the "how not's."

How not to get exhibitors to milking hit attractions for all they are worth:

First: Do not allow specious talking sales executives and uninformed trade writers to put all the necessity for showmanship on the shoulders of the lowly independent exhibitor; while extolling the virtues of the mighty circuit men of affairs.

Second: Let's not be satisfied with having production—which, the gods know, is certainly straining these days to do its best—talk directly to exhibitors; let's have them first talk to distribution.

* * *

We can illustrate our point.

You will remember this page last week published the open letter to Si Fabian, Eastern circuit tycoon, concerning an inexcusable action interminating the run of "Drums Along the Mohawk" at a Schenectady house after six days even though it had passed "Alexander's Ragtime Band" figures for seven days.

Reports now have it that the termination was really a "move-over"—that is, Mr. Fabian took the picture from his house that was playing on percentage, and moved it to a flat rental follow-up house. Thus not only getting the cream from the top of the bottle, but to avoid sharing too much with the producer, also getting cream from the bottom.

Now we ask you:

Would any lowly independent exhibitor—not a poverty stricken one necessarily, but possibly one owning a mere half dozen theaters—be allowed to get away with that?

And is Mr. Fabian the sole circuit big shot in the United States with the strength in a strategic position to employ such practices?

If you have read our Field Investigator Nichols' reports it is not necessary to travel far from Hollywood to smell a few move-over mice in the Pacific Coast circuit situation.

All of which is neither here nor there when we consider that this is a broad, wide, and expansive nation, and that there are so many of these situations that anyone could pick out. But it does bring it to our point:

* * *

Let's quit using two stock phrases whenever this picture business needs to gird its loins to meet a crisis. The phrases are:

"Conditions are wrong because the producers don't make enough hit pictures—or else, too much money goes to those who do make hit pictures."

"Conditions are wrong because the backward independent exhibitor is not a showman—he won't get the money out of the pictures that we deserve."

They are stock phrases, with little more value than any stock phrase ever had in solving problems. But they are phrases that hide this fact:

Distribution in this industry has never kept pace with advances in production ambitions and performance; distribution methods must re-gear themselves to war-created conditions just as equally as production and distribution.

Only then can we set about "MILKING THE HITS."

Only when we get to modern merchandising methods that consider every cash customer a good customer, that consider his problems and COOPERATE to help him, as the retailer, to get more money for both the manufacturer and the retailer—will we get somewhere.

Only when some distribution executives realize that their years' work is not done when they close the deals with a dozen or so of caristic circuits, taking "what they can get" and then proceeding to bawl out the salesman and the lowly independent

for being brakes on the wheels of progress for not giving up blood transfusions, will our problem be solved.

We say: "MILK THE PICTURES — FOR ALL THEY ARE WORTH." It is vital, for all of us, every branch of this industry.

But we add: Let's have the distribution departments in on the slogan.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	.....15 Releases	.....97
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	.....45 Releases	.....96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	.....39 Releases	.....94
4. Paramount	.....44 Releases	.....86
5. Warner Brothers	.....45 Releases	.....86
6. RKO-Radio	.....32 Releases	.....81
7. Universal	.....33 Releases	.....79
8. Columbia	.....32 Releases	.....77
9. Republic	.....21 Releases	.....69
10. Monogram	.....18 Releases	.....66
11. Grand National	.....4 Releases	.....66
12. Gaumont British	.....2 Releases	.....65

330

The Highlighter: SAVES YOUR TIME BY GIVING ALL THE REAL NEWS OF THE WEEK IN ONE PAGE

Your Highlighter should probably talk about strikes, near strikes, and no strikes if he were giving the surface news of the past week, but will you pardon him if he turns an apathetic ear to the job? . . . Have you ever watched a prize-fight where two stumblebums made ferocious faces at each other for three or four rounds, just "missed" with wild swings a dozen times, and then, when the signal was given see one stumbler do a dying swan while the referee tolled the fatal ten count? . . . You have? . . . Well, then, you know why The Highlighter, with all his curiosity complex that impels him to be in the midst of everything, remains Jello to strike news. . . . At the same time he can remind his readers of something the editorial page said four weeks ago: "Watch out for the projectionists and others over the country climbing aboard that ten per cent increase stuff." . . . The Editor added, and he apologized to Mark Hellinger, "Don't say we didn't tell you so." . . . So this week's news wires tell us that New York's projectionists have already secured a promise of a ten per cent increase. . . . New York is the try-out point. . . . And—again we beg your pardon, Mark—don't say we didn't tell you so. . . . But on your own, can we ponder the hope that some day there will be a "great day" when this industry's big shots will forget their income tax worries and racing stable problems long enough to give some real thought—in a straight line—to the problems of the industry that pays their oats, their attorneys, their headaches, and heir sneers towards the younger fellows attempting to come up within and for the industry? . . . Omigosh, The Highlighter almost wrote an editorial. . . . Pardon him the intrusion, but don't discount the fact that he is one of the fellows who means what he says.

Shucks, News Is Always More Interesting Than Views

Let's be cheerful. . . . Along with Sid Skolsky, "We love Hollywood." . . . Let's just forget what might be called "epic news" and bear down on what is really news. . . . There are a number of interesting items. . . . For instance, the tip-off to reviewers and to exhibitors that George Marshall, veteran director, has turned in a picture to Universal, "Destry Rides Again," that has the lot—and those who have seen the sneak previews—doing raves. . . . That's more news to Box Office Digest readers than a lot of Vine Street worries. . . . Because that news means money. . . . The official preview, after all the benefit of learning from the sneaks, comes up within a couple of days, so we expect to clinch the sneaker's enthusiasm. . . . There is news in the fact that Tay Garnett has his story "World Cruise" in shape where releasing deals are being discussed. . . . Garnett has a world of audience value he shot on a short

3 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. Drums Along the Mohawk.....	FOX.....153	157
2. First Love	UNIV.....121	125
3. Allegheny Uprising	RKO.....112	115

jaunt AROUND THE WORLD and it only remains for the story to be right to make one of those one in a hundred box office hits. . . . Let's forget news, we have just heard an air siren: A major company plans to reissue some more John Wayne pictures. . . . Why not give the boy a break? . . . It was Winnie Sheehan and Raoul Walsh who first saw his possibilities, it was Monogram that made him a solid box office figure, it was John Ford who made him a first run figure, why dig up pictures that he may have made in the in-between period? . . . The announcement says that Warners are doing the reissues of some old Leon Schlesinger subjects. . . . We just don't think it is cricket.

Among The Many Things That Make Life Interesting

News wires from New York tell us that part of Mayor LaGuardia's set-up to bring production back to the Big Town concerns an agreement that the Gotham unions will agree to be good boys on their contracts for a three or five year period. . . . All this news coming at a time when West Coast unions are creating new highs in aspirin sales among producers. . . . It is very puzzling. . . . It is VERY puzzling. . . . One end of the great United States gets a Mayor, and our most imposing banking structures to sound the tocsin from production that will bring work their way; another group, members of the same family, are not satisfied with their present boarding house. . . . Gosh, how puzzling. . . . But, off the record, can you imagine Fiorella telling General Motors that they must start making a husky percentage of their Cadillacs, Buicks, Chevies, etc., in his voting district—or else? . . . Sounds a little screwy, doesn't it? . . . Oh, you tell us that these big motor companies do have big plants in the Father Knickerbocker Guardella district. . . . Yes, but they are assembly plants—not creator plants. . . . Translate that into picture terms.

4 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. Eternally Yours	UA..... 95	93
2. Intermezzo	UA..... 91	89
3. On Your Toes	WAR..... 82	80
4. On Dress Parade	WAR..... 76	73

Odds And Ends Gathered Here And There In Studios

Just a bit more than ordinarily interested is Your Highlighter in the rumors that Gary Cooper may be seeing a way out of his Sam Goldwyn contract after doing "The Vine-graoon." . . . Or is that the latest of the six titles? . . . Cooper is today one of the most solid box office assets in the world. He could be incorporated for making money and pay off dividends just by being Gary Cooper. . . . And apparently he is one of those unusual phenonema, of an asset wishing to assure its preservation as an asset. . . . Glad to hear the news that Eddie Small has signed Frances Dee for a featured spot in "My Son, My Son." . . . Frances has the unique record of never having appeared in a box office flop, even though she has occasionally allowed herself to be backgrounded for story purposes. . . . But that's a pretty good record: Never a flop, and practically all pictures up in the big money class.

Let's Have More News Such As Herman Wobber Gives

One of the most important figures in this industry today is Herman Wobber, general sales manager for 20th-Fox, and previously a veteran of Northern California exhibition since the memory of man. . . . Yet, Herman Wobber can come in to Hollywood for important business conferences with Darryl Zanuck about 20th product, boil a month of telephone calls into a week of action, and when he has left town about all you hear in the trade press is that "Herman Wobber was in Hollywood, stopping over from a visit to San Francisco." . . . As a matter of fact, we had to await Mr. Wobber's return to New York to get a very solid announcement in two lines when he summed up his Hollywood visit with the flat statement that "Twentieth will deliver every picture as promised in its contracts and announcements." . . . An orchid to Wobber for his modest manner of making emphatic declarations, and a silent vote to Zanuck whose assurances must have made the statement possible. . . . Your Highlighter is rooting along with Paramount in its decision to place Allan Jones under contract for more pictures as a result of his work in the Victor Herbert picture. . . . Gosh, we can hardly believe it, but a three line item in a local daily says that Von Stroheim is back in Hollywood for a 20th picture. . . . Stroheim, until war came, was hitting on high in France, and Stroheim in Hollywood was always good for three columns instead of three inches. . . . We still don't believe it, but we read it. . . . Charlie Einfeld is due back at Warners Burbank rancho about Monday, after one of those New York trips that was called "conferences" but resulted in one of those showmanship knockout campaigns of the year for "Elizabeth and Essex" along Eastern coast.

The Box Office: 'ELIZABETH AND ESSEX' LEADER FOR WEEK; 'CAT AND CANARY' GOING STRONG

WARNERS--2 New Releases

Warner Brothers-First National Pictures have two new releases this week, one a super-special, and the second, just another programmer.

One of the most pretentious pictures to come out of Warners for the beginning of the '39-40 season is their big Technicolor costume picture, "ELIZABETH AND ESSEX," which was originally intended for road-showing, but instead has been generally released throughout the country, averaging 140% on its first openings.

Just how this picture will fare on its future bookings is hard to determine, as yet. While the average American patron is not particularly interested in English history still this picture has been produced on a very lavish scale and backed with one of the greatest exploitation campaigns that Charlie Einfeld has ever staged. Furthermore, it co-stars the popular Errol Flynn with Bette Davis, fresh from her two recent big box office triumphs, "Dark Victory" and "The Old Maid."

Naturally, a picture of this type is bound to draw better in class houses, while it may not have so much appeal to the working man. However, it is receiving strong support from P.T.A.'s and Boards of Education, which should bring in many extra dollars.

If conditions were not such as they are in Great Britain today this picture should easily run 175% or better in that territory. But since the British Colonies are not effected so seriously by the war they will unquestionably find this one a big box office winner.

Under Hal Wallis' supervision, Warner's ace director, Michael Curtiz, handled the direction, which the critics have termed his best job to date.

Warner Brothers' second release this week, "KID NIGHTINGALE," 66%, is just another fair programmer from the Bryan Foy unit. It is a light comedy drama with a prize fight background, co-starring Jane Wyman and John Payne, neither of whom as yet have a very strong box office following. However, it will fill in pleasingly as the lower half of the average double bill. George Amy directed.

PARAMOUNT--1 Release

Paramount's only new release this week is the 1939 streamlined version of "THE CAT AND THE CANARY," which in our opinion is even more thrilling than the original Universal "CAT AND THE CANARY," produced some years ago as a silent picture starring Laura La Plante.

On its first bookings, "THE CAT" is averaging 98%, which is quite satisfactory under current conditions. Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard are co-starred and among the

Of Eight New Releases in the Past Week

Only One Ran Over 100%; One

Came Through Strong; Six

Were Very Weak.

more important featured players are John Beal, Douglas Montgomery, Gale Sondergaard, and Nydia Westman.

Arthur Hornblow, Jr. produced, and Elliot Nugent directed.

RKO--1 New Release

RKO's only new release this week is an outside picture, "THE FLYING DEUCES," produced by Boris Morros, the former Paramount musical director.

In this, his first effort, Mr. Morros co-starred the famous Laurel and Hardy team in a very entertaining aviation comedy, and on its first bookings "THE FLYING DEUCES" is holding fairly well at 87%, hardly strong enough to be the top attraction in big first-run deluxe houses, but quite satisfactory for the average suburban house, and will probably get by very well in the "nabes" catering to family trade. The men and kiddies in particular have always gone for Laurel and Hardy.

In "FLYING DEUCES" Laurel and Hardy are supported by Jean Parker, Reginald Gardiner, Charlie Middleton, Eddie Sutherland directed.

FOX--2 New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox has two new "B" features from the Sol Wurtzel unit this week, both of which are above the Sol Wurtzel average, but still are not strong enough for top billing. The strongest of these two, "20,000 MEN A YEAR," was produced on a rather heavy budget, but due to its timeliness—aviation and the present world war—much more was expected from this one at

the box office; yet on its first bookings it is only averaging about 82%.

It is possible that while this theme is of great interest to men, particularly the younger generation, that it doesn't have a very strong feminine appeal.

The romantic leads are portrayed by Randolph Scott—who is excellent—and Margaret Lindsay, with Preston Foster, Mary Healy, and Kane Richmond prominently featured. Exhibitors will do well by booking this one with a good woman's picture.

Al Green directed.

Fox's second release this week is another of the popular Charlie Chans, this time "CHARLIE CHAN IN THE CITY OF DARKNESS," 77%. Sidney Toler is clicking as the star of this series and the picture will undoubtedly pick up on wider release. The supporting cast includes Harold Huber, Lynn Bari, Douglas Dumbrille, Noel Madison and Lon Chaney, Jr.

John Stone was associate producer to Sol Wurtzel and Herberts Leeds directed.

UNIVESAL--1 New One

Universal Pictures have a new program release this week. "THE LEGION OF LOST FLYERS," 77%, is another of the popular action series co-starring Richard Arlen and Andy Devine with Anna Neagle appearing as the leading lady this time.

This series has been well received in the average neighborhood house, particularly in those houses catering to action pictures, with exhibitor reports showing that it makes an excellent Friday-Saturday booking.

Universal's second release is entitled "ONE HOUR TO LIVE," 74%. This exciting melodrama features Charles Bickford, Doris Nolan and John Litel and should prove satisfactory on the average dual program.

Universal's third and last release this week is "HERO FOR A DAY," which is just doing so-so at a 71% average. Anita Louise and Dick Foran are co-starred and Charlie Grapewin featured.

COLUMBIA-- 1 New One

Columbia's only new release this week is the third in the popular Blondie series, entitled "BLONDIE BRINGS UP BABY," 78%, running better than the last Blondie picture, and accordingly exhibitors know where best to spot this one.

Producer Robert Sparks and Director Frank Strayer again held the helm on this new Blondie.

8 New Releases Not in Last Issue

		% We Est.
1. Elizabeth and Essex	WAR	140 150
2. The Cat and the Canary	PAR	98 100
3. The Flying Deuces	RKO	87 80
4. 20,000 Men a Year	FOX	82 95
5. Blondie Brings Up Baby	COL	78 80
6. Legion of Lost Flyers	UNIV	77 80
7. Chan in City of Darkness	FOX	77 75
8. Kid Nightingale	WAR	66 70

'Tower of London' Horror Spectacle Hit

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Producer-Director Rowland V. Lee
Original Screenplay Robert N. Lee
Featured: Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff, Barbara O'Neil, Ian Hunter, Vincent Price, Nan Grey, Ernest Cossart, John Sutton, Leo G. Carroll, Miles Mander, Lionel Belmore, Rose Hobart, Ronald Sinclair, John Herbert-Bond, Ralph Forbes, Frances Robinson, G. P. Huntley, John Rodion, Walter Tetley, Donnie Dunagan.

PhotographerGeorge Robinson
Art Director.....Jack Otterson
Film Editor.....Ed Curtiss
Time92 minutes

"Horror on a spectacular scale." is probably the best summary of "Tower of London," and the best tip-off to the exhibitor as to how to go about selling this Universal special to full advantage. After that statement, the reviewer can proceed to proclaim it one of the best jobs of Rowland Lee's career.

First of all, producer-director Lee found a period of history for his story that is refreshingly different, when kings acted like mice and thrones were always tottering. Then he found a straight-line horror theme in the character of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, portrayed by Basil Rathbone, who cold-bloodedly sets out to remove from this mortal coil all and sundry who stand between him and his brother's throne. After that he gave Rathbone none other than Boris Karloff to do the dirty work.

It makes a great combination, magnified by a modernly constructed script, and enhanced by direction that keeps a slyly humorous touch always balancing the grim purpose of the villain. And backgrounding the whole is a broadly spectacular production, rich in settings and throned with scenes seemingly employing thousands of extras.

Lee has secured great performances from his players. Rathbone is even more repressed than usual in his sinisterness, and to greater effect. Karloff takes full advantage of one of the best opportunities he has received. Probably the highlight among performances is that of Ian Hunter, as the King who uses Rathbone's talents for publicity, never dreaming their ultimate aim is his throne. The picture actually takes something of a drop after Hunter leaves the scene, saved, however, by the fact that the thrilling hand-to-hand

battle scenes are still to come for the climax.

Vincent Price, John Sutton and Nan Grey are most prominent in the support, with Ernest Cossart turning in a fine characterization as a chimney sweep.

Jack Otterson's art direction must come in for a paragraph of its own, because it is the atmosphere of authenticity and size that he has created which provides much of the picture's strength.

There are moments when the horror reaches a point where it may strain many nerves. It is likely they will be trimmed by the time the pictures reaches you.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Sell it strongly for what it is: "Horror on a spectacular scale." Punch it home on that basis, but don't try to fool audiences who

Paramount's 'Geronimo' Just Misses on Epic Pretensions

(PARAMOUNT)

(The Digest Estimates 105%)

DirectorPaul H. Sloane
Original Screenplay: Paul H. Sloane.

Stars: Preston Foster, Ellen Drew
Featured: Andy Devine, Gene Lockhart, William Henry, Ralph Morgan, Pierre Watkin, Marjorie Gateson, Kitty Kelly, Addison Richards, Chief Thunder Cloud, Monte Blue, Joseph Crehan, Hank Bell, Frank Cordell.
PhotographerHenry Sharp
Art Directors: Hans Dreier, Earl Hedrick.

Film Editor.....John Link
Time89 minutes

Paul Sloane, who conceived, wrote and directed "Geronimo," has performed an ambitious job of creating a pseudo-epic, and it may prove a bargain buy for many Paramount exhibitors—with one proviso, that it is not sold as an honest-to-goodness eighteen karat epic.

For there is too much in the plot that is reminiscent of "Bengal Lancer," and too much in the celluloid that is disturbingly a reminder of a trip through the Paramount film stock library. One has the feeling of encountering "Wells Fargo," "The Plainsman," "Texas Rangers" and many old friends in unchanged clothes as the spectacular scenes unroll.

Thus, Sloane seems to have been beset with two handicaps, one, a story that was merely transferred from Gary Cooper's India; second, a story that had to be

recoil from horror. Previewed November 16.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "With all its dark and sinister overtones, this is a picture of which the industry can justly be proud for sheer quality in every department. Clinging to fact with extraordinary fidelity, here is history, unsoftened, made absorbing, exciting, often chilling, but at all times giving a profound sense of living reality."

CURRENT REVIEWS

		We Est.
1. Tower of London	UNIV.....	115
2. Four Wives	WAR.....	110
3. Geronimo	PAR.....	105
4. That's Right—You're Wrong	RKO.....	100
5. Secrets of Dr. Kildare	MGM.....	90
6. The Amazing Mr. Williams	COL.....	85
7. Chan in City of Darkness.....	FOX.....	75
8. The Honeymoon's Over	FOX.....	70

VARIETY: "While 'Tower' belongs in the same classification that claims 'Frankenstein,' 'Son of Frankenstein' and other super-mellers sponsored by U, it also ranks as one of the really artistic productions of the year. Production and directorial achievements of Rowland V. Lee will zoom his professional stock to a new high, while the brilliant portrayal of his star, Basil Rathbone, definitely makes the latter a contender for Oscar consideration."

adapted as best the fates would allow, to the material provided him.

He did not overcome the obstacles completely, but he did turn out a fairly satisfactory piece of red Indian meat for action houses, with sufficient of size to make many of those fans think they are seeing a Hollywood epic. Thus he is apt to make money for the action houses, and at the same time for Paramount at the probable production cost.

With the "Bengal Lancer" in mind, we can give you the plot very briefly: Ralph Morgan is the stern parent, sent by General Grant to round up Geronimo, an Apache with a bad habit of killing whites; William Henry is his son, West Point graduate, arriving at the frontier fort, and given the ice treatment by his father, who had not seen his son since his divorce from Marjorie Gateson. Ellen Drew is the mild love interest.

Chief Thundercloud is the heavy menace, Geronimo, given the best playing opportunities in the picture, and proceeding to wrap them up for the histrionic highlight, shouldered only in the competition by Andy Devine, who got a better break than in most of his recent pictures, and came through. Preston Foster is able as the sympathetic army captain—a la Gary Cooper—who befriends the general's son.

There are Indians and more Indians, there is action and more action, with a slam-bang ride to the rescue and capture of the villain climax, that the blood and thunder fans will probably eat up.

Considerable publicity has been given, in connection with the picture, to a new fine grain positive film. This reviewer must report his reaction as cold; as a matter of fact, the effort to match up various photographs results in the total being a shade below average.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Don't go overboard. But if you get it on terms for whoop-it-up fans, there is satisfaction in it. Marquee value none too hot. Previewed November 15.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "If super-westerns continued to click at the box office—and there is no reason to believe they won't—'Geronimo' should be a sock hit, for here is one of the most spectacular, actionful, big-scale outdoor dramas to reach the screen in many a day."

VARIETY: "Red-blooded story material, skilled performances and masterful direction combine to make 'Geronimo' powerful screen fare. Built on stark drama, loaded with thrilling action and photographed against colorful natural backgrounds, picture constitutes an outstanding piece of entertainment."

'Four Wives' Suffers From Over-Length

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Executive Producer.....Hal Wallis
Associate Producer..Henry Blanke
DirectorMichael Curtiz
Story by.....Fannie Hurst
Screenplay: Julius J. and Philip G. Epstein, Maurice Hanline.
Featured: Claude Rains, May Robson, Jeffrey Lynn, Priscilla Lane, Eddie Albert, Rosemary Lane, Frank McHugh, Lola Lane, Dick Foran, Gale Page, Henry O'Neil, Vera Lewis, John Qualen.
PhotographerSol Polito
Musical Director..Leo F. Forbstein
Film Editor.....Ralph Dawson
Time110 minutes

For a little more than half of the way "Four Wives" is a honey of a picture, then at about that point the thin story idea must be stretched to the thinnest of points, and the result is many dreary passages, and a general feeling of tiredness at the conclusion.

All the values and the charm of the original "Four Daughters" are retained in that first half, and the picture bubbles along at a most enjoyable pace. But as a means of keeping John Garfield's original portrayal in the audience mind, he becomes the theme and the morbid manner in which Priscilla Lane allows her current happiness to be endangered by memories of Garfield is not exactly entertainment. Garfield is seen twice in the picture, both times as a ghostly visitor.

Barring the matter of the let-down created by the picture's over length, it is far above average on every other count. With the same intimate homey atmosphere of its parent subject, with the same fine cast of players, director Michael Curtiz turns in one of the top jobs, technically, of his career. The way that boy plays with angles to achieve an uncanny pictorial smoothness, the manner in which he drops in the odds and ends of human business to achieve laughs or chuckles, is a treat.

The story concerns babies. Who is going to have a baby, who is not, and why? Babies anticipated, babies arriving, babies to the right and babies to the left, are all every-day and every-moment matters of discussion. Treatment of this once-ticklish subject is so honestly and straightforwardly discussed that there can be no objection except from the most extreme of carpers.

Chief dramatic element of the plot is the manner in which the arrival of Priscilla's baby, born of her marriage to the departed

Michael, overshadows her romance with Jeffrey Lynn.

One of the highlights of the picture is a performance of Michael's symphony, with cut-backs to Priscilla's hospital bed, which the music critics will probably hail with joy. It is given full length. To your reviewer, who must be a low-brow, it only accentuated the fact that the audience was beginning to grow restless. And points out the fact that the writers were having difficulty winding up their yarn. They really have four stories to bring to a conclusion.

If lobby comment means anything, many in audiences will be confused by "Daughters Courageous."

and the real parent, "Four Daughters."

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: It's a money picture, but will be better if it comes to you in shorter length than the time we have listed above. Not for the youngsters, and this not because of anything wrong with the baby discussions, but just because they grow tiresome to some ages. Previewed November 20.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The trilogy of 'Four Daughters,' 'Daughters Courageous' and 'Four Wives' is brought to a Warner close with what is probably the most ambitious of the productions centered around the Lemp family, but

which falls short of the first of the series ('Four Daughters') and, because of its pretentiousness, is a bit better than the second ('Daughters Courageous').

VARIETY: "Producers and performers of the series which has as its previous clickers 'Four Daughters' and 'Daughters Courageous,' add another interesting and entertaining exhibit to the array in 'Four Wives.' Picture is overboard on length and attempts to crowd too much substance into its nearly two hours of unreeling, but it provides much genuine comedy, develops a theme of unusual dramatic material and by virtue of excellent performances and top notch direction emerges as substantial box office stuff for the mass."

'Amazing Mr. Williams' Up to Series Par

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

ProducerEverett Riskin
DirectorAlexander Hall
Based on story by.....Cy Bartlett
Screenplay: Dwight Taylor, Cy Bartlett, Richard Maibaum.
Stars: Melvyn Douglas, Joan Blondell.
Featured: Ruth Donnelly, Edward Brophy, Clarence Kolb, Jonathan Hale.
PhotographerArthur Todd
Film Editor.....Viola Lawrence
Time80 minutes

Exhibitors must use their own knowledge of their own audiences as to the length of popularity of the many series groups presented today, all the reviewer can do is give his first hand impression of each individual picture in a series as it comes along.

Just as he has in an adjoining column reported on a "Dr. Kildare" episode, your reviewer must, in the case of "The Amazing Mr. Williams," record his opinion that it is one of the best of the zany detective Melvyn Douglas-Joan Blondell yarns from Columbia.

Probably it would be just as safe to say "THE best." Director Al Hall is in a carefree, bubbling stride with this series, the players are at home, and the script in the present case provides both players and director with ample opportunities.

There are murders and crimes galore in the picture, all treated with the gay tongue in cheek manner that manages to balance the thrills with the laughs and, if anything, give the laughs the best of it. There is the problem of getting Melvyn Douglas married to his fiancee, Joan Blondell, but

crime won't pause in its march long enough for the deed to be done. Story's chief twist comes through an angle that finds Douglas convinced that he has piled up the evidence against the wrong man, and then forced to set out and clear his victim under circumstances that put his own safety at stake. Along the picture's route there are a couple of the most hilarious gag sequences the screen has seen this year.

Support has been cannily selected from some of the best scene-stealing laugh-getters in Hollywood, with the proper sprinkling of capable heavies.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Marquee draw limited by the strength of the two top names, but that will entertain them aplenty in its proper spots.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "... is one long, loud, lusty laugh, the kind of show that sends audiences home happy and brings them back for more. It is a credit to its creators and to the industry."

VARIETY: "Smartly paced and amply embellished with laugh-provoking lines and situations, 'The Amazing Mr. Williams' hits a merry clip to qualify as light entertainment well equipped to fill the top spot in many situations."

'Honeymoon's Over Just a Factory Job

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

ProducerSol M. Wurtzel
DirectorEugene Ford
Based on play by William Anthony McGuire.
Screenplay: Hamilton MacFadden, Clay Williams, Leonard Hoffman.
Stars: Stuart Erwin, Marjorie Weaver.
Featured: Patric Knowles, Russell Hicks, C. C. Clive, Hobart Cavanaugh, Jack Carson.
PhotographerVirgil Miller
Film Editor.....Nick De Maggio
Time69 minutes

It seems as though, back there in the roaring 20's, or what you may call them, William Anthony McGuire wrote a stage hit that will keep on bouncing back at us. "Six Cylinder Love" was the play that possesses this perennial vigor

and which now comes forth in a new version as "The Honeymoon's Over."

McGuire's yarn has the sure-fire basis of the trials and tribulations—with accent on comedy treatment—of a young married couple. The present version apparently did not aim at any modernizing improvement over the original, and it naturally did not achieve any. It can only be rated as satisfactory B entertainment, the sort that Republic and Monogram can do just as well, and probably for less money.

Stuart Erwin is this time the ambitious but blundering young husband. Marjorie Weaver is his jittery bride. The dependable Jack Carson, delivers to fine laugh re-

(Continued on Page 12)

A HIT IN THE HAPPY

... *But Romantic!*



TYRONE ('King of the Movies') POWER
... a perfectly swell guy... but there's
something about a secretary!



LINDA ('Hotel for Women') DARNELL
... his peach of a wife ... who won-
dered whether he wandered ... and
like a woman she's right!

BEST HOLIDAY MOOD



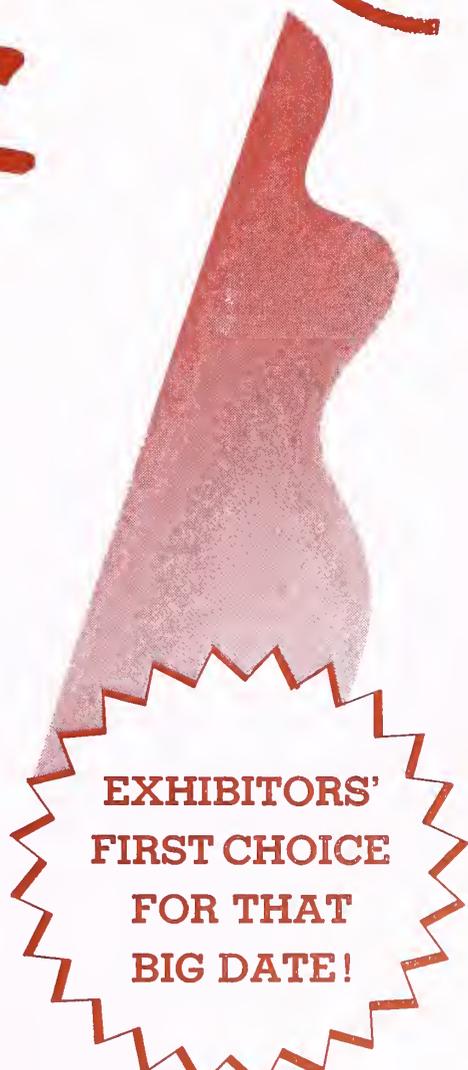
Tyrone
POWER • Linda
DARNELL
in

*Day-Time
Wife*

with this hilariously romantic cast

WARREN WILLIAM • **BINNIE BARNES**
WENDY BARRIE • **JOAN DAVIS**

Directed by Gregory Ratoff
Associate Producer Raymond Griffith • Screen Play by Art Arthur and
Robert Harari • Story by Rex Taylor
Darryl F. Zanuck in Charge of Production



**EXHIBITORS'
FIRST CHOICE
FOR THAT
BIG DATE!**



Butler Gives Kay Kyser Okay Screen Debut

(RKO)

(The Digest Estimates 100%)

Producer-DirectorDavid Butler
Story: David Butler, William Conselman.

Screenplay: William Conselman, James V. Kern.

Stars: Kay Kyser, Adolphe Menjou.

Featured: May Robson, Lucille Ball, Dennis O'Keefe, Edward Everett Horton, Roscoe Karns, Moroni Olsen, Hobart Cavanaugh, Ginny Simms, Harry Babbitt, Sully Mason, Ish Kabibble, Dorothy Lovett, Lillian West, Denis Tankard.

PhotographerRussell Metty
Songs, The Little Red Fox, James V. Kern, Lew Porter, Johnny Lang, Hy Heath; **Fit To Be Tied,** Walter Donaldson; **The Answer Is Love,** Sam Stept, Charles Newman; **Happy Birthday To Love,** Dave Franklin; **Chatterbox,** Jerome Brainin, Allan Roberts.

Musical Arrangements: George Dunning.

Film Editor.....Irene Morra
Time93 minutes

David Butler, who not only served as producer-director on "That's Right—You're Wrong," but who also shares story credit with his collaborator, William Conselman, has performed one of the finest jobs of bringing a vast radio audience to picture theater box offices that these eyes have seen.

Don't get us wrong. The picture is not a billion dollar musical spectacle. Kay Kyser has not suddenly become a John Barrymore. What Butler has done is to wrap up a grand piece of entertainment around the star whom audiences will be paying to see, and to return him to his own radio field untarnished, and possibly enhanced.

We think there is money in the picture, because our Radio Reporter admits himself an assiduous follower of Kay Kyser, and his records of audience standings put the same maestro of musical knowledge up among the hot ones. We know it has entertainment.

Instead of attempting any one

of the hundred and one monotonous variations of the back stage yarn to introduce their new star, RKO's group stepped out frankly and with delightful naivete built a story around the problem of a picture company that has signed the air star for a picture and is then faced with the problem, "What the dickens can we do with him for a story?"

The necessary preparation has the story starting slowly to establish characters, but then it begins to pick up, and suddenly it goes into high gear when the frustrated Kyser returns whole hog to his famous radio routine for one of the top comedy sequences of the year. One of those routines that send audiences out so happy they forget everything else.

Aside from the Kyser presence for sales angles the cast is chiefly highlighted by adept performances from Adolphe Menjou and May Robson; and adequate support in the other roles.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A proposition for showmen. Go

after that Kay Kyser following. Maybe rig up some local "That's Right—You're Wrong" contests of your own. Place your bets on Kyser, and the picture will satisfy them. *Previewed November 14.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: " 'That's Right—You're Wrong' is a top example of pictures borrowing from radio. In this instance they not only borrow, but they take the whole Kay Kyser radio show and photograph it with good effect, and however long it takes to reach that point in the picture's actual telling, it's worth sitting through to see what makes the Kyser thing tick."

VARIETY: "Kay Kyser figuratively sings a song of b. o. money to the strains of jingling coins supplied by his Musical College with 'That's Right — You're Wrong' foundationed on a satire on Hollywood and its production methods, this is as humorous and tuneful an offering that has come to the screen in many a moon."

'Secret of Dr. Kildare' Tops in MGM Series

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

DirectorHarold S. Bucquet
Based on story by.....Max Brand
Screenplay: Willis Goldbeck, Harry Ruskin.

Stars: Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore.

Featured: Lionel Atwill, Helen Gilbert, Laraine Day, Nat Pendleton, Sara Haden, Emma Dunn, Robert Kent, Samuel S. Hinds, Grant Mitchell, Alma Kruger.

PhotographyAlfred Gilks
Film Editor.....Frank Hull
Time85 minutes

Making comparisons between releases in a popular series is a delightful pastime, because as a general thing no half dozen viewers will agree, and the mere fact that a picture is good enough to invite comparison conversation is indication that everybody should really be happy.

"The Secret of Doctor Kildare" is, in this reviewer's opinion, tops in the series. Story values are sound, scripting is thoroughly workmanlike, and direction and playing combine to wrap it up as a neat, if unpretentious, package of family entertainment.

The only danger to this series right now is the necessity of retaining in the action too many of the characters established at the outset who now take on lesser plot importance as the career of

Doctor Kildare expands. It presents a problem to the writers.

However, "The Secret of Dr. Kildare" comes through to general satisfaction. The story idea, from Max Brand's published basis, concerns the problem faced by Lew Ayres when he must decide between endangering the health of his patron, Lionel Barrymore, by continuing arduous experiments on which they have collaborated, and appearing to be a "quitter." There is a wealthy socialite young woman involved in the action, Helen Gilbert, and her friendship with Ayres still further throws an off-color hue on his actions.

Harold Bucquet continues to maintain the standard of directorial excellence he set for himself when graduating into features. In other words, he is no "flash in the pan." The stars, Ayres and Barrymore, are their usual excellent selves, with the highly capable support highlighted by the performance of Helen Gilbert as the fluttery socialite, and the repressed skill of Lionel Atwell as her father.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Probably tops in the "Kildare" series so you can do your planning accordingly. *Previewed November 17.*

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In this third of the series, the adventures of Dr. Kildare get back on the main highway from which they skidded in the preceding number and fulfill all the bright promise of the first . . . is swell entertainment, warmly human, amusing and dramatically potent by burn, well-written, well-directed and excellently played."

VARIETY: "Emphasizing the human elements even more strongly than they have been harnessed in past, exhibs who have enjoyed good business from earlier editions should find this one no disappointment."

Latest 'Charlie Chan' Needs More Chan

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Exec. Producer.....Sol M. Wurtzel
Associate Producer.....John Stone
DirectorHerbert I. Leeds
Screenplay: Robert Ellis, Helen Logan.

Based on a play by Gina Kaus, Ladislaus Fedor.

StarSidney Toler
Featured: Lynn Bari, Richard Clarke, Harold Huber, Pedro de Cordoba, Dorothy Tree, C. Henry Gordon, Douglas Dumbrille, Noel Madison, Leo Carroll, Lon Chaney, Jr., Louis Mercier, George Davis, Barbara Leonard,

Adrienne d'Ambricourt, Fredrik Vogeding.

PhotographerVirgil Miller
Film Editor.....Harry Reynolds
Time72 minutes

There is nothing more irritating than to watch a picture unit find wrong ways to do a job. In our opinion, the Charlie Chan series is sold on Charlie Chan. In fact, we believe it is the Charlie Chan series.

Somewhere in conception, writing, or direction of this picture the Sol Wurtzel unit got off on

the wrong foot. Sidney Toler, who is hitting in stride as Charlie Chan, was allowed to recede in script and in actual production to play almost a shadow for an over-written, over-played Harold Huber characterization.

Huber is a fine trouper, but it is our view that the customers are paying for Charlie Chan.

That explains the chief things that hurt "Charlie Chan in the City of Darkness." They reduce it from a unique, saleable charac-

(Continued on Page 17)

The Radio Reporter: KEEPS THE INDUSTRY POSTED ON PICTURE PERSONALITIES ON THE AIR WAVES

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations of each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard for that particular program.

SCREEN GUILD (For Gulf Oil)

M.C., Roger Pryor; stars, Fred Allen, Bob Benchley, John Charles Thomas Oscar Bradley's music.
Rating: 90%.

Tallulah Bankhead failed to appear for the planned program, with no explanation given over the air, so the program slipped below average because even the herculean efforts of Fred Allen and Benchley could not get past the patched-up feeling. A switch to Chicago brought in John Charles Thomas and that veteran lifted the show with two effective selections.

★ ★ ★

BOB HOPE (For Pepsodent)

M.C., Bob Hope; featured, Judy Garland, Jerry Colonna, Bill Goodwin.
Rating: 95%.

The Radio Reporter is catching up with Hope's pre-Thanksgiving program. . . . A week before we had heard one of the best periods Hope ever delivered. . . . This week he ran up against that stereotyped pre-Thanksgiving routine. . . . Despite Hope's personality and spot of good material, it did not come up to standard. . . . Over-long and over-heavy commercials do not help this program, either.

★ ★ ★

SILVER SCREEN 1847 Rogers Bros.

M.C., Conrad Nagel; star, Carole Lombard.
Rating: 100%

Carole Lombard is a great bet for one of these half-hour programs that depend on speed and

fast action. . . . She did a fine job with "Incredible Lady." . . . William Bowers sold himself in the part opposite. . . . Production skill plus the star made it a 100% offering.

★ ★ ★

BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Star and M.C., Bing Crosby.
Rating: 90%.

Bing just doesn't seem to be in stride with present material. The current week's offering was too far overboard on the English side. . . . Bing is also up against it on the current crop of song offerings.

★ ★ ★

CECIL DeMILLE (Lux Products)

Play: "Mr. Chips"; stars, Laurence Olivier, Edna Best; guest, James Hilton.
Rating: 110%.

The mind or imagination of a listener could not expect anymore of fidelity to beloved "Mr. Chips" than this scripting, presentation by DeMille, and performance by Olivier. Olivier's performance was excellent. . . . Edna Best and all in support tops. . . . Started slowly, but built on the quality of the playing and presentation.

GEORGE JESSEL

M.C., George Jessel; guest stars, Eleanor Holm, Arthur Train, Ray Perkins and Peter the Great.
Rating: 100%.

Jessel has been none too hot, but this is the best heard for a few weeks, despite the handicap of Eleanor Holm. . . . Jessel's own material was good, author Arthur Train was different and interesting; Peter, who tore telephone books, and Eleanor were both helped over the bumps by Jessel.

★ ★ ★

"IT HAPPENED IN HOLLYWOOD"

(Hormel Products)

Presents Martha Mears, John Conte; Eddie Dunsteder's music. A Monday to Friday program.

Rating: 70%.

Pretty terrible on the one we caught last week, both from the standpoint of material and delivery. . . . They are trying to sell Hormel's Spam, but they might just as well call it Hormel's hams. . . . It was that light. . . . One of those programs aired in afternoon time for the Pacific Coast, and nothing to worry about if it did not use the word "Hollywood."

★ ★ ★

JACK BENNY (Jello)

M.C., Benny, in person; featured, Mary Livingstone, Eddie Roch-

ester Anderson, Phil Harris (and his music), Dennis Day.

Rating: 100%.

The Jack Benny coast presentation this week hits into his real stride and deserves that 100%. Benny is taking more of the burden on his own shoulders, and while the result may appear to be a muffed line now and then, the effect is spontaneity. . . . This Dennis Day is coming along with increased confidence. . . . Mary Livingstone bounced the ball back and forth with Jack to aid the general air of having a good time.

★ ★ ★

CHASE AND SANBORN

M.C., Rudy Vallee; stars, Bergen and McCarthy, Dorothy Lamour; guests, John Garfield, Alan Mowbray, Lansfield Hatfield.

Rating: 100%.

Vallee is back in his own showmanship stride, and the entire program was snapped up and effective for air listeners. . . . Garfield, as he had done a week before, shows that he can sell over the waves what he sells on the screen, Mowbray lifted the comedy routine, Hatfield will satisfy, and Bergen was just a little bit better than some recent weeks.

★ ★ ★

ODDS AND ENDS

When Claudette Colbert could not appear for the Orson Welles air version of "Garden of Allah," Madeleine Carroll stepped into the breach and did a grand job. . . . Other comment on the show is superfluous since it was in the Welles tradition of excellence, even though "Garden of Allah" is not a happy air selection. . . . The Grouch Club hit a new low last week and had better soon decide whether it wishes to remain in the major league. . . . If you are in the proper mood you can always take Jean Hersholt in "Dr. Christian" but some of the scripts are pretty heavily on the high school sophomore side. . . . Maybe we are all wrong, and that's what the doctor's patients want.

The Radio Reporter Thinks:

That a number of programs are suffering because of a disease that might be called: "The source of the broadcast."

He thinks, in his humble way: Too many New York programs are aimed at Lindy's elaborate delicatessen; too many Hollywood programs are aimed at studio audiences keyed to laughs that only Hollywood might get.

That's just what The Radio Reporter thinks. Take it or leave it.

But maybe someone should recall, every now and then, that the product to be sold, whether it be cheese or ham or face goozlum, is looking for customers over a nation that is 3000 miles wide.

Or so we have been told.

Exhibitor Letter Prompts Nichols to Write About Experiences With Sales Executives



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

Friends, we can hide the old jalopy in the garage this week. Is it possible that our tour of the San Gabriel Valley during the past three weeks is bearing fruit? How we hope we do not have to tour further through this section to pick up dirt while riding on paved highways. The writer would love to have the opportunity to tell you this kind of true story every week, but alas there are still the mice to contend with in this business.

We, after 22 years touring this country, have always held up to the trade the one individual representing the motion picture industry that best typifies that true slogan of Rotary—"He profits most who serves best," and we speak of none other than Jack Flynn, who so ably represents MGM in the Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee territories.

Now to you exhibitors in those territories under Mr. Flynn's jurisdiction, we are very happy to introduce another district representative of MGM, George Hickey, who has the Coast and Rocky Mountain divisions for "Leo," and when we say to you exhibitors we now class George Hickey in the same category as Jack Flynn, you know we hand to Mr. Hickey the finest compliment that this industry can hand to one individual from another.

We still have another personality to class with these sales executives—one Walter Penn, Western Texas salesman for Columbia Pictures in Dallas. These three, while one does not have the same executive position as the other two, believe in one policy and one policy alone—to keep every theater open and going in their territories, regardless of

situation or affiliation. A truly commendable sales policy in which our industry is sadly lacking.

While we are on the subject of competent salesmen, with a flare for legitimate sales policies, let's not forget that Grover C. Parsons, who lives at Redwood City, California, Route 2, and whose possible contributions to the sales problems of this industry, are being wasted among his gardens at his beautiful country home. This industry needs men like Mr. Parsons to help chart the proper sales course through the period of readjustment that we are rapidly approaching.

We have been making the Salt Lake area for years and we personally know an exhibitor by the name of Vosco Call. We pride ourselves that we are a confidant of Mr. Call at Brigham, Utah, and we know of his fight to keep his doors open in the face of a powerful chain trying to take the MGM product from him.

Could we have succeeded without help from some one with understanding and with a set policy to keep all theatres open and going? He could not! It took a man like Mr. Hickey with intestinal fortitude to buck mighty interests. He knew Vosco Call was a credit to our industry and an old tried and true customer of MGM; and may we state right here, it's funny how in most territories, MGM sticks with its old customers, in spite of all offers from interests who will pay anything to obtain their opposition's MGM product. This last statement of fact as it applies to the above, we can give, frankly to you, from our years of covering all kinds of theatre situations in this country.

You no doubt read our first article on the San Gabriel Valley Theatre situation about Alhambra. It seems George Hickey read it too. Thanks to the confidence for truth Mr. Hickey places in the writer, we were immediately called into Mr. Hickey's office. You understand Mr. Hickey only has 2361 theatres in his entire division which covers thousands of square miles of territory, with many in vast mountain and desert areas and he cannot hope to see all of his product's customers, as much as he would like to. He is

forced to listen to the arguments put forth by his subordinate about your theatre situation and it is hard for him sometimes to separate the wheat from the chaff. But somehow he does a grand job of it, and only in isolated cases, like Mr. Ferry's Granada Theatre, Alhambra, situation do they escape him where pressure has been placed on Mr. Hickey's subordinates, by outside interests.

So Mr. Hickey asked us a lot of pertinent questions about Alhambra. Then he went into his own whirlwind investigation, taking nobody's word for anything. You who know George Hickey in his own territory, know he doesn't fool around when he thinks an injustice has been done either his company or the exhibitor. What happened in this case is told in the letter on the opposite page.

We would under no consideration ever class Mr. Hickey as a softy, so we warn you exhibitors with fancied wrong when you read this article, don't think you can impose on Mr. Hickey. You better be able to substantiate your claims with something stronger than conversation. We would never be guilty of trying to fool Mr. Hickey.

Now what does the product of MGM gain from Mr. Hickey's fair and just action in the Alhambra matter? One cannot measure in dollars and cents what goodwill is worth but we venture to say that Southern California exhibitors as a whole will have more respect and good feeling toward MGM in its action through the policies as set down by Mr. Hickey's attitude in the Alhambra matter. No "FORGOTTEN MAN" NOW! Money can never buy the esteem that Mr. Hickey's decision in the Granada Theatre situation has placed him in the eyes of the exhibitors of Southern California. MGM has truly proven in this instance that its slogan, "THE FRIENDLY COMPANY" is not a mere motion picture advertising gesture.

We only wish we knew and could tell you just what commitments Mr. Hickey has made for MGM with Mr. Ferry, but we do know that this same commitment will help keep open the doors of the Granada Theatre.

Further, Mr. Hickey assures us that all clearances in the City of

Alhambra will be lived up to as far as it concerns MGM product. To you, Vosco Call at Brigham, Utah, you are the one man who reads this article that can best appreciate what Mr. Hickey's action in the Granada case means to Charles Ferry.

You exhibitors who do not know the Southern California territory, but have a sneaking suspicion after reading our series of articles on the San Gabriel Valley Theatre situation that something is rotten in Denmark and the San Gabriel Valley is not Copenhagen, will, I know, agree with the writer that you do not have to know Mr. Hickey personally—his actions speak louder than words.

So we will close with this thought in mind—we only hope that we have more stories like this to print in the very near future.

'Honeymoon's Over'

(Continued from Page 7)

sults as the high pressure auto salesman who takes advantage of the youngsters' desire to own a car and thus keep pace with others in their suburb. Supporting players are standard and satisfactory.

This will probably be the last appearance of Bill McGuire's play on the screen, unless the next scripting aggregation changes the motivation. Even WPA workers now have two car garages, even if there isn't any chicken in the pot.

Direction and all production elements are geared to an even tenored program basis.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Will get by, but strictly bottom of the bill. Previewed Nov. 17.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "... is on par with the consistent dual end pictures that 20th-Fox producer has been battling out for years. There is nothing pretentious about 'The Honeymoon Is Over,' either in cast or production, but it will stack up as acceptable in the cities, and in the hinterlands should even do better."

VARIETY: "... geared exactly for the family trade in supporting spots. Generously spotted with chuckles, matrimonial mixups with the general business of living for a young married couple, picture romps along for pure audience satisfaction of the lighter variety."

*A Friendly Exhibitor . . .
Writes the Friendly Paper . . .
About a Friendly Company*

Direction of C. A. FERRY

Phone ALhambra 3078

FERRY'S GRANADA THEATRE

130 West Main Street . . . Alhambra, Calif.

November 14th, 1939.

Mr. Harry E. Nichols,
Box-Office Digest,
Hollywood, Calif.

Dear Mr. Nichols:

When you came to me and stated that you had discovered a "move-over" of three pictures from the El Rey Theatre charging a 20c admission to the Alhambra Theatre charging an admission of 35c and further stated you were investigating that matter, I felt that you had discovered the climax of a series of like unethical operating policies existing in Alhambra and naturally considered it my duty to acquaint you with such facts as you demanded.

However, because of the fact that your story uncovered existing conditions, I was called in to the office of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer by Mr. George Hickey who had become aware for the first time that these conditions actually existed and not only has corrected many of these conditions that affect me, but has made possible for me to continue operating my theatre, as far as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is concerned. I want to say that Mr. Hickey has proven to me to be the outstanding friend of the exhibitor in this territory because his fine constructive action toward me has emphasized M.G.M.'s slogan, "THE FRIENDLY COMPANY."

What other major distributors will do to correct these unethical conditions I do not know, but it is naturally obvious that a theatre cannot exist on one product alone. Therefore, I am giving each one of the other distributors with whom I do business the opportunity to correct them so that I may be able to keep my doors open.

May I thank you and Box-Office Digest for your unselfish recognition of an exhibitor's problem and the able manner in which you fearlessly published the facts as you found them. I know that you have had nothing to gain in upholding my cause and I want to request that you publish this letter so that I may publicly thank Mr. Hickey also for his fine consideration,

Sincerely yours,
GRANADA THEATRE,
ALHAMBRA, CALIF.
C. A. FERRY

**“For unprecedented
screams--of fright
and hilarity--we give
you ‘The Cat and the
Canary’--the ace
mystery-comedy of
the past decade!”**



★

BOB HOPE

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Management

Louis Shurr • Al Melnick • James Saphier

PEPSODENT PROGRAM

Ridge Finds Sentiment for Salesman's Union Growing; Other Live News From the Carolinas



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Charlotte, N. C.—Nov. 18—Seventeen years ago Harold Pickett went to work for Paramount. Served as exploiteer, salesman, sales manager in Dallas, manager in San Antonio, Texas, and later branch manager in Charlotte. He served through those lean years, when Paramount cut the boys salaries in two parts. He served when the Paramount Boys were told it would please their higher ups and Brass Hats immensely if they laid aside a sizeable amount of their incomes, to buy that "Historic Stock."

Yes, Pickett lost the money invested in stock. Yes, he stuck right along and worked for Paramount, taking the salary cut. He gave the best years of his life to that company.

Today, or rather a short time ago, Oscar Morgan, the District Manager, permitted Harold to resign. A friend of Oscar's for a long time was given the Charlotte branch manager's job. Some rumors even say the friend is a relative of Oscar's as well. That's the way the picture rumor's go. The new appointee had formerly sold film for that company. I know nothing of his record. That does not matter. The point at issue is Pickett—and the unionization of FILM SALESMEN.

These dismissals or forced resignations of men who have spent nearly twenty years in service, are building up daily resentment among others, who feel like the turkey on November 1st.

Either Paramount district and salesmanagers were dumb in keeping Harold Pickett for 17 years, if he was incompetent, or some one in that organization has applied the same kind of judg-

ment Hitler did to the nine Czech youths the other day.

And what is it creating among others in other companies? A desire for economic security: a desire to be freed from the personal desires of some district manager, in the face of long service and certainly satisfactory service, if they be kept nearly two decades.

These knights of the road are asking me every day how they should go about organizing a union. Of course they do not meet in groups and shout their desires from the house tops, but they see what happened to "Pickett's Last Charge," and sooner or later anticipate his fate. So far no other company has made a place for Pickett.

"If we had a union," one of the boys said, "they might have demoted Harold Pickett from branch manager, but if he had been elevated from our ranks, they would have had to let him return to the road."

Ridge Foresees A Moses From Ranks of AFL

I may be reading the signs wrong, but I do not believe I am. There is decided unrest in the hearts of many salesmen and others, in the branches of all major companies. They read daily in the papers about "economic security under the Townsend plan, the Ham and Eggers, the Bigelow Ohio old age pensions, President Roosevelt's concern for those unfortunate in middle age. All these things together with the treatment they see their fellows getting, after so many years of service, are creating a seething ire in their minds, which needs only leadership to foment into action. That leader is bound to come out of the AFofL ranks, as soon as he discovers this undercurrent.

Mr. Distributor, Mr. Salesman, Mr. District Manager of all major companies, it is your lack of foresight; your lack of looking out for your old "SLAVES," that is bringing this about. Do not blame anybody but yourselves. You have bivouacked in \$8.00 hotel rooms and allowed your salesmen only \$3.00 ones. You have arrived to cop the big contracts, after your salesforce has worked them up. You have grabbed credit to keep these boys from climbing

up in favor in the home office. You have created a wholesome dislike for yourselves by being cruel to your fellow servants, just because you were one or two steps removed from a salesman. Then you have decapitated them ruthlessly, at will.

Now it's their inning approaching. Anytime the salesman's BOSTON TEA PARTY may start.

Fiery Henry Barry Probable Carolinas Prexy

Hartsville, S. C., Nov. 17.—Unless present indications are miscading, the next President and leader of the North and South Carolina exhibitors will be a fiery South Carolinian, Henry Barry. He is the present vice-president, and one of the men regarded as always getting what he goes after.

Lone-handed, so the story goes, he licked the South Carolina legislature, when they tried to hogtie the motion picture folks with unbearable and burdensome taxes.

Henry Barry is said to be a man of few words, but ones that count when he has a job to do. As one of his closest friends in organization work put it this week, "Henry isn't much of a diplomat or gum shoe worker. But when he is convinced he is right, hell and high water will not stop him. He isn't exactly a radical in this business, but no one ever considered him exactly a retiring type of worker. He may not be an orator, but he will get results.

Some fireworks are expected at the meeting which is to be held at the Hotel Charlotte Sunday and Monday, December 3 and 4. The sessions since Charles W. Piquet retired as president have been behind closed doors. When we inquired why this was, one of the officers told us that they should have at least one day a year, where they could all meet; cuss the branch managers and salesmen, and generally enjoy themselves without these fellows jawing back at them. So maybe it is just as well that even the press should be excluded. Sometimes the best way to solve one's problems is to let off the surplus steam, before going into the direct contact with those with whom there are problems to solve.

Does Chain Operation Cut Producer Revenue?

Tax problems are the largest ones that are coming up for discussion, according to members of the board. They have already taken their stand against the Neely Bill; with respect to the defunct proposed Code; regarding MPTOA activities. They belong and work with Ed Kuykendall. He will be their principal out of town speaker—also Metro's Will Rodgers, if he can get away from New York. They expect over two hundred members present.

Ashville, N.C., Nov. 17.—Since the war oratorically broke out in Europe, with the attend reverberations from Hollywood's wailing wall, exhibitors in every spot have cussed our West Coast Brass Hats, and have generally said it serves them right. Referring of course to the loss of foreign film rentals. However, now and then some independent exhibitor does offer a suggestion, as to the way out.

This week a man who has been an exchange manager, booker, film salesman and now an exhibitor, suggested that it was within the hollow of their own hands to do it. He suggested that there was too great a difference between film rentals paid by the independent and the producer owned chains; that if their own theatres were to pay as great a percent of their gross receipts, as is taken from the independents, it would more than make up the loss from foreign business.

I asked this man if he had any figures to bear out his belief; he said no others than when he was in the distribution end of the game. Then he said film rentals shrunk as soon as chain operation came in.

So far I have had opportunity to investigate to some extent this situation so far as it applies to Charlotte. Here the Wilby-Kincey partnership is tied in with Public. In discussing this matter with some of the exchange managers, it was found that "Mike" Kincey is paying as much per thousand population for pictures, and in some instances more than independents. This, it was explained by the exchanges, was due to his getting larger returns on percent-

(Continued on Page 17)

Ridge Find Sentiment For Salesman's Union Growing

(Continued from Page 16)

age pictures, due to more intensive advertising than many independents. However, it was admitted by the executives in some of the branches of the major companies, that they knew of some territories where this situation did not exist, and believed that the independent exhibitor had something.

Payrols Are Up And Revenue Down in Mines

Within the next two weeks your Field Investigator will be in the Atlanta and Jacksonville territories, and will make a more complete survey of this situation, at which time this column will carry his findings.

Ran into Ferd Middleberg of Logan, W. Va., last night, who follows the swallows south every time the leaves turn to red and gold in the coal fields. He had a question that is hard to answer about this cock-eyed business—that is experiencing so many inconceivable problems, that even the folks reputed to be endowed with business uncton and profound wisdom are groping for the answer.

"What is wrong with the people?" Mr. Middleberg asked. "Out our way in the heart of the West Virginia Coal Fields, where thousands of cars of good coal are being mined and shipped to market every day, our business is off over the times when these miners were

idle, and supposedly had no money," he remarked.

"For the past fifteen weeks they have been working night and day. Some of them drawn down as much as three hundred and fifty dollars a month. They were in debt to begin with, but they have caught up at the company's stores. They have good bank rolls, but still the same fellows that formerly gave us a good business, are not coming; neither are their families. Whether they are hoarding their income against what they feel may be a hard winter, if this European situation does not demand their coal, I do not know. All I know is, only an exceptional picture is clicking with us."

Continuing he remarked that

the night before he left Logan. Abe Hyman of Huntington called him and said the same situation is present in that metropolis of West Virginia, where they have a million and a half dollar theatre.

Mr. Middleberg said he was not unmindful of the producers' problems, but remarked that he had his hands full, to keep the old shop open and on the right side of the ledger in Logan.

I have known Ferd for twenty-five years. He does not talk either out of turn or from the standpoint of a radical, nor is he just complaining for the sake of buying. He has been successful, and when he asked the question, he was sincerely puzzled for the answer.

Need's More Chan

(Continued from Page 10)

ter to a hack writer's formula B mystery yarn for sub-B audiences.

The yarn starts out with an over-ambitious attempt at international intrigue in Paris at the time of the Munich conference. We say "overambitious" because nothing that ever happens afterwards measures up to the aim at the opening. It slips down into the usual spy routines, and attempts at timely war stuff in blacked-out Paris that no producer of B's should attempt in these days when the customer has already yawned over his morning paper's headlines.

Toler is excellent, in what he has been given to do. Blame for the general weak result can be divided between producers, writers and director.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Not so hot. Slide it by, so as not to hurt your future draw on Chan and Toler when you get a real Chan picture to sell. Previewed November 14.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Failing to measure up to most of its predecessors by a considerable margin, this latest Charley Chan is a confused and rather dull effort, with the screened result well below the usual standard of almost everybody connected with it."

VARIETY: "'City in Darkness,' latest entry in the Charlie Chan series, comes up as average entertainment. Script injects a timeliness, tying in with the Munich crisis of September a year ago. Picture will satisfy fans of Chan and the series but will prove just modest divergence for balance of theatre patrons."

It's In the Works . . .



● THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST'S NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY—the most efficient working tool ever devised for all branches of this industry.

● IN COMPACT FORM—with dictionary clarity—all the essential facts that the showman or picture worker needs about every picture currently in circulation.

● THE BOX OFFICE ANGLES AND FIGURES; the reviewer's thoughts. All wrapped up in a handy package.

● P.S.: The advertising pages will be working for our friends day in and day out because it is the sort of working tool that will be used day in and day out.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	GOL	167
The Rams Came	FOX	165
Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	156
Drums Along The Mohawk	FOX	155
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Babes In Arms	MGM	153
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Hollywood Cavaleade	FOX	143
Elizabeth and Essex	WAR	140
Kentucky	FOX	138
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Bean Geste	PAR	126
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	124
Juarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120
Only Angels Have Wings	GOL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Roaring Twenties	WAR	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
The Real Glory	UA	115
Allegheny Uprising	RKO	115
At The Circus	MGM	112
Thunder Aloft	MGM	112
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	102
Midnight	PAR	111
OKlahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Lopper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Wuthering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
In Name Only	RKO	102
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	100
Tailspin	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Eternally Yours	UA	93
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91
Intermezzo	UA	89
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	139
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	122
First Love	UNIV	125
Disputed Passage	PAR	112
Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	103
Golden Boy	GOL	102
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	98
Jamaica Inn	PAR	97
Manie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
The Cat and the Canary	PAR	96
Good Girls Go To Paris	GOL	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
What A Life	PAR	92
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Fast and Furious	MGM	90
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	87
Blackmail	MGM	87
The Flying Deuces	RKO	87
Naughty But Nice	WAR	85
Fast and Loose	MGM	85
Off The Record	WAR	85
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Espionage Agent	WAR	84
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

U-Boat 29	GOL	93
Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82
Blondie Meets the Boss	GOL	81
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80
Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX	80
Tropic Fury	UNIV	78
Devil's Island	WAR	78
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77
Legion of Lost Flyers	UNIV	77
Man They Couldn't Hang	GOL	77
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76
Blondie Brings Up Baby	GOL	76
Flight at Midnight	REP	75

Four Girls in White.....MGM.....81
Return of the Cisco Kid.....FOX.....82
These Glamour Girls.....MGM.....82
Cafe Society.....PAR.....81
King of the Underworld.....WAR.....81
Dancing Co-ed.....MGM.....81
On Your Toes.....WAR.....80
Angels Wash Their Faces.....WAR.....80
Arizona Wildcat.....FOX.....80
The Gorilla.....FOX.....80

I'm From Missouri.....PAR.....79
The Sun Never Sets.....UNIV.....79
The Girl Downstairs.....MGM.....79
Here I Am A Stranger.....FOX.....78
Under Pup.....UNIV.....78
Never Say Die.....PAR.....78
The Lady's From Kentucky.....PAR.....77
Prison Without Bars.....PAR.....77
Let Us Live.....COL.....77
20,000 Men a Year.....COL.....76
Coast Guard.....COL.....76
\$1,000 A Touchdown.....PAR.....75
The Lady Vanishes.....FOX.....75
Boy Friend.....FOX.....75
Indianapolis Speedway.....WAR.....75
Mutiny on the Blackhawk.....UNIV.....75
Charlie Chan in Honolulu.....FOX.....74
Fisherman's Wharf.....RKO.....74
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.....FOX.....72
Bridal Suite.....MGM.....72
The Jones Family in Hollywood.....FOX.....72

Inside Story.....RKO.....75
Pacific Liner.....RKO.....75
Charlie Chan in the City in Darkness.....FOX.....75
The Day The Bookies Wept.....RKO.....74
The Witness Vanishes.....UNIV.....74
Two Bright Boys.....UNIV.....74
Chan in Treasure Island.....FOX.....74
One Hour To Live.....UNIV.....74
On Dress Parade.....WAR.....73
Boy Slaves.....RKO.....73
Disbarred.....PAR.....73
Missing Daughters.....COL.....73
Blondie Takes Vacation.....COL.....73
Island of Lost Men.....PAR.....73
Beware Spooks.....COL.....73
The Spellbinder.....RKO.....72
It Could Happen To You.....FOX.....72
King of Chinatown.....PAR.....72
Society Lawyer.....MGM.....72
Persons in Hiding.....PAR.....72
Society Smuggler.....UNIV.....72
Mr. Moto's Last Warning.....FOX.....72
Twelve Crowded Hours.....RKO.....72
Ex-Champ.....UNIV.....72
Nancy Drew, Reporter.....WAR.....71
Pirates of the Skies.....UNIV.....71
Sorority House.....RKO.....71
Nancy Drew, Trouble Shooter.....WAR.....71
Mystery of the White Room.....UNIV.....71
The Girl and the Gambler.....RKO.....71
Quick Millions.....FOX.....71
Blind Alley.....COL.....71
Million Dollar Legs.....PAR.....71
Charlie Chan in Reno.....FOX.....71
Hero For a Day.....COL.....71
Those High Grey Walls.....UNIV.....71
Hawaiian Nights.....UNIV.....70
The Escape.....FOX.....70
Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase.....WAR.....70
Full Confession.....RKO.....70
Stop, Look and Love.....FOX.....70
Unexpected Father.....UNIV.....70
Chasing Danger.....FOX.....70
Unmarried.....PAR.....70
Romance of the Redwoods.....COL.....70
Winner Take All.....COL.....70
Big Town Czar.....UNIV.....70
On Trial.....WAR.....70
Torchy Blane in Chinatown.....WAR.....70
Ambush.....PAR.....70
They Made Her A Spy.....RKO.....70
Torchy For Mayor.....WAR.....70
The Girl From Mexico.....RKO.....70
Within the Law.....MGM.....70
Grand Jury Secrets.....PAR.....70
Bulldog Drummond's Bride.....PAR.....70
Cowboy Quarterback.....WAR.....70
The Saint in London.....RKO.....70
Call A Messenger.....UNIV.....70

Some Like It Hot.....PAR.....69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police.....PAR.....69
Everybody's Baby.....FOX.....69
Death of a Champion.....PAR.....68
No Place To Go.....WAR.....68
News Is Made At Night.....FOX.....68
The Family Next Door.....UNIV.....68
The Saint Strikes Back.....RKO.....68
Undercover Doctor.....PAR.....68
Mr. Moto in Danger Island.....FOX.....68
Adventures of Jane Arden.....WAR.....68
Fixer Dugan.....RKO.....68
For Love or Money.....UNIV.....68
Forgotten Woman.....UNIV.....68
Lone Wolf Spy Hunt.....COL.....67
Conspiracy.....RKO.....67
Playing With Dynamite.....WAR.....67
Almost A Gentleman.....RKO.....66
A Woman Is A Judge.....COL.....66
Mr. Moto Takes A Vacation.....UNIV.....66
Beauty for the Asking.....UNIV.....66
Sudden Money.....PAR.....66
They Asked For It.....UNIV.....66
The Ware Case.....GB.....66
Boy Trouble.....PAR.....65
Burn 'Em Up O'Connor.....MGM.....65
Secret Service of the Air.....WAR.....65
Tell No Tales.....MGM.....65
They All Come Out.....MGM.....64
Exile Express.....GN.....64
Sweetstakes Winner.....WAR.....64
6,000 Enemies.....MGM.....63
Night Work.....PAR.....61
The Kid From Texas.....MGM.....60
Miracles For Sale.....MGM.....60

Rio.....UNIV.....70
Back Door To Heaven.....PAR.....70
King of the Turf.....UA.....70
One Third of a Nation.....PAR.....70
Clouds Over Europe.....COL.....70
Stronger Than Desire.....MGM.....70

Inspector Hornleigh.....FOX.....54
This Man Is News.....RKO.....54
Career.....RKO.....53

Shipyard Sally.....FOX.....68

Our Leading Citizen.....PAR.....67
Stolen Life.....PAR.....67
Hotel Imperial.....PAR.....66
Zenobia.....UA.....66

Gracie Allen Murder Case.....PAR.....64
Way Down South.....RKO.....64
Spirit of Culver.....UNIV.....63
The Flying Irishman.....RKO.....63
Smiling Along.....FOX.....63
Climbing High.....GB.....63
Women in the Wind.....WAR.....62

Whispering Enemies.....COL.....75
Homicide Bureau.....COL.....71
Mysterious Mr. Wong.....MONO.....71
Woman Doctor.....REP.....71
North of Shanghai.....COL.....71
Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence.....FOX.....71

She Married A Cop.....REP.....70
Hidden Power.....COL.....70
The Sunset Murder Case.....GN.....70
Pride of the Navy.....REP.....70
Tough Kid.....MONO.....70
Mysterious Miss X.....REP.....70
Trapped in the Sky.....COL.....70
Orphan in the Street.....REP.....70

I Am A Criminal.....MONO.....69
Fighting Thorongbreds.....REP.....69
Gambling Ship.....UNIV.....69
Convict's Code.....MONO.....69
Parents On Trial.....COL.....68
The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew.....COL.....68
Streets of New York.....MONO.....68
Inside Information.....UNIV.....68
I Was A Convict.....REP.....68
Navy Secrets.....MONO.....68
Federal Man Hunt.....REP.....68
Pride of the Bluegrass.....REP.....68
Forged Passport.....MONO.....68
Calling All Marines.....REP.....68
Smashing The Money Ring.....WAR.....68
Scandal Sheet.....COL.....68
House of Fear.....UNIV.....67
My Wife's Relatives.....REP.....67
Long Shot.....GN.....67
Sabotage.....REP.....67
Pride of the Bluegrass.....WAR.....66
Behind Prison Gates.....COL.....66
Wolf Call.....MONO.....66
First Offenders.....COL.....66
Rookie Cop.....RKO.....66
Wanted by Scotland Yard.....MONO.....66
Waterfront.....WAR.....66
Kid Nightingale.....WA.....66
Irish Luck.....MONO.....65
Mickey The Kid.....REP.....65
The Zero Hour.....REP.....65
Outside These Walls.....COL.....65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave.....REP.....65
Mr. Wong in Chinatown.....MONO.....65
The Man Who Dared.....WAR.....65
Konga, The Wild Stallion.....COL.....64
Mystery Plane.....MONO.....64
My Son Is A Criminal.....COL.....64
Code of the Secret Service.....WAR.....64
Should A Girl Marry?.....MONO.....64
Everybody's Hobby.....WAR.....63
Smuggled Cargo.....REP.....63
Should Husbands Work?.....REP.....63
Street of Missing Men.....REP.....63
Siar Reporter.....MONO.....63
Undercover Agent.....MONO.....63
Boy's Reformatory.....MONO.....63
Sky Patrol.....RKO.....62
Panama Lady.....RKO.....62
The Girl From Rio.....GN.....62
Jeepers Creepers.....MONO.....62

Inspector Hornleigh.....FOX.....54
This Man Is News.....RKO.....54
Career.....RKO.....53

Joe Pasternack

PRODUCED

"FIRST LOVE"

Coming:

"DESTROY RIDES AGAIN"



For The

NEW UNIVERSAL

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 13.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 30, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

“Another Thin Man”
Heads Box Offices
For Week

SEE PAGE 5

Atlanta Red Hot
Awaiting Selznick’s
“Gone With the Wind”

SEE PAGE 13

“Writers-vs-Stooges”
Presents Problem
To the Editor

SEE PAGE 3

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*
DIGEST "HONOR BOX"
 THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week MGM Wins With
"ANOTHER THIN MAN" 136 %



General Manager
EDDIE MANNIX



Producer
HUNT STROMBERG



Director
W. S. VAN DYKE, II



WILLIAM POWELL

Featured Players
**VIRGINIA GREY
 OTTO KRUGER
 RUTH HUSSEY
 PATRIC KNOWLES
 MARJORIE MAIN
 ASTA**

Original Story
DASHIELL HAMMETT

Screenplay
**FRANCIS GOODRICH
 ALBERT HACKETT**

Photographers
**OLIVER T. MARSH
 WILLIAM DANIELS**

Film Editor
FREDRICK Y. SMITH

Musical Score
EDWARD WARD



MYRNA LOY



NAT PENDELTON



C. AUBREY SMITH

DIGEST

WRITERS VERSUS STOOGES

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Ever since writers became regimented to the point where trade papers cannot talk to screen writers, and screen writers talk only to Cabot and Lodge, The Digest has refrained—in a timid way—from even mentioning anything concerning writing.

It might almost be considered that The Digest, aside from its routine review credits, and its sincere good words every now and then for a good job well done, had decided that writing had nothing to do with the making of motion pictures.

Perhaps we should still remain a stand-in for an ostrich. But a thought occurs to us:

* * *

Within recent weeks we have had opportunity for the closest of contacts with the top executives facing this industry's current serious problems.

(Maybe they only talk to us because they want to know more and more about our field reports; we talk to them because they are nice fellows personally.)

But our conversations always work around to a realization that this gigantic industry is facing one of those ridiculous problems where grown men throw their hands up and say: "We're up against a stone wall—what shall we do?"

Which they always follow with a wistful expression:

"What we really need in these days is IDEAS. Gee, if some of those writers would only come up with some big IDEAS."

The opening expression of this thought is always "wistful," but the concluding words usually go like this:

"If some of those topnotchers with real ability would not be so self-satisfied with drawing four figure money each week on script writing jobs that they admit are manual labor—if only they would come up with some BIG ideas!"

* * *

We have always had a good answer for that. We have told three top studio executives:

"Why not be specific? If a writer in your own organization erupted with a good idea this afternoon, how many hurdles would he have to jump before it reached your ears?"

We sometimes add:

"You are sore about a certain few of your highly-paid geniuses—but who fed them

that red meat that made their necks become bigger than their collars?"

And we always finish with:

"Have you had any time recently to read some of the ideas that come up from your own reading department?"

The answer could almost be a chorus: "Of course not, I am too busy. My assistant Blotzie Bottles reads the reports from that department."

So—and we tried this on one of the biggest and most capable of the executives, we then reply with our speech that is so well known it is a rehearsed routine:

"You have fed the big shots with turkey-fattening meat to the point where you expect manual labor to be creation, and would be surprised to receive a created IDEA; you leave the fate of the up-and-comers to the whims of the Blotzie Bottles stooges."

We have a clinching climax:

"We will bet that there is no man in your organization above the rank of stooge who is checking on the fine work being turned in by the futurity prospects, the makers of sleeper B's."

The last executive on whom we tried this speech hesitated a moment before replying—he must have been visualizing his own stooge and the famine of ideas—before he answered:

"Maybe you've got something there."

* * *

All of which encouraged Your Editor to the point of saying this:

Writers were never born to be pants-pressers, and the more of pants-pressing psychology the industry's methods create in writers, the sooner they lose whatever potentialities they may have as writers.

Stooges were never born to be more than stooges. And the greater the blockade and veto power a stooge possesses in respect to his top executive or a particular organization, the worse the result for art, entertainment, and stockholders' dividends.

And we finish with this thought:

"Now is the time for all
(Continued on Page 5)

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	15 Releases	97
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	48 Releases	96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	41 Releases	94
4. Paramount	47 Releases	86
5. Warner Brothers	47 Releases	83
6. RKO-Radio	33 Releases	81
7. Universal	36 Releases	79
8. Columbia	34 Releases	78
9. Republic	22 Releases	67
10. Monogram	18 Releases	66
11. Grand National	4 Releases	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases	65

367

The Highlighter: DISCUSSES THE STRIKE SITUATION BUT FINDS COMING PICTURES MORE INTERESTING

One of the messiest situations the picture industry has ever managed to be messed up in super-messy style by the last two weeks of messing on the threatened strike, and its alleged settlement. . . . To most of the individuals concerned it is perhaps too burning a memory for The Highlighter to be guilty of pouring caustic in the wounds, so perhaps he should sign off, right here and now. . . . But, being a NATIONAL paper, perhaps he should give The Digest the benefit of a NATIONAL thought. . . . Which is: turn to Page 13 and read what Field Investigator Ridge reports as to the exhibitor attitude in the sections he was covering when the AP, UP and INS were blanketing the country with news of the threatened moving picture blackout. . . . In order to avoid spoiling Ridge's story, we won't go any further than our own impressions, which seem to add up to this impression of exhibitor thought: "Whyinell should we worry? Let those Hollywood big-wigs who make more in a week than we can squeeze out in a year do the worrying. They won't let a strike occur, because they don't want their own income jeopardized. They will finish up—anyway it goes—by telling us we have to pay more money for the pictures. We know that theme song and final answer already—so why worry about a strike?" . . . This sums up the off-the-record opinions our Field Men are getting from exhibitors. . . . We present them for their full worth. . . . But also for its value in showing that we are in a pretty vulnerable industry when there isn't a single element—from our Shakespeares of writing, our Belascos of production, our John Does of labor, and our Woolworths of selling, are continually and apparently inevitably, in a mood that forbids any possibility of getting in the same bed with the other fellow, no matter how tired you feel.

Let's Look Around For Some Cheerful News

You say there isn't any cheerful news these days? That all is war and strikes? . . . Well, The Highlighter can slip some good news the exhibitor way concerning the thing that concerns him most importantly: Pictures. . . . The scouts report that "Of Mice and Men" is a real bell-ringer; the reviewers this week tell you about "Destry Rides Again," and

6 Features "Going Down"

Was Now

1. Rulers of the Sea	PAR	127	123
2. The Real Glory	UA	115	112
3. Honeymoon in Bali	PAR	103	99
4. U-Boat 29	COL	93	90
5. On Your Toes	WAR	80	78
6. Here I Am A Stranger	FOX	78	75

Darryl Zanuck has one of his choice prize packages in the cutting rooms in "Little Old New York." . . . Not to mention another completed subject that will rival "Gone With The Wind" for controversial interest, "Grapes of Wrath." . . . Yessir, m'hearties, there may be some in Hollywood suffering from panicitis, but there are others leading product up to your box offices. . . . They tell us also that Towne and Baker are coming up with a picture in "Swiss Family Robinson," which Edward Ludwig is directing. . . . That's the pipeline information. . . . And, of course, you know that RKO will soon be sounding the cymbals for "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." . . . Going further along the list, someone has tipped off Your Highlighter that Universal has a picture in "The Return of the Invisible Man," or whatever they are calling it. . . . Come to think of it, we got this tip from a film editor. . . . MGM is hot on "Balaleika" which Rheinhold Schunzel has just completed. . . . Wish they would help the exhibitor with better titles down there in Culver City. Do you remember "Remember?"

- There is only ONE . . .
- Dun and Bradstreet of the
Motion Picture industry . . .
- TRIED AND PROVED . . .

The Box Office DIGEST

. . . But aside from the discussion of titles, they tell us this director Schunzel has given MGM a star in the new Illona Massey, and that he even unlimbered Nelson Eddy. . . . Before we close up on the pipe line information, just a tip that Isa Miranda will knock 'em for a loop when Paramount springs "Diamonds Are Dangerous,"—if our G-men are correct.

Pictures Are Being Made; Pictures Are Ready For Sales

One thing that has disturbed Your Highlighter in the reports from Digest field men in the East and the South, and right close to home in California, in recent months, is the impression he gets that exhibitors over the nation have decided that Hollywood has quit on its job of providing entertainment. . . . We can't blame the exhibitor, because a flood of ill-advised publicity that must have been

10 Features "Going Up"

Was Now

1. Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	167	169
2. The Cat and Canary	PAR	98	105
3. Jamaica Inn	PAR	97	99
4. Fast and Furious	MGM	88	91
5. Blondie Brings Up Baby	COL	76	78
6. On Dress Parade	WAR	73	77
7. Coast Guard	COL	73	76
8. Beware Spooks	COL	73	75
9. Five Little Peppers	COL	67	70
10. Jeepers Creepers	REP	62	66

timed with Prime Minister Chamberlain's war declaration, must have started exhibitor thought that way. . . . But we do blame producers and their selling agents who have lost so much of the customer's confidence that they can't say "There is no wolf," after having rehearsed "Wolf! Wolf!" for so many times. . . . But just to be cheerful again, someone should remind exhibitors of "Destry Rides Again," the Joe Pasternak-George Marshall picture which will soon be heading their way. . . . Or, about "Victor Herbert," which will be a treat for music lovers. . . . Which reminds us of the buzzing around town about the way Paramount mishandled the grand and glorious after-theater party in connection with that picture. . . . It seems as we hear it, that all the sophomores at UCLA enjoyed Paramount's bounty, and fattened Victor Hugo's check, while the more or less important people couldn't get within parling range of the coffee shop. . . . Your Highlighter was not there, so this is second hand. . . . But it does remind him of an article that he has been planning to write for a long time: "Companies That Know How to Handle Previews." . . . The Highlighter gets kinda hot about that subject every once in a while—because at heart he is an exhibitor, and he hates to see representatives of the production branch show so little knowledge of the exhibition technique that makes the customer happy.

Jogging Around The Studios In Search of News

Shucks, there isn't any news, after you have finished talking about PICTURES. . . . Unless you count it news that Hedy Lamarr has patched up her troubles with MGM, and returned to the tent. . . . We venture the thought that she may have spent her time out learning how to act. . . . The headlines tell us that Joan Bennett is suing Hal Roach because of the type of advertising he is using on "Housekeeper's Daughter." . . . We hope it is only a space-grabbing gesture, because Joan should welcome any type of advertising that will help her sell tickets. . . . And the box office figures seem to prove that the Roach organization went out to sell tickets.

The Box Office: HUNT STROMBERG RINGS BELL WITH NEW 'THIN MAN' - - - 'HOUSEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER' OKAY

MGM--2 New Releases

MGM takes top honors with two new good releases, one doing very fine business, while the second is doing fairly well, but is being hurt at the boxoffice by its poor title.

MGM's topper, which is also the Honor Box this week, is "ANOTHER THIN MAN," which brings Bill Powell back to the screen after two years absence, and again co-stars him with Myrna Loy in the third of this popular series. Exhibitors who have long clamored to MGM for another 'Thin Man' have at last received an answer to their prayers, for "ANOTHER THIN MAN" has opened up well and is batting around 136%, which may not be quite as strong as the predecessors in this series, but still is very good in the present days of weak box offices. Producer Hunt Stromberg handled this hit.

MGM's second release this week, "REMEMBER?" is a fine production that is not delivering nearly as much as it should at the box office, probably hurt by the poor title, which really suggests nothing, neither comedy, drama, or what-have-you. "REMEMBER?" co-stars Bob Taylor with Greer Garson of "Mr. Chips" fame, and Lew Ayres. The three all deliver fine performances in the light comedy vein.

We estimated "REMEMBER?" at 110%, but on the first figures received from quite a number of houses this picture is only averaging 96%, which is rather weak considering the fine production and the three big marquee names.

Producer Milt Bren and Director Norman McLeod who made "The Topper" pictures for Hal Roach were also responsible for "REMEMBER?" and have again showed skill in the class comedy field. This picture will unquestionably please all types of audiences, but in order to improve its box office possibilities exhibitors should go out of their way on extra exploitation.

UNITED ARTISTS--I Release

United Artists has a very good box office release this week in the new Hal Roach production, "HOUSEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER," which is doing the biggest business of any Roach feature since the original "Topper," averaging 111% on its first bookings, with indications of even building stronger. Due to the fact that this one has no strong marquee names—Joan Bennett and Adolphe Menjou are co-starred—it has been sold very satisfactorily with a very spicy ad campaign and the results have been excellent. Exhibitors who follow up the United Artists-Hal Roach ad campaign suggestions should reap fine benefits.

Producer Hal Roach personally directed this picture and it looks as though he made a smart move in taking the megaphone into his own hands.

Of Eight New Releases In The Past Week

Two Ran Over 100%, Two Came
Through Okay, and Four
Were Very Weak.



PARAMOUNT--2 New Releases

Paramount Pictures have two new releases this week, neither of special importance, but both satisfactory fillers for the average double bill.

The best of these two is the Charles Rogers' production, "O U R N E I G H B O R S — T H E C A R T E R S," 87%, which hasn't proved sensational in the first run houses, but has gone over so well in the "nabes" that we understand Paramount is seriously considering making a series of "Carter Family" pictures with the same cast, built along the same lines as the Hardy and Jones series.

Ralph Murphy directed for Mr. Rogers' intelligent Paramount unit.

Exhibitors will probably remember that Mr. Rogers' previous release was the Bing Crosby starring picture, "The Starmaker," which was a big box office success.

Paramount's second release, "TELEVISION SPY," 73%, is another programmer from the Harold Hurley unit. This one is minus in marquee names, but because of its title it is a timely subject and will probably prove to be quite satisfactory as the second feature.

COLUMBIA-- I New Release

Columbia's only new release this week is another of the Larry Darmour series, starring Jack Holt, entitled "FUGITIVE AT LARGE," which is doing well for this class of subject at 77% average. Pat Ellis and Big Boy Williams are featured. Lew Collins, who has handled most of the pictures in this consistent series, also directed this one.

FOX--Also I Release

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release this week is another of the Jones Family series, this time it is "TOO BUSY TO WORK," 75%. As usual this one features the same cast; Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, etc., and also produced by the Sol Wurtzel program unit. John Stone was associate producer and Otto Brower directed.

Exhibitors who have been running the Jones family series know best their possibilities on this one.

REPUBLIC--I New Programmer

Republic's new release this week, "MAIN STREET LAWYER," is one of the finest offerings to come out of the studio for some time, but is dragging at the box office due to the lack of marquee names, only averaging 70%. "MAIN STREET LAWYER," originally sold to exhibitors as "Abraham Lincoln Boggs," is a fine sentimental melodrama which probably would have done much better if it had one big star name to carry it. Edward Ellis, formerly featured by RKO, is starred with the romantic leads portrayed by Anita Louise and Robert Baldwin. Exhibitors can't expect too strong a box office on this one and accordingly should book it with a big attraction, but on the other hand the picture will receive fine word of mouth advertising from the majority of patrons.

Robert North produced and Dudley Murphy directed.

Writers Versus Stooges

(Continued from Page 3)

good writers and true to rally to the cause of their bread and butter."

The industry needs ideas.

So we add:

"Now is also the time for top executives to take some of the hurdles off the track that prevent the boys with ideas from reaching them; now might also be a good time to ease some well-warmed chairs of ponderous 'writers' who haven't had an idea since Hector was in his mother's mind."

And' Now is the time to brush off the stooges. The industry has a couple of tough years ahead of it.

Let's get down to earth. Let's ALL get down to earth—producer, director, writer, player, technician, exhibitor.

Out of the earth we may COME UP with something that spells "SHOWMANSHIP."

8 New Releases Not In Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. Another Thin Man	MGM	136	145
2. The Housekeeper's Daughter	UA	111	95
3. Remember?	MGM	96	110
4. Our Neighbors—The Carters	PAR	89	90
5. Television Spy	PAR	73	70
6. Fugitives At Large	COL	72	75
7. Too Busy To Work	FOX	71	70
8. Main Street Lawyer	REP	70	70

Nichols' Valley Visits Suggest Reasons Why Producers May Be Losing Deserved Revenue



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

Hollywood, November 26.—We take up where we left off week before last and go up higher in the hills that overlook the San Gabriel Valley.

There is a lot of conversation taking place in numerous trade papers, about revenue and still more revenue for the producers. We had heard rumors in our investigations of this territory that pictures were sometimes held up as much as three, four, and in some cases, six months before an independent could get datings.

Some one told us Monrovia would be the place to investigate. So we took a gander over to the Fox West Coast Lyric Theatre playing seven days after Pasadena at thirty-five cents and the Monrovia Theatre, fourteen days, at thirty cents. It is owned by Dietrich and Feldstein. Nothing wrong with this situation at first glance, both theatres operating on proper stipulated clearances; but in looking over the newspaper files and comparing our list of pictures distributed in 1937 and '38, we were struck with one mysterious fact—that the Monrovia Theatre was playing some companies' product months after other theatres in the Valley had played these same pictures, and they were pictures that should have played, by all booking precedent at the F.W.C. Lyric.

While in the San Gabriel Valley we could not help but hear the reverberations of what was happening in Monrovia.

So we made up a chart and the results were amazing. Either Warners and Paramount for the season of '37 and '38 had the worst product, from the standpoint of a F.W.C. booking department, or F.W.C. wanted

Dietrich and Feldstein to succeed and felt duty bound to release some of their product to the Monrovia Theatre, even though most of these belated releases had been played by every one else in the Valley.

Here's our chart for the season of 1937-38 as it applies to the F.W.C. situation in Monrovia.

WARNERS—21 features canceled.

FOX—2 features canceled.

RKO—11 features canceled.

MGM—2 features canceled.

PARAMOUNT—26 features canceled.

Season 1938-39. The move-over now being more prevalent in the F.W.C. situations it seems Paramount productions are now the sluff material for Monrovia.

PARAMOUNT — 25 features canceled.

PARAMOUNT — 6 Hopalong Cassidy's canceled.

Paramount—2 re-issues canceled.

It took F.W.C. six months to decide that RKO's "Fisherman's Wharf" was not an epic and release it to Dietrich and Feldstein. Yet our dear friends, the producers, still cry for more and faster revenue. We will not comment any further on the above figures as we feel our readers are entirely intelligent enough to understand their meaning.

While in the Monrovia newspaper office we had our attention called to a paper from the San Fernando Valley that carried a story that a certain theatre named the Studio could not get pictures to run. We were rather surprised at that as we were over there the other night and saw "The Rains Came" and we knew that F.W.C.'s El Portal Theatre at North Hollywood, some miles distant, had just completed its run on the same picture. So we took a look at the date line on the paper. It was an issue of quite a few months ago.

It seems that when Gore Brothers built the Studio Theatre in Studio City they found themselves with a picture palace but no product. MGM helped them out some, as it is Leo's policy to keep theatres open. But that was about all the help they could get from the other majors. In the meantime, over at North Hollywood, Ed Thompson had a little

four hundred seat second run house, the Valley Theatre, that had no second run on Fox and MGM, F.W.C. and its partners, Grant-Young-Swope, took a sudden fancy to this same Valley Theatre, said fancy coming after the Studio had made its appearance, and they paid Mr. Thompson the magnificent sum of between ten and fifteen thousand dollars for his lease. But still no MGM product, as Leo refuses to sell the Valley second runs. The change of ownership, it seems, has no effect on the policies of MGM as it applies to right versus might.

We now travel over to the city of San Fernando where Dietrich and Feldstein have another spot playing twenty-one days after L. A. at thirty cents. They play Universal, Columbia, United Artists, RKO and Republic first run for that city.

We find these companies, products being kicked around on one of the widest move-over campaigns we have ever run across.

Now folks, we will attempt to describe a situation on move-overs that will make you Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and St. Louis exhibitors gasp. We sincerely hope it never happens to you.

F.W.C. goes into partnership with a Van Nuys theatre interest. This town is some ten miles from San Fernando. Then F. W. C. or other partners in a separate community and in the San Fernando Valley, build the La Reina Theatre at Sherman Oaks, Making this house the first run, and the Van Nuys the move-over spot. Next in this Valley control plan, F.W.C. buys the Studio Theatre from the Gore Brothers. The same house that could not get enough suitable product. Now the picture has changed completely. F.W.C. play first run day and date with their La Reina and El Portal Theatres miles apart, using two other towns for move-overs, same being their Studio Theatre and Van Nuys, all these theatres being located in a continuous strip in San Fernando Valley.

All pictures being not of the move-over type and when used as secondary features to balance the holdover picture program, the milking process becomes more acute. The percentage of custom-

ers having seen the pictures before becomes a real problem to the independent exhibitor. Then the loss of revenue for the producer now becomes an assured fact, as these same secondary features are played by F.W.C. at flat rental, in most cases, while the subsequent independent has them on a percentage date.

We say good-bye to the San Fernando Theatre, which has enjoyed a clearance of twenty-one days after L.A. for the past four years. This break being the same as the El Portal and Van Nuys, but with F.W.C. operating on a different form of contract that we all know; the pressure will be applied to this Dietrich and Feldstein situation and at the proper time can chain will make an offer and Dietrich and Feldstein, being good business men, will sell out. Their only hope is that another Studio Theatre situation develops in the Valley.

We drive quite a ways now, some sixty-five miles, and stop in Ventura, a Principal Theatre circuit town with two houses and one Independent operating at 25 cents. Here we find the two affiliate houses, the Ventura at 40 cents and the American at 25 cents playing the old move-over game again, only the American goes to 40 cents when they play move-overs. We wonder if the American enjoys a flat rental deal?

We leave Ventura and go over eight miles to Oxnard where we find the Oxnard Theatre operated by Dietrich and Feldstein charging 30 cents or higher, and being compelled to play seven days after Ventura, 25 cents first run. Now Ventura plays day and date with L.A. or earlier and for some cockeyed reason the zoning books have bracketed Ventura in a zoning with a town served out of Dallas, Texas, same being Gallup, New Mexico, some 900 miles east of Ventura. Plenty of towns served out of Denver, Colorado are in the same bracket. So it stands to reason that these same forces must have become tired when they reached Oxnard, and said "stick it seven days back of Ventura, regardless of admission price and we can then all go home."



THE HONOR BOX WINNER OF THE WEEK



HUNT STROMBERG

Produced

Metro  Goldwyn-Mayer

"ANOTHER THIN MAN"

'Great Victor Herbert' Festival for Music Lovers

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 120%)

Producer-Director Andrew L. Stone
Screenplay: Russell Crouse, Robert Lively.

Based on a story by Robert Lively, Andrew L. Stone.

Stars: Allan Jones, Mary Martin, Walter Connolly.

Featured: Lee Bowman, Susanna Foster, Judith Barrett, Jerome Cowan, John Garrick, Pierre Watkin, Richard Tucker, Hal K. Dawson, Emmett Vogan, Mary Currier, James Finlayson.

PhotographerVictor Milner
All music by.....Victor Herbert
Music Supervisor.....Phil Boutelje
Music Scorer.....Arthur Lange
Vocal Arrangements.....Max Terr
ConductorArthur Kay
Musical numbers staged by LeRoy Prinz.

Film Editor.....James Smith
Time84 minutes

Over a span of many years, the music of Victor Herbert has established its value as a cash asset to the entertainment industry—on the stage, in those dear dead days when organists used them for salvation with silent pictures, and on the radio.

So, since Paramount has given Victor Herbert a sincere approach, a rich production, and a super-excellent musical presentation both vocally and technically, there is no reason that this offering, 'The Great Victor Herbert' should not prove a money-maker above average.

The only reason that the box office estimate given above is not higher, is probably a stupid one. Your reviewer believes the picture will go higher when word of mouth gets to work, and when ticket-buyers who haven't seen pictures for months are brought forth from hibernation. But he has the brakes on his enthusiasm because of our chronic movie worry about the "jitterbug age." And, also, because it is going to take that healthy word of mouth to let the public know what stellar performances have been delivered by Allan Jones, Mary Martin, Walter Connolly, and a jewel of a fine, fourteen year old Susanna Foster.

As a matter of fact, putting immediate consideration of the picture aside for the moment, the chief news about "Victor Herbert" concerns what it has probably done for Paramount's star roster. Allan Jones was never given more freedom for his talents, and he more than measures up to every opportunity offered, both vocally and in personality. Mary Martin, who a few days ago was just "an-

other experiment from Broadway" to picture buyers, is definitely a screen futurity winner. No one needs to be reminded these days about the tonal quality of her pipes, but the surprise is her ability to meet acting demands of the celluloid, and a warm pictorial suggestion of Claudette Colbert. Then, there is the youngster: Susanna Foster. How that under-aided thrush can warble.

So Paramount is ahead even before the pictures goes out with the progression of a neglected star in Allan Jones, and the birth of two new ones. That's finding 'gold in them thar hills.'

Coming to the picture: Writers faced with this sort of problem haven't too much latitude. A back stage story is a back stage story, no matter how much cellophane you use. We think that, all factors considered, the writers have done a good job, even though we could have welcomed a little more comedy, possibly in the form of a running gag character getting an occasional loud laugh. That is one of the weak spots of the picture that must be mentioned, no one seems to ever laugh or be having a real good time. In other words "Life is real, life is earnest" to too great an extent.

But the writers stuck to their straight line, and, with the flowering in direction and playing, give us a satisfactory story evening while the music of Herbert and the vocal chords of the players, round it up for a musical festival.

Producer-director, Andrew Stone, first surprised the industry with a semi-Gilbert and Sullivan offering "The Girl Said No" which came in on short money and made plenty. His grasp of the problem of musical presentation on the screen reaches a top in "Victor Herbert." His handling of the players in intimate story scenes is top-notch; and that reminds us that we haven't gone out of the way to mention that Walter Connolly's Victor Herbert is as close to the "Old Man" of Broadway, as we ever hope to see. In physical appearance, and in the selling of human qualities.

Jerome Cowan gets the "meanie" role and turns in his usual capable job, despite the fact that the writers did not give him much opportunity for shading. Lee Bowman, Judith Barrett and John Garrick handle their assignments capably.

We have tried to catch up with Paramount's publicized new fine grain film but without suc-

CURRENT REVIEWS

		We Est.
1. Destrý Rides Again	UNIV	130
2. The Great Victor Herbert	PAR	120
3. The Big Guy	UNIV	80
4. The Cisco Kid and the Lady	FOX	75
5. Two Thoroughbreds	RKO	75

cess so far. In "Geronimo" there was too great a percentage of stock shots to allow judgement; and your reviewer saw "Victor Herbert" from seats within arm's length of the screen. The position did not affect the picture's entertainment appeal, but certainly allows for no pictorial opinions. However, if fine grain aided the usually pleasing sound recording we can give it a vote for that.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Can't miss, just as it stands; a clean-up if you can get out those music lovers who will walk a mile to hear "Kiss Me Again" and other Herbert treasures. But figure your own audiences: it is music that you are selling. Previewed Nov. 27.

The Big Guy' Okay for Action Lovers

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

ProducerBurt Kelly
DirectorArthur Lubin
Story: Richard K. Polimer, Wallace Sullivan.

ScreenplayLester Cole
Stars: Victor McLaglen, Jackie Cooper.

Featured: Edward Brophy, Peggy Moran, Ona Munson, Russell Hicks, Jonathan Hale.

PhotographerElwell Bredell
Art Director.....Jack Otterson
Film Editor.....Philip Cahn
Time78 minutes

Another prison picture—but skill in production guidance, direction, scripting and playing lift it above the routine characterization, and definitely aim it for more money than Universal expected to garner.

Jackie Cooper, orphan who has gone through most of an orphan's trials, is an ambitious would-be inventor. Jonathan Hale, a suave front man in crooked circles planning a break from grey walls, Victor McLaglen the "big guy" tough egg, Edward Brophy, a colorful inmate.

Cooper, through his ambitions for his invention, is tricked by Hale into driving the car on the get-away.

The get-away becomes fatal when

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "For sheer melodic beauty, 'The Great Victor Herbert' stands unrivalled in film musical history. Here has been given an almost unbroken flood-tide of gorgeous song, magnificently sung and played, the greatest riches from the greatest wealth of romantic melody ever left by an American composer. If the story leaves something to be desired, this is both forgiven and forgotten in the glories of the Herbert music."

VARIETY: "The beguiling and various music of Victor Herbert, given beautiful setting and tellingly delivered, coupled with good performances, lifts a fictive tale about the prodigious composer through some rather labored dramatic passages to the status of excellent mass entertainment."

there is bloodshed and murder, and the cons maneuver to fix the blame on Jackie. McLaglen holds the secret that will save Jackie, and must struggle with his conscience until the proper suspense and desired ending is reached.

Arthur Lubin, who is coming fast along the directorial trail, receives the majority of the orchids for the fine result achieved, with due credit to neat trouping performances by Jackie Cooper and Victor McLaglen. Eddie Brophy gets the best spots in the support. Script by Lester Cole was a workmanlike job.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Substantial fare for action enthusiasts who still want to see prison pictures. Previewed Nov. 23rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It is no surprise that Universal has an exceptionally good action drama in 'The Big Guy,' for it was given exceptional production and dramatic talents. It is stacked with every surefire audience element."

VARIETY: "Melodramatic happenings connected by a gripping, human story thread, the whole given excellent mounting, makes 'The Big Guy' a picture that will excite action enthusiasts."

'Destry Rides Again' ---And He's Headed for Box Offices

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 130%)

ProducerJoseph Pasternak
DirectorGeorge Marshall
Original Screenplay: Felix Jackson.

Based on the novel by Max Brand
Stars: James Stewart, Marlene Dietrich.

Featured: Mischa Auer, Charles Winninger, Una Merkel, Brian Donlevy, Irene Hervey, Allen Jenkins, Billy Gilbert, Samuel Hinds, Jack Carson, Warren Hymer.

PhotographerHal Mohr
Art Director.....Jack Otterson
Film Editor.....Milton Carruth
Time94 minutes

"Destry Rides Again" was a daring experiment on the part of all concerned in its conception and production. It is no longer an experiment—its box office future is assured.

Producer Joe Pasternak and Director George Marshall set out to make a Western with the conviction that there is such a thing as a super-Western; they secured scripting and dialogue worthy of any sophisticated high-art drama: they spotted a hand-picked cast from stars clear through all featured players; they gave it the time and the skill that makes the difference between the "op'ry" and the hit.

And they have done so many other things that there is a trifle of incoherence in trying to list all the good deeds performed. Taking them one by one: James Stewart, fresh from "Mr. Smith" triumphs, is seen in a role that definitely sets his acting versatility; Marlene Dietrich, with sad memories of some of her late American pictures, is given the opportunity to come through with all the talent—and physical allure—which she possesses, and our tip to exhibitors is to revamp their rating on La Dietrich's draw; Brian Donlevy is given a choice opportunity; Charles Winninger gets a part into which he can put his teeth, and he grinds them to a classic performance.

So it goes. A husky piece of red-meat Western melodrama dressed up by quality handling. Felix Jackson's story is not the original "Destry Rides Again"—which leaves Universal still possessing a good yarn—but it is molded to the marquee names and the showmanship desires of the producers. And it is entertainment.

This "Destry" concerns the town of Bluebottle, over which

Brian Donlevy rules as dance hall proprietor, with the shrewd backing of Samuel Hinds as a stoolpigeon mayor, and the charms of his anamorita, Marlene Dietrich, dance hall siren, to conquer the customers who fall for a siren's lure.

Charles Winninger is a banjo-playing derelict, with garrulous memories of past days when he was a he-man deputy. When the current sheriff departs this life mysteriously, the local Hitlers decide it is a good joke to name Winninger as sheriff. It is a joke, until the latter sends for Jimmy Stewart to become his chief aide. For a time it seems even more of a joke when Jimmy turns out to be possessed of a desire to clean up the town without the use of guns. But, of course, you picture followers are not fooled—there is

plenty of gun play before the picture is concluded.

The fine performances of Stewart, Miss Dietrich, Winninger and Donlevy have been mentioned. Chiefly prominent in support are Una Merkel and Mischa Auer, with all other parts in the capable hands of such troupers as Allen Jenkins, Warren Hymer, Irene Hervey, Billy Gilbert and Dickie Jones.

All in all a grand entertainment job, though a little trimming of the last reel will help to round the picture up on a high note, and probably be done before the picture reaches most theaters.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Super-super - Western with sex glamour added. A safe bet for any days of the week. Previewed Nov. 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "If the interest of the fans at large is in the least comparable to the interest that Hollywood showed for Universal's 'Destry Rides Again' at last night's preview, it should be one of the largest grossers of the day."

VARIETY: "Here is a rip-roaring western which will drag 'em for a cleanup. A top name or two for the marquee come-on. Stuff as old as Max Brand's fine early melodramas, but with treatment so fresh and presentation so impressive as to give a vivid picture of newness. Bawdy comedy coupled with lusty battle and gun play, seasoned with fine touches of genuine sentiment, fascinating slants on character and surprise in the nature of the performances to offer near perfect entertainment for the masses in practically every theatre situation. Big and lurid and colorful — 'Destry Rides Again'."

'Two Thoroughbreds' RKO 'B' Surprise

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

ProducerCliff Reid
DirectorJack Hively
Story by.....Joseph A. Fields
Screenplay: Joseph A. Fields, Jerry Cady.

Stars: Jimmy Lydon, Joan Brodel
Featured: J. M. Kerrigan, Arthur Hohl, Marjorie Main, Selmer Jackson, Spencer Charters.

PhotographerFrank L. Redman
Film Editor.....Theron Warth
Time62 minutes

They may call this the "B" unit at RKO, but the group coming up with pretty steady consistency on grand entertainment, and frequent flashes of originality to spice jaded picture appetites, is giving exhibitors an answer to their repeated request: "Let's have something different, and let's have it good."

Perhaps the pictures don't soar over that one hundred per cent mark in the percentages, along with the million dollar epics. But they do give a number of exhibitors a lot of pleasant evenings, and they are developing some of our future great directors and writers.

"Two Thoroughbreds" keeps up the good work. Unpretentious in size, it is big in human values and audience appeal. Writing, direction and playing combine talents to achieve the result. The "Two Thoroughbreds" of the title are two orphans—one, a boy, the other a motherless foal for whom he undergoes hardships and for whom he makes the sacrifices

that a boy will for his animal friend.

It's a neatly simple theme that is so universal in appeal that it could as well have been a boy and his dog, or a boy and his kid brother. There are a grasping, penny-pinching uncle and aunt, there is the "beautiful Lady Bountiful" rich girl.

Intelligent scripting and capable directing give the picture that "different" feeling that spells "class." Producer Cliff Reid can take a bow for another good contribution to RKO's list, and writers Jerry Cady and Joseph Fields share the orchids with director Jack Hively. The name of Jerry Cady comes up repeatedly on these RKO surprises.

The parts are all in excellent hands, with youngster Jimmy

Lyndon manfully carrying the burden of the lead part.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A sleeper as entertainment that will be valuable on any double bill, and good standard fare in many nabe and rural situations. Previewed Nov. 24th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Two Thoroughbreds' RKO has one of the prize entertainments of the year, one of the best piece of direction and acting that it, or any other studio, has developed."

VARIETY: "A miniature classic is unveiled by RKO in 'Two Thoroughbreds.' Here is a gentle little picture which will leave an indelible impress on the family audience mind, one which will grow in importance out of proportion to the pictures' complete lack of marquee names and obviously slim budget."

'Cisco Kid' Fits in Nicely With Series

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer.....Sol Wurtzel
Associate Producer.....John Stone
DirectorHerbert I. Leeds
ScreenplayFrances Hyland
Original Story.....Stanley Rauh
Suggested by character created by William Sidney Porter

(O. Henry)

StarCesar Romero
Featured: Marjorie Weaver, Chris-Pin Martin, George Montgomery, Robert Barrat, Virginia Field, Harry Green, Gloria Ann White, John Beach, Ward Bond, J. Anthony Hughes, James

Burke, Harry Hayden, James Flavin, Ruth Warren.

PhotographerBarney McGill
Musical Direction.....Samuel Kaylin
Film Editor.....Nick de Maggio
Time74 minutes

Once again we meet the Cisco Kid, and he now appears in the person of Cesar Romero. Your reviewer can first report that Senor Romero is perfectly at home as the Cisco Kid, and sells the glamorous Latin Robin Hood very effectively.

Then the reviewer must also
(Continued on Page 13)

Thanks . . .



KAY KYSER

COLLEGE OF MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE
his ORCHESTRA and his

Exclusive Management:
MCA ARTISTS, LTD.
MUSIC CORPORATION OF AMERICA

"THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE WRONG"



To My Exhibitor Friends:

In more than a dozen years, I've not given you one bum steer.

If you can book RKO'S 'THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE WRONG!' it will bring in the shekles as did "KENTUCKY" and "EAST SIDE OF HEAVEN."

My next will be a BING CROSBY-UNIVERSAL.

Management: M.C.A.

DAVID BUTLER



"THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE WRONG"

The Radio Reporter: FINDS NO HIGHLIGHTS IN THE WEEK BUT IS SATISFIED WITH GOOD ENTERTAINMENT

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations of each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard for that particular program.

SCREEN GUILD

(For Gulf Oil)

M.C., Roger Pryor; guest stars, Fredric March, Helen Hayes; program of November 26.
Rating: 110%.

Hayes and March working together with such material as "The Enchanted Cottage" are tops in any man's league. With the rest of the program up to standard, the playlet sent it over the hundred per cent mark.

★ ★ ★

JACK BENNY

(For Jello)

M.C., Jack Benny; featured, Mary Livingstone, Andy Devine, Rochester, Dennis Day, and Phil Harris with his music. Program of November 26.
Rating: 105%.

Nothing new, but one of the best routines Benny has had in recent weeks. . . . Material must have been good because everything seemed to just click. . . . Andy Devine was back, and heard to advantage, without too much of him. . . . Rochester also got his gags and faded out at the right moment. . . . Benny carried the show along with Mary and it was a good job.

★ ★ ★

CECIL DeMILLE

(Lux Products)

M.C., Cecil DeMille; play, "Pygmalion," with guest stars Jean Arthur and Brian Aherne; program of November 27.
Rating: 110%.

Jean Arthur took on the most difficult chore of playing Shaw's

cockney heroine, and did she come thru. . . . Brian Aherne was right in stride. . . . The whole presentation had that well-rehearsed air that one expects from DeMille. . . . And we cannot finish without again tossing an orchid to Jean Arthur. . . . Commercials on this program are neatly handled for the distant listener.

★ ★ ★

GEORGE JESSEL

(Vitalis)

M.C., George Jessel; guest stars, Walter Connolly, Teddy Bergman, Countess Illya Tolyoski; program of November 24.

Rating: 90%.

Lots of good moments, but this program can't seem to get itself in a solid groove. . . . George is doing his best to carry the burden, but the spotted guests make that burden a tough demand on showmanship.

★ ★ ★

SILVER THEATER

(International Silver)

M.C., Conrad Nagel; guest star, William Powell program of November 26.

Rating: 105%.

Adapting "Speak of the Devil" to the radio proved a good idea, with William Powell selling quite a ton of that personality over the waves. . . . The girl, Pauline Winslow, held up her end of the chore. . . . If our ears were correctly tuned it was John McLane who did the script job. . . . Orchids to all concerned, and that includes Conrad Nagel and the commercials that are pretty close to being a model for all to follow.

★ ★ ★

CHASE AND SANBORN

M.C., Rudy Vallee; stars, Bergen and McCarthy, Dorothy Lamour, Lansing Hatfield; guests, Loretta Young, Vera Vague; program of November 26.

Rating: 95%.

A poor selection of material for the playlet let this down below average for the program, being one of those hoity-toity playlets that tickle actors and actresses and lay eggs over lawns of the customers. . . . Vera Vague's chatter lifted the program, while Bergen strove manfully to keep it up to standard.

★ ★ ★

"BLONDIE"

Based upon the comic strip by Vic Young, with Arthur Lake and

Penny Singleton featured; program of November 24.

Rating: 85%.

Some fine dialogue writing, but the story premise compelled a slow opening and even slower development. May we suggest that the creators of the radio version seek some of the tempo that Chic Young uses in his comic strip, which millions know? It might not be modest, but it might be a good idea to let listeners in on the fact that they are welcoming the same Dagwood and Blondie whom they read about over the breakfast table.

★ ★ ★

BOB HOPE

(Pepsodent Products)

M.C., Bob Hope; featured, Judy Garland, Jerry Colonna, Bill Goodwin; guest star, Madeline Carroll. Program November 28.

Rating: 100%.

Material and Bob Hope's work would have put this over the mark if it had not been for the sloppy feeling created when Judy started missing her lines, and when as good a trouper as Miss Carroll also followed suit. . . . It hurt the show. . . . Even if radio listeners get it free, they expect to get it workmanlike — and Bob Hope can't carry all the elephants on his shoulders.

★ ★ ★

ODDS AND ENDS

Alec Templeton's program is improving steadily, with Pat O'Malley creating a following. . . . You'll be hearing more about them. . . . Bing Crosby's last program was above the "English night" but there is still an air of lassitude about the weekly offerings that seems to even filter over the air. . . . "Pursuit of Happiness," with Burgess Meredith doing the mc-ing, hit a high mark last week with Laughton and Lancaster present. . . . Another program that will build. . . . Don Ameche is coming back soon to the Chase and Sanborn coffee pot. . . . He is needed.

The Radio Reporter Thinks:

That mis-cues, and other evidences of sloppy rehearsing may be funny to the studio audience—especially when the star picks up a line with an ancient egg—BUT—

They are not good showmanship!

And neither are they good selling.

Too many programs of recent weeks have given the impression that while the clowns up on the stage are having a good time missing their cues and lines, and the super clown must be the sponsor paying the freight, and the folks who laugh at clowns are the select few in the studio, there might be—

Some customers out on the airways for your toothpaste, your mouth-wash, or your giggle-gum, who feel a bit cheated at giving up some of their two-bit-an-hour time up to listen to entertainers getting thousands a week alibi for not knowing their lines.

What about it, folks?

Field Investigator Ridge Finds Georgia In Martial Spirit Over 'Gone With the Wind'

David!

"Gone With The Wind!"

"A Lantern In His Hand!"

Proudly Lewis J. Selznick's spirit must hover over Atlanta these days, as his son's masterpiece, is heralded far and wide over the South.

This city is agog, every day its newspapers carry double column headlines, proclaiming the coming of Margaret Mitchell's Epic of the South.

People are coming here for its premiere from far and wide. "Molly O'Grady and the Colonel's Lady" are to have equal shares in seats. The Blueblood of the South, are to have no greater part in this triumphal march of David Selznick's masterpiece, than the sons and daughters of the plow. Tickets are being disbursed by the editors of the papers, the Governor and heads of organized charities, as a committee.

This, in fact as well as fancy, is to be by far the most colorful presentation of a picture, that has taken place for a decade.

Even three weeks before its coming, the fervor of the people is nearing the boiling point. Everywhere folks are discussing it, like children do the approach of Santa Claus. Add to a Hollywood opening night, the gaiety of the old South, the glamor only these folks can engender, together with the Yule Tide Spirit, and you will have a faint picture of the color that awaits David Selznick and his entourage, when the hour of his greatest triumph is at hand.

Those of us who knew and loved Lewis J. Selznick; who knew his great love and ambition for his son David; of his ambition to be triumphant in this industry, feel that he must look down from realms of Glory with satisfaction on his son's approaching conquest of Atlanta.

There is another side, less sentimental perhaps, but of no less interest to the motion picture industry, in the coming of "Gone With The Wind." It is the fact people in this section who have not been to a cinema performance for years will be in a picture show. During this three day opening celebration, thousands of men and women, who too frequently scoff at the picture show as beneath their dignity, will attend.

This is known by the great and unsatisfiable demand for tickets for this class of people. If only a small number of them become picture fans, the industry in this section of the South will be the gainer, thus proving again that this industry truly is the greatest single factor, in molding the public mind and satisfying its desire for entertainment.

For once Santa Claus is going to have a very hard time about December 16th, holding his place in Atlanta.

MGM's Rodgers Welcome At Carolina Convention

Charlotte, N. C., Nov. 24.—Renewed interest is being shown by the North and South Carolina Exhibitors in their approaching convention to be held in Charlotte December 3 and 4, since they have assured that William F. Rodgers, Metro G.S.M. will be there to discuss with them some of the industry's trying problems.

Speaking of the conferences they expect to hold with Mr. Rodgers, Henry Berry, who is slated to be the new Prexy, said that they do not intend to put the Metro chief on the spot, but believe that inasmuch as he is the head of the Distributors Committee for ironing out their difficulties, that they can give him many ideas to carry back to G.H.Q. for serious consideration.

President Lyle Wilson has had telephonic communications with Ed Kuykendall, head of the M.P.T.O.A. who will attend, to the effect that he has some rather strong recommendations to offer the local folks, tending to promote the interest of Independent Exhibitor. According to information seeping out from some of the national leaders of the M.P.T.O.A. it seems that they are becoming unusually concerned about the progress the backers of the Neely Bill have made recently. It is said that from surveys at hand, there is strong likelihood of its passing the House, unless the tide is turned between now and the early part of the year.

Henry Berry, present Vice-President, believes that the Neely Bill is, in its present form a very bad piece of dangerous legislation, however it is his opinion that there are a number of good

ideas in it, if it could be safeguarded by proper amendments. He expects to bring some of these plans before his fellow exhibitors at this convention, in the hopes that if the bill cannot be beaten, then at least if it can be properly safeguarded, it will be better than to have it fastened upon the industry, to the detriment of them all.

Exhibitors Apathetic To Hollywood's Woes

Atlanta, Ga., Nov. 27.—Having lived in Hollywood for a decade and experienced the appalling fears that constantly hover over the industry, lest strikes, picture like come to pass, it is hard to see how tranquilly the industry outside of those portals can take the possibility of a tie up, such as seemed certain this week.

In several parts of this state and the Carolinas, I asked important exhibitors, whose houses had Union help, what they anticipated doing, if the threatened strike took place. They just laughed about it. They allowed that it was a lot of Hollywood ballyhoo, to engender sympathy over the loss of foreign business, or the laying of the foundation for increases in film prices next year.

Facts are these men down this way just do not take anything Hollywood proclaims, very seriously.

"It's their heartache, not ours," was expressed by any number of theatre owners, who might have had their houses closed if their operators walked out on them.

The big wigs and brass hats in Hollywood can take a tip from this attitude of apathy about their woes. Hollywood producers would do well to recognize this apathy on the part of independent exhibitors toward them, and try to carry the sincerity of their endeavors to the field, for the good of the industry. "An injury to one is of concern to all."



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

and scripting give the effect of an off-hand, lazy man's job. It's not bad, but neither is it good. On that basis, direction could not be expected to be more than adequate.

Chris-Pin Martin, in the Stooze role, provides an abundance of laughs and frequently keeps the routine story thread from snapping.

"The Cisco Kid and the Lady" retells the familiar story of the bandit who sets out to redress a wrong. In this case, he must regain a mine for the bundle of infancy, out-manuever clever villains, etc., and do it all with a typical Cisco Kid smile. Also, he must near the verge of romance, but shy away with Casanova adroitness.

Support is capable, without getting much opportunity to rise above the level of the script, Virginia Fields delivers to advantage in the most interesting support characterization.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Just fair for the Cisco Kid fans, but gives indications they should like Cesar Romero later. Pre-viewed Nov. 24th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The most important thing about the rather unimportant 'Cisco Kid and the Lady' is the fact that Cesar Romero has stepped into the role of the Kid with a grace and ease which add a good deal of romantic glamour to the character. The picture itself isn't much.

VARIETY: "The Cisco Kid," O. Henry's romantic bandido, struts the screen with a load of profitable entertainment as he meets 'the lady' to open the new 20th-Fox series being built around this character in the person of Cesar Romero."

'Cisco Kid'

(Continued from Page 9)

report that they didn't do quite right by our new Cisco Kid in the story they provided for "The Cisco Kid and the Lady." Plot

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Cunga Din	RKO	180
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	169
The Rain Came	FOX	165
Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	158
Drums Along The Mohawk	FOX	157
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Babes In Arms	MGM	153
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151
Union Pacific	PAR	145
Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	143
Kentucky	FOX	138
Another Thin Man	MGM	136
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Elizabeth and Essex	WAR	132
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130
Bean Geste	PAR	126
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
First Love	UNIV	125
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	125
Ituzer	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120

Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
The Roaring Twenties	WAR	116
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
The Real Glory	UA	112
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	192
Midnight	PAR	111
Thunder Aloft	MGM	110
Oklahoma Kid	WAR	110
East Side of Heaven	UNIV	110
Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	108
Honolulu	MGM	107
Popper Takes A Trip	UA	106
Invitation To Happiness	PAR	102
Allegheny Uprising	RKO	102
Withering Heights	UA	102
Paris Hongkong	PAR	102
In Name Only	RKO	102
All The Girls	MGM	100
Lady of the Tropics	MGM	100
Laila-Lip	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Remember? Yours	MGM	96
Eternally Yours	UA	95
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91

Intermezzo	UA	87
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87
Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
Three Musketeers	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	130
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130
Dark Victory	WAR	128

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
The Housekeepers Daughter	UA	111
Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
The Cat and the Canary	PAR	105
Golden Boy	COL	102
Honeymoon In Bali	PAR	99
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
Jamaica Inn	PAR	99
Disputed Passage	PAR	98
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust, Be My Destiny	WAR	98
Maise	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
What A Life	PAR	92
Fast and Furious	MGM	91
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	87
Blackmail	MGM	87
The Flying Deuces	RKO	87
Our Neighbors—The Carters	PAR	87
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off The Record	MGM	86
The Kid From Kokomo	WAR	85
Five Came Back	RKO	85
Espionage Agent	WAR	85
Sergeant Madden	MGM	84

U-Boat	29	COL	90
Hell's Kitchen	WAR	82	
Blondie Meets the Boss	COL	81	
Chicken Wagon Family	FOX	80	
Pack Up Your Troubles	FOX	80	
Tropic Fury	UNIV	78	
Devil's Island	WAR	78	
Blondie Brings Up Baby	COL	78	
Blackwell's Island	WAR	77	
Pardon Our Nerve	FOX	77	
Legion of Lost Flyers	UNIV	77	
Man They Couldn't Hang	COL	77	
On Dress Parade	WAR	77	
You Can't Get Away With Murder	WAR	76	
Flight at Midnight	REP	75	
Inside Story	FOX	75	

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

Whispering Enemies COL..... 75
Homicide Bureau COL..... 71
Mysterious Mr. Wong MONO..... 71
Woman Doctor REP..... 71
North of Shanghai COL..... 71
Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence..... FOX..... 71

She Married A Cop REP..... 70
Hidden Power COL..... 70
The Sunset Murder Case GN..... 70
Pride of the Navy REP..... 70
Tough Kid MONO..... 70
Mysterious Miss X REP..... 70
Trapped in the Sky COL..... 70
Orphan in the Street REP..... 70
Five Little Peppers COL..... 70
Main Street Lawyer REP..... 70

I Am A Criminal MONO..... 69
Fighting Thoroughbreds REP..... 69
Gambling Ship UNIV..... 69
Convict's Code MONO..... 69
Parents On Trial COL..... 68
Streets of New York MONO..... 68
Inside Information UNIV..... 68
I Was A Convict REP..... 68
Navy Secrets MONO..... 68
Federal Man Hunt REP..... 68
Pride of the Bluegrass MONO..... 68
Forged Passport MONO..... 68
Calling All Marines REP..... 68
Smashing The Money Ring WAR..... 68
Scandal Sheet COL..... 68
House of Fear UNIV..... 67
My Wife's Relatives REP..... 67
Long Shot GN..... 67
Sabotage REP..... 67
Mr. Wong in Chinatown MONO..... 67
Pride of the Bluegrass WAR..... 66
Behind Prison Gates COL..... 66
Wolf Call MONO..... 66
First Offenders COL..... 66
Rookie Cop RKO..... 66
Wanted by Scotland Yard MONO..... 66
Waterfront WAR..... 66
Kid Nighbingale WA..... 66
Leapers Creepers REP..... 66
Irish Luck MONO..... 65
Mickey The Kid REP..... 65
The Zero Hour REP..... 65
Outside These Walls COL..... 65
S. O. S. Tidal Wave REP..... 65
The Man Who Dared WAR..... 65
Kongat, The Wild Stallion COL..... 64
Mystery Plane Criminal MONO..... 64
My Son Is A Criminal COL..... 64
Code of the Secret Service..... WAR..... 64
Should A Girl Marry? MONO..... 64
Everybody's Hobby WAR..... 63
Smuggled Cargo REP..... 63
Should Husbands Work? REP..... 63
Star Reporter MONO..... 63
Undercover Agent MONO..... 63
Boy's Reformatory MONO..... 63
Sky Patrol MONO..... 62
Panama Lady RKO..... 62
Panama Patrol GN..... 62
The Girl From Rio MONO..... 62

Back Door To Heaven PAR..... 70
King of the Turf UA..... 70
One Third of a Nation PAR..... 70
Clouds Over Europe COL..... 70
Stronger Than Desire MGM..... 70
Shipyard Sally FOX..... 60
Our Leading Citizen PAR..... 67
Stolen Life PAR..... 67
Hotel Imperial PAR..... 66
Zenobia UA..... 66
Gracie Allen Murder Case PAR..... 64
Way Down South RKO..... 64
Spirit of Culver UNIV..... 63
The Flying Irishman RKO..... 63
Smiling Along FOX..... 63
Climbing High GE..... 63
Women in the Wind WAR..... 62

*It is two years this week
since I joined the Warner
Brothers' organization.*

*This is an expression of
sincere thanks to my co-
workers for an association
that continues to be
most pleasant.*

Mark Hellinger

The Box Office

DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 14

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 7, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

“Destry Rides Again”
Along Money Trail
To Box Offices

SEE PAGE 5

Rodgers Officially
Gives Terms On
“Gone With the Wind”

SEE PAGE 4

The Highlighter Sees
Ben Goetz As Man
For N. Y. Pic Job

SEE PAGE 4

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **UNIVERSAL** Wins With
"DESTROY RIDES AGAIN" 135 %



Producer
JOSEPH PASTERNAK



Director
GEORGE MARSHALL



MARLENE DIETRICH

Featured
**IRENE HERVEY
BILLY GILBERT
ALLEN JENKINS
WARREN HYMER
SAMUEL H. HINDS**

Original Screenplay
FELIX JACKSON

Based on Novel by
MAX BRAND

Photography
HAL MOHR

Art Director
JACK OTTERSON

Film Editor
MILTON CARRUTH



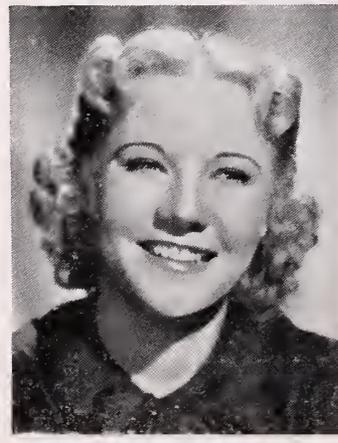
JAMES STEWART



CHARLES WINNINGER



BRIAN DONLEVY



UNA MERKEL



MISCHA AUER

DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

Money... Money... Money!

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

We can't quite believe our own eyes, so we are going to ask you if you believe yours. Here is the gist of an advertisement in the Los Angeles papers these last few days:

MERALTA THEATER
Culver City
Doors Open at 6:15
In Technicolor:
HOLLYWOOD CAVALCADE
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington

Do you see what we believe we see? Two of the hottest of current attractions, two of the biggest of potential money-makers of the past twelve months, on a double bill! And almost on top of their runs in first-run Hollywood and downtown Los Angeles.

And notice that it is a house which does not open until 6:15. The admission price is 25 cents.

This coming at a time when the battle cry of the industry is: "We must get more money out of our HIT ATTRACTIONS!"

* * *

No wonder your editor sized up the domestic situation a few weeks ago in relationship to the increased revenue demands made by the foreign confusion and sounded off as his humble keynote: "LET THE DISTRIBUTION DEPARTMENTS IN ON THE PROBLEM."

This may be an isolated case in the entire length and breadth of the United States, and there may be reasons, but there is nothing of isolation about the fact that over the country there are probably thousands of hungry showmen begging exchanges to give them a few days earlier break on these two hits, and being gently forestalled with phrases and legal documents about "clearance," "traditional zone policy," etc.

And neither is there any doubt that there are numberless situations where many other hit pictures are being played—without the flagrancy of this double bill, but with the same effect—under "peculiar" conditions because of some locally ambiguous situation.

All the time we are yelling in Hollywood, within a stone's throw of the bargain bill:

"Let's get more money out of the hits. So, let's first eliminate the B's. Then we will have eliminated the double bill. Then we will make the exhibitor play the pictures we do make for more days and bigger percentage, then—"

And right smack in our face comes up the fact that:

We haven't let the distribution departments in on the problem.

* * *

The day is long past when the simple means of getting more money out of a picture was to have a dynamic sales manager who exhorted the exchange meetings, "We must get more money!" The day has passed when you merely hung up a gold watch award, or a gilded star salesman button, and came up with increased revenue. The day is nearing when the hallelujah sales drives named in honor of the department's chief will fail to sop up extra gravy.

We are down to merchandising earth.

So—lets' do two things first:

Let's stop dividing the evils of this business in pat phrases between the ogres of Hollywood who make the product, and the lowly dumbbell exhibitors who play it and pay for it.

Let's take a look at distribution.

Where is the seat of the cancer that keeps this industry agitating in legislative assemblies, and before lay organizations, and in the halls of Congress? In distribution.

Where is the extra revenue to come from that this industry will need next year, if it is to maintain quality of product, unless we overhaul the present mental attitude of so many distribution organizations?

An attitude that the lowly salesman must carry through if he wishes to hold his job. And he does.

We repeat: The problem is not answered by saying, "Let's get more money if we have to sundbag the exhibitor." It is: "Let's look over our own set-up—maybe there's a lot of easy money we have been kicking away in the lush years."

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	16 Releases.....	97
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	45 Releases.....	96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	43 Releases.....	94
4. Paramount	47 Releases.....	85
5. Warner Brothers	48 Releases.....	85
6. RKO-Radio	35 Releases.....	81
7. Universal	38 Releases.....	79
8. Columbia	34 Releases.....	78
9. Republic	22 Releases.....	69
10. Monogram	18 Releases.....	67
11. Grand National	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases.....	65

The Highlighter: SEES BEN GOETZ AS SOLUTION IF NEW YORK WANTS TO COMPETE WITH HOLLYWOOD

6 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. First Love	UNIV. 125	127
2. The Housekeepers Daughter	UA 110	112
3. A Day at the Circus	MGM 100	103
4. Jamaica Inn	PAR 99	102
5. Remember	MGM 95	97
6. Beware of Spooks	COL 75	77

If there is anything serious in the threatened picture producing boom in New York. The Highlighter feels that the top note of importance has been struck in the reports that Mayor La Guardia will have discussions with Ben Goetz. . . . Goetz, recently returned from England after batting 1000% on one of the most difficult undertakings ever tackled by a picture executive, makes the whole Gotham idea sound like sense. . . . Many of today's readers only think of Ben Goetz as the man who charted MGM through the squally British production seas and gave to screens "The Yank at Oxford," "The Citadel," and "Mr. Chips." . . . But more recall that Goetz has been part and parcel of the picture industry, and every branch of it, almost since there has been an industry. . . . As a pioneer laboratory man his ability forced the expansion that brought him into every branch. . . . Soon he was a banker, a distribution advisor, and a production god-father. . . . His activities were behind the scenes with the biggest of big fellows, and shoulder to shoulder with the littlest of little ones. . . . What a record to pile up, and then be able to top off by listing nary an enemy or ill-wisher. . . . Yessir, Mr. Knickerbocker, the thought of Ben Goetz makes sense. . . . If you can sell him. . . . If you can't sell him, think it over. . . . P.S.: Ben Goetz is not a stranger in New York, its picture people, its show people, its financial interests, and its native pride. . . . Double P. S.: Ben Goetz doesn't need the money—so he is far outside most of those fellows grabbing publicity from New York these days who have no more on the ball than a prayer, a hope, and a peeve against the Hollywood in which they couldn't deliver.

MAYBE WAR WILL HELP SOLVE EXTRA'S PROBLEMS

It is peculiar psychology, but in times of stress, men cut more quickly and sincerely to the solution of problems than they do when all is plush and caviar. . . . That fact seems to be working in the picture business. . . . Latest evidence is a definite movement towards

3 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. Rulers of the Sea	PAR 117	101
2. Sabotage	REP 67	64
3. Panama Patrol	G.N. 62	58

a solution of the extra problem in Hollywood. . . . The Highlighter is in sympathy with the carefully thought out, methodical manner in which the Screen Actors Guild is approaching what may eventually be a satisfactory solution. . . . No one who has not been close to this problem can ever appreciate the ramifications, the headaches, that come with any attempt to alleviate it, so the Guild big-shots deserve a vote immediately for their courage and sincerity in seeking means of aiding their less fortunate members down in the extra classification. . . . Extras are a motion picture essential. . . . And extras come from all walks of life, from experienced veteran troupers—only too frequently a former big star of silent days, occasionally a director who was once at the top of the ladder, and ever so many of the troupers who kept alive the glories of vaudeville and the road show—down to the newcomers needed for their fresh youth, the "friends of relatives" whose earnings thus take a burden off the relative, and through to various racial types of varied abilities. . . . Unfortunately producers cannot plan schedules just to keep all extras working, and human nature being what it is, the path to the jobs that are available seems to have its obstacles for many. . . . If a solution is to be found, we believe the Screen Actors Guild will find it, because the men in charge of the search are troupers one and all, most

of whom came up the same hard path that the extra is trodding.

JAUNTING AROUND FROM STUDIO TO STUDIO

We are awaiting interesting reactions from our exhibitor readers to the news that Rowland Lee has moved over to Eddie Small's camp to begin preparations on "The Son of Monte Cristo." . . . There are always certain pictures which ring the money bell in an exhibitor's memory. . . . Ten minutes after opening a conversation with any showman you will find him listing three, four or ten pictures with a gleam in his eye and saying, "Why can't they give us another one like that?" . . . The original "Monte Cristo," also made by the Small-Lee combination, is one that comes up so frequently. . . . So there is one that can be recorded as pre-sold. . . . Which reminds us of Pop Korson, Philadelphia's most important independent exchange man, who always greets us with: "Why doesn't someone remake Bennie Ziedman's 'Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?'" . . . About the time you start gently informing Pop that such titles are not class today, he begins un-reeling the figures of the business he did in four Eastern states with the quickie, and you pause and ponder. . . . Hit pictures, big or little, stay in exhibitor and exchange minds.

(Continued on Page 14)

MGM'S RODGERS STATES DEAL ON "GONE WITH THE WIND"

Atlanta, Ga., Dec. 4th.—"Gone with the Wind" cost more money than most productions gross nationally. It is the biggest picture I have ever seen. It will positively not be exhibited before 1941, except at advanced admissions and to extended runs; and the terms will be to every one who runs it 70% of the gross receipts, with a guarantee to the exhibitor, that he will make 10% net on the gross, if we can agree on his operating expense."

"In my opinion the exhibitor is entitled to a profit, even more than a reasonable one, on this production."

So how do you like that statement from the man who has the say, William F. Rodgers, General Sales Manager of MGM. Those were his words, sternly stated, before the assembled exhibitors of North and South Carolina, at their convention December 4th in Charlotte.

Mr. Rodgers, a favorite with these boys, was brutally frank about every statement he made, although not offensively so.

Speaking of the authority of branch and district managers, he said there had been

much said about adjustments having to be taken up with the home office. "This is not true with MGM. If any of our branch managers tell you they have to take up adjustments with New York, they are just stalling you. They have my authority to make any adjustments they see right and proper, if we have misjudged and oversold any exhibitor."

Going further into details about "Gone With the Wind," he stated "It costs us \$1000 each for the color prints. It is three hours and forty minutes long and will not be cut an inch. It is more than 20,000 feet in length. It will be sold to all alike, and run on the same terms and at advanced prices, until 1941 at least."

Rodgers gave the boys to understand that the picture was one of the immortal great: it was theirs and David Selznick's; that they had a fortune in it and proposed to make money on it. He said on the side to an exhibitor MGM had a million and a half in it and David Selznick two-and-a-half million.

J. MAURICE RIDGE.

The Box Office: "DESTRY RIDES AGAIN" HITTING ON HIGH; "DAYTIME WIFE" GOING STRONG AT B. O.

UNIVERSAL--3 New Releases

The New Universal has a big week, with three new releases, one a top box office attraction, the second delivering fairly good, while the third is just another programmer.

Universal's top release and the Honor Box winner this week is Joe Pasternak's special release, "DESTRY RIDES AGAIN," which in spite of the pre-Xmas lull, is averaging 135% with heavy indications of building much higher after the holidays.

For the past three years, "Little Joe" Pasternak has gained much fame as the discoverer, producer, and guiding light of Deanna Durbin's career, having personally supervised every picture in which she has appeared.

But with "DESTRY RIDES AGAIN" Mr. Pasternak has stepped into an entirely new field, for "DESTRY" can certainly be classified as a super western, with 100% plus audience appeal for practically all types of houses. Furthermore, in addition to starring Jimmie Stewart fresh from "Mr. Smith," in a corking role, it brings back to the screen the former star, Marlene Dietrich—in such a manner that every studio in Hollywood is bidding for her services. And we have just received word to the effect that Mr. Pasternak has signed la Dietrich for two more Universal pictures.

Exhibitors should really go to town with this picture and expect excellent returns.

There is also a fine supporting cast headed by Brian Donlevy and Charles Winninger.

Exhibitors will remember that Universal produced "DESTRY" some years ago as a Tom Mix western, but this new version has been produced on a much more elaborate scale and is really an original by Felix Jackson, who also wrote the fine screenplay.

Much praise for "DESTRY'S" big success should also go to Director George Marshall for his very fine directorial job, one of the best pictures he has directed in a highly successful career.

Universal's second release this week is Rowland V. Lee's production, "THE TOWER OF LONDON," which on its first bookings is averaging 102%, not bad at all, considering the reasonable budget this picture was brought in for.

In those theatres where "Dracula," "Frankenstein," and "Werewolf of London" scored heavily, "THE TOWER" will probably pull even better grosses. Needless to say, if it were not for the European war this picture would pull very fine business in Britain and the Dominions.

Basil Rathbone is starred, and the more important featured players are Boris Karloff, Ian Hunter, Barbara O'Neil, Vincent Price, and Nan Grey.

Rowland V. Lee produced as well as directed this outstanding horror spectacle.

Of Seven New Releases in the Past Week, Two Ran Over 100%; Two Came Through Okay; and Three Were Very Weak.

Universal's third release this week, "LITTLE ACCIDENT," is the second in the "Baby Sandy" series. Exhibitors who ran Bing Crosby's "East Side of Heaven" (Universal) can play up "Baby Sandy's" name and possibly get a little extra business on this one. But on its first bookings, "LITTLE ACCIDENT"

considering general conditions in recent weeks.

Seen opposite Ty is Darryl Zanuck's new protege, Linda Darnell, who recently scored so heavily in "Hotel For Women." Among the most important featured players are Warren William, Wendy Barrie, Binnie Barnes, and Joan Davis.

Gregory Ratoff did a very fine job of directing. "DAYTIME WIFE" is such a clever, entertaining and fast moving comedy that if exhibitors will put out a little extra money for special exploitation they should get this one off to a very good start, and word-of-mouth advertising will undoubtedly hold up the balance of the run.

WARNERS-- 1 New Release

Warners-First National also have one new release this week, "THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X," a new mystery melodrama which is doing quite satisfactorily on its first bookings at around 82%.

Wayne Morris and Humphrey Bogart are co-starred and Rosemary Lane, Lya Lys and John Litel are featured. If this one holds at its present figure it will be the best programmer out of the Bryan Foy unit for sometime.

Vincent Sherman directed.

RKO--2 New Releases

RKO-Radio Pictures have two new program releases this week, one from an outside unit and one from their own studio.

"MEET DR. CHRISTIAN" is the first of a series of four independently made "Dr. Christian" pictures starring Jean Hersholt, that RKO will release on the present '39-'40 program. On its first run bookings, "DR. CHRISTIAN" is only averaging around 76%, as the cast names are not any too strong. However, in the nabes, particularly where the "Dr. Christian" radio program is followed closely, exhibitors will probably do better with this one. The romantic leads are portrayed by Dorothy Lovett and Robert Baldwin and Marcia Mae Jones and Jackie Moran are featured.

William Stephens produces the "Dr. Christian" series as an independent unit at General Service Studios and releases through RKO. Bernard Vorhaus directed.

RKO's second release this week, "THREE SONS," 68%, is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit. This one will make a good filler for the nabes especially those catering to family trade, but in spite of the fact that it is a fine human melodrama it will not pull much on account of the shortage of marquee names.

Edward Ellis is starred and Kent Taylor, J. Edward Bromberg, and William Gargan are featured.

Bob Sisk acted as associate producer and John Hively directed.

The Fastest
Growing Paper
in the Industry



The Box Office
DIGEST

is only averaging 72%, indicating that it is more or less in the filler class for the average dual bill program.

FOX-- 1 Release

Twentieth Century-Fox has only one new release this week, "DAYTIME WIFE," starring Tyrone Power. In spite of excellent critic reports and very fine reviews, this ultra-modern sophisticated comedy-drama is only averaging 120% on its first bookings, which is below what we had estimated, but good

7 New Releases Not In Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. Destry Rides Again	UNIV	135	130
2. Daytime Wife	FOX	120	130
3. Tower of London	UNIV	102	115
4. The Return of Dr. X	WAR	82	85
5. Meet Dr. Christian	RKO	76	75
6. Little Accident	UNIV	72	75
7. Three Sons	RKO	68	70

MGM's 'Joe Twerp' Average Family Entertainment

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

ProducerEdgar Selwyn
 DirectorRobert B. Sinclair
 Based on a story by Damon Run-
 yon.
 ScreenplayMelville Baker
 Featured: Ann Sothern, Lewis
 Stone, William Gargan, Walter
 Brennan, Marsha Hunt, Tom
 Neal, James Bush, Don Costello,
 Muriel Hutchinson, Jack Nor-
 ton, Aldrich Bowker, Frederick
 Burton, Al Shean, Robert Em-
 mettt O'Connor, Cliff Clark, Rus-
 sell Hicks, Paul Everton, Charles
 Trowbridge.
 PhotographerLeonard Smith
 Art Director.....Cedric Gibbons
 Film Editor.....Gene Ruggiero
 Time69 minutes

There wasn't quite enough meat in this story which tells why and how "Joe and Ethel Turp Call On the President" to lift it to top ranking among the MGM offerings, but it does come through as generally satisfactory entertainment.

Followers of the characters created in Damon Runyon's columns, and later elaborated into this story for the Saturday Evening Post, will probably be more than satisfied. For in the hands of the director, and portrayed by Ann Sothern and William Gargan, they take on flesh and blood. And backing up Joe and Ethel, there are such troupers as Walter Brennan, Lewis Stone, Marsha Hunt and well chosen players in the lesser roles.

It all becomes a story because of the unwavering devotion of Walter Brennan, Brooklyn letter-

carrier, to his boyhood sweetheart, Marsha Hunt, which leads him to a final mis-step when he interferes with the U.S. mail by destroying a letter which tells her of her wayward son's death in a prison break.

If you know the way Ethel always prods Joe into "doing something" you will not be surprised to hear that eventually Joe and Ethel, as solid American citizens as anybody, exercise their rights to make a call on the President in Walter's behalf. The sequence that climaxes the picture, with Lewis Stone in the part of the nation's executive, is exceptionally good theater.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory family fare, without offering anything extra. Previewed November 30th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "For three reels, the screen bow of Joe and Ethel Turp of the Brooklyn Turps, is as amusing, warmly human, down-to-earth comedy as has been seen in many a day, with considerable novelty in its mode of presentation. But along about the middle the novelty wears off, the paucity of story material and lack of scripting imagination raise their ugly heads, and a period of tedium sets in, which continues until the pictures takes a new lease on life in its closing stages."

VARIETY: "Screen adaptation of Damon Runyon's Satevepost yarn about his two Flatbush characters, Joe and Ethel Turp, comes out average entertainment with moments of great moving appeal and satisfactory chuckles."

copper who, inspired to some extent by personal reasons, sets out from his lowly position to uncover the city's top racketeer, a job that his superiors in higher-up posts have failed to do.

Charles Bickford is the rough and ready copper, John Litel the local gang leader who starts the whole search for the man behind the rackets by marrying Bickford's girl, Doris Nolan. It can be seen that the leads are in capable hands, and a glance at the cast credits above will show that the support parts are assigned to players who can do this sort of thing with their eyes shut.

Two surprise bits are turned in by a negro duo, Jack Carr and Teresa Harris.

Direction by Harold Schuster is
 (Continued on Page 14)

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Joe and Ethel Turp Call on the President.....	MGM.....85
2. Nick Carter, Master Detective	MGM.....75
3. All Women Have Secrets	RKO.....70
4. Escape to Paradise	RKO.....70
5. The Witness Vanishes	UNIV.....70
6. One Hour To Live	UNIV.....70

'Nick Carter' Series Off to Flying Start

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

ProducerLucien Hubbard
 DirectorJacques Tourneur
 ScreenplayBertram Millhauser
 Story: Bertram Millhauser, Harold
 Buckley.
 Featured: Walter Pidgeon, Rita
 Johnson, Henry Hull, Stanley
 Ridges, Donald Meek, Addison
 Richards, Henry Victor, Milburn
 Stone, Martin Kosleck, Frank
 Faylen, Sterling Holloway, Wal-
 ly Maher, Edgar Dearing.
 PhotographerCharles Lawton
 Film Editor.....Elmo Vernon
 Time57 minutes

The fabulous Nick Carter—hero of our days behind the barn or up in the attic sneaking a look—makes his screen bow in zippered-1939 clothes, with stream-lined MGM production backing, and an all around good contribution from director, scripters, and players.

It looks as though Leo has a really entertaining series on the way. We would rate it higher than the figure given above, except that the first picture must break the ice. If the standard is maintained in subsequent issues, it will undoubtedly go higher.

A preview audience, apparently not knowing what was coming, seemed disappointed when the main title flashed on, feeling they were doomed to a cops and robbers meller of the quickie school. But the picture took hold almost from the first appearance of Walter Pidgeon and the interest of the opening scenes, and built steadily thereafter.

Part of the reason for this building is in the personality of Pidgeon and the careful characterization given by writers and directors. He is not the super-sleuth, nor a thin "Thin Man," he seems just an ordinarily intelligent guy like your brother, going about his work in a likeable, ordinary way.

Another reason, may be in an intriguing background—the presentation of airplane building, of air scenes, in a manner that is really remarkable. As fact scenes they are interesting in themselves, even if there were no mystery, comedy, or story wound through

them. Exceptional photography, especially in its matching of studio scenes with factory-made shots helps here immeasurably to the feeling of class.

It all concerns foreign agents who have an uncanny method of getting secret plans out of the plane factory, even though, before your eyes you see the employees stripped to shower baths before they leave each day. Nick Carter is set to solve the problem. He does. That's all we need to tell you of the story. Donald Meek is rich in an amateur sleuth role, not a Doctor Watson, but a loveable bungler who is always messing things up. Rita Johnson, opposite Pidgeon, turns in a good performance, while the strength of the support can be readily seen in the names above.

It is an auspicious debut for the series, and equally so for young Jacques Tourneur—son of an illustrious father—in the field of feature directing.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Worthy, on entertainment values, of special handling to lift it above the figure you will get if just played as "another picture." Previewed December 5th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The super-sleuth of the ages, the great American detective, Nick Carter, makes a very auspicious debut in the first of MGM's new detective series. . . What has been presented on the screen before as stirring crime detection, is just child's play as compared to the heroics and detection performed by this dynamic fiction detective, who has thrilled dime novel readers for generations."

VARIETY: "This is by no stretch of wistfulness that old Nick Carter—which the avid young reader of the 90's and the early 1900's absorbed behind the geographies and the secret libraries of their day. No sir. He has been streamlined and modernized in his first essay against crime so as to deal competently with alien spies in an airplane factory and other current problems he will have to face in the projected series here instituted with 'Nick Carter, Master Detective'."

'One Hour' Below Average Programmer

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Asso. Producer...George Yohalem
 DirectorHarold Schuster
 Original Screenplay...Roy Chanlor
 Featured: Charles Bickford, Doris
 Nolan, John Litel, Samuel S.
 Hinds, Paul Guilfoyle, Robert
 Emmett Keane, Jack Carr, John
 Gallaudet, Emory Parnell, Olin
 Howland, Theresa Harris, Eddie
 Chandler, James Green, Jack
 Roper.
 PhotographerGeorge Robinson
 Time59 minutes

"One Hour To Live" has been told so often, and so often told in the same stereotyped way, that it had little chance to lift above average program fare. To say that it has been well done is, then, about the best that can be said.

We once again meet the honest

'The Witness Vanishes' Capably Handled Mystery

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

ProducerIrving Starr
 DirectorOtis Garrett
 Original Story.....James Ronald
 ScreenplayRobertson White
 Stars: Edmund Lowe, Wendy Barrie.

Featured: Bruce Lester, Walter Kingsford, Forrester Harvey, J. M. Kerrigan, Barlowe Borland, Vernon Steele, Robert Noble, Reginald Barlow, Leyland Hodgson, Denis Green.

PhotographerArthur Martinelli
 Time65 minutes

This Crime Club series produced by Irving Starr for Universal has hit a pretty consistent stand-

ard, showing that the unit has the correct formula for mystery entertainment on the screen.

"The Witness Vanishes" is no exception for the record. Well paced by director Otis Garrett, scripted intelligently, and played by an excellent cast, it holds the interest and will also hold up its end of the program in the spots for which it was intended.

The story is laid in England, and the players, with the exception of Edmund Lowe, selected from the best of the British players in Hollywood. All concerned deliver with a smooth experience above the usual mystery thriller cast in the program bracket.

Wendy Barrie is seen as the

daughter of a British publisher who has been railroaded to an insane asylum by four crooks who seek possession of his paper. During his incarceration the publisher has devised plans for the untimely death of the conspirators should he ever escape. And escape he does, when Miss Barrie, on her twentieth birthday learns of his fate, and enlists the aid of Bruce Lester and Forrester Harvey, honest workers on the paper.

Of course the quartette of schemers meet death, one by one, and in circumstances that point to the former asylum inmate being the guilty one. There is a surprise twist for the finish that is well handled and effective.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good bottom of the bill fare for the mystery addicts. Previewed November 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "The Witness Vanishes' will be good fare when properly coupled with a screenplay of lighter calibre, and should do okay at the box offices of the land."

REPORTER: "The Witness Vanishes' is a sanely-handled mystery picture that builds interestingly to a climax. Its chief virtue is that it is acted quietly and sincerely by an almost entirely English cast, and their reserved actions and mannerisms lend a type of subdued fascination to the story."

'Women Have Secrets' Brings New Cagney to Screen

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Asso. Producer.....Edward T. Lowe
 DirectorKurt Neumann
 Screenplay: Agnes Christine Johnston.

Based on story by.....Dale Eunson
 Featured: Jean Cagney, Virginia Dale, Joseph Allen, Jr., Peter Hayes, Betty Moran, John Arledge, Janet Waldo, Lawrence Grossmith, Una O'Connor, Kitty Kelly.

PhotographerTheodor Sparkuhl
 Film Editor.....Arthur Schmidt
 Time70 minutes

A gem of unpretentious entertainment. With a promising youthful cast, it has a human story, skilful scripting and top-notch direction. All in all, a bottom-of-

the-bill offering that will give better than average satisfaction.

"All Women Have Secrets" even has the suggestion of a mild exploitation angle in that it marks the screen debut of Jean Cagney, younger sister of the Cagney tribe. Her initial screen appearance is pleasantly auspicious, combining attractive looks, adequate ability, and even satisfying singing talents.

It is a college story, without being limited in appeal to those usually attracted by college stories, since its theme is broadly human and treatment adult. The yarn concerns three young collegiate couples who cannot await the future but embark on the sea of matrimony while still in the midst

of their financial and scholastic problems. Of course there are complications when the arrival of off-spring is expected in two of the struggling families.

Kurt Neumann has neatly balanced his comedy and drama; the results he has obtained from a youthful cast deserve extra tribute. Joseph Allen, Jr., shares the burden of the story's weight opposite Miss Cagney; Betty Moran and John Arledge are another appealing couple; with the lighter moments well handled by Virginia Dale and Peter Hayes. More mature roles are in the capable hands of Lawrence Grossmith. Una O'Connor, Kitty Kelly and there is a pleasing youngster, Janet Walda.

A creditable contribution Paramount's "B" list from Producer Edward Lowe.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: General appeal for all classes of audiences. Previewed December 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A pleasant, intriguing presentation of the problems of undergraduate marriage, this picture is imbued with a wholesome sincerity which gives it a definitely attractive quality."

VARIETY: "A neat programmer of unusual charm and quality in its class, in which a group of capable youngsters acquit themselves creditably to leave an agreeable impression."

'Escape to Paradise' Standard Bobby Breen

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Asso. Producer.....Barney Briskin
 DirectorErle C. Kenton
 ScreenplayWeldon Melick
 Original Story: Ian Hunter, Herbert C. Lewis.

StarBob Breen
 Featured: Kent Taylor, Marla Shelton, Joyce Compton, Pedro de Cordoba, Robert O. Davis, Rosina Galli, Frank Yaconelli, Anna Demetrio.

Photographer Charles Schoenbaum
 Film Editor.....Arthur Hilton
 Time60 minutes

Latest in the screen chapters of Bobby Breen, and probably his last for some time, since the youngster is in the voice-changing period, "Escape to Paradise" rates a bit flat in the entertainment parade, despite a few very good top scenes.

Slenderness of story provides the chief handicap, leaving it pretty squarely up to director Erle Kenton to use every ounce of veteran ingenuity to keep the offering on the "satisfactory" grade. He is helped by a breezy performance from Kent Taylor, and Bobby at least delivers up to his record when vocalizing.

Taylor is seen as a son of wealth and little responsibility who abandons ship on a round-the-world cruise at a South American port to follow the lure of ro-

mance. Bobby Breen becomes his local guide, and the two manage to have a series of more or less interesting adventures, mostly on the lighter side.

Best sequence is the one which finds Taylor attempting to go real Latin and serenade his lady love, but using the voice of Bobby for the actual singing.

Support is in capable hands. The picture was apparently aimed at the "newly-discovered" Latin market, and will have extra appeal there.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Just standard in the Bobby Breen series. Previewed December 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Sol Lesser's 'Escape to Paradise' is an amusing comedy farce with a South American background, a little thin on story, but nevertheless, still amusing."

VARIETY: "Last of the Bobby Breen features for RKO release, 'Escape to Paradise' should prove out mildly diverting in supporting

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The **BOX OFFICE DIGEST**

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Thanks Everybody

Joe Pasternak



Management
STANLEY BERGERMAN, Inc.
Agency

THE NEW UNIVERSAL'S

"Destry Rides Again"



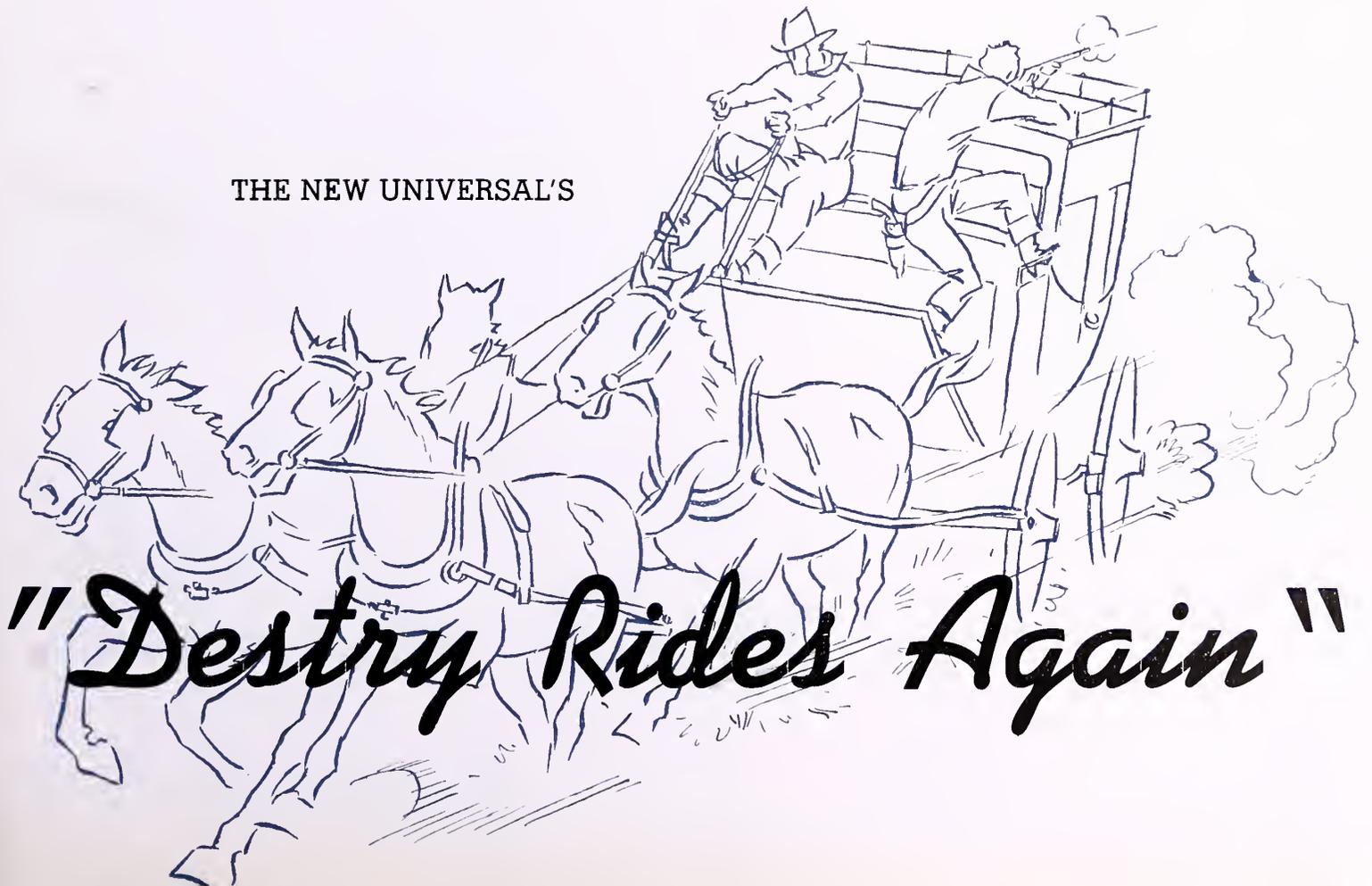
THE HONOR BOX WINNER

George Marshall



Directed

THE NEW UNIVERSAL'S



"Destry Rides Again"

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Marlene Dietrich



THE NEW UNIVERSAL'S

"Destry Rides Again"



THE HONOR BOX WINNER

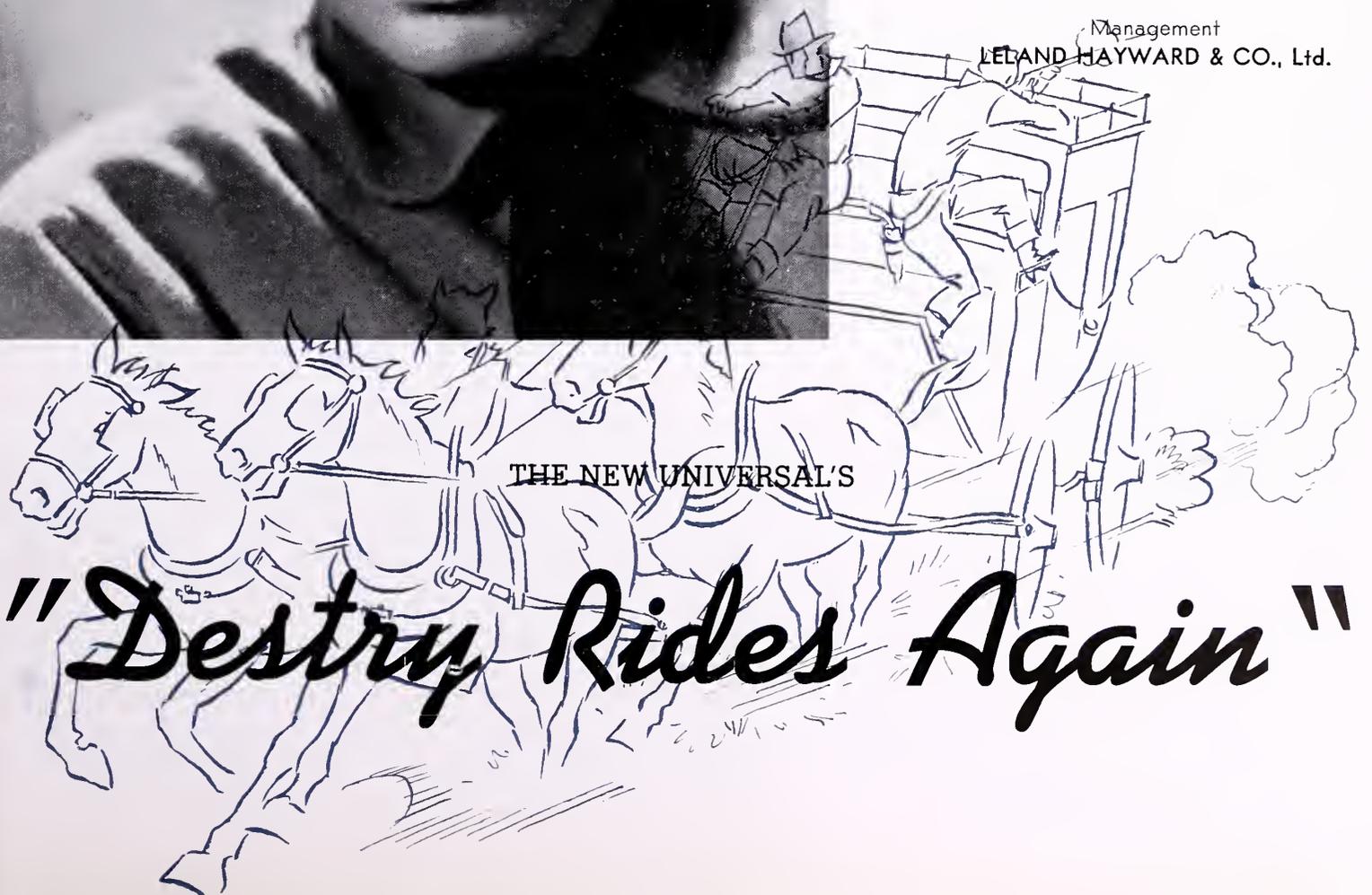


James Stewart

PLAYS

"Deputy Sheriff Destry"

Management
LELAND HAYWARD & CO., Ltd.



THE NEW UNIVERSAL'S

"Destry Rides Again"

Ridge Reports Canny E. V. Richards Method of Meeting Theatrical Union Agitator Invasion



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Atlanta, Ga., Dec. 3.—“Damn clever these Chinese!”

That expression is not copyrighted or exclusive to the yellow man.

Down New Orleans way, there is a very clever theatre operator. His methods of operation are known far and wide. He could give these Chinese philosophers much to add to their lore of logic and proverbs. His name is E. V. Richards.

Here is one for the mighty minds of labor unions to solve.

For many moons, the followers of “Bill” Green and John L. Lewis have been scouring and scouring the theatre field, as some of the mighty minds of this industry view it. They have organized the studios, and made their union demands stick. They have reached far afield, and brought many of the theatre employees into their fold, even to exchanges. But the mighty Titan of New Orleans put one problem before them, that has not found any method of solution.

Doormen, ticket takers, ushers, and similar employees of theatres have been looked upon as easy prey for the labor organizer, who has been sent out from Chicago and New York bad lands, to bamboozle the folks in the theatres to come across with initiation money and monthly dues, that they might have the strong arm of labor about their shoulders, (or necks) to get for them more wages; shorter hours and to kindle in them a contempt for their employers. E. V. Richards saw this coming some years ago. E. V. had his early training in circuses and other strenuous places. He was not caught napping.

AND HERE IS ONE FOR THE BOOK

The cagey E. V. changed his type of ushers, ticket takers and other employees. He employed middle aged women, with unquestioned social standing to be hostesses, whose real duties were to be ushers, ticket takers, cashiers and supervisors of janitors. He selected these women, the story goes, from very prominent old Southern families, whose financial straits, due to the depression, made it necessary for them to secure some outside income. Coming as they did from the homes of folks, who have been employers of labor, naturally there would be little sympathy in their hearts and minds for the type of labor organizer that is usually sent out to herd the self-pitying class under the wing of organized labor.

As the story is told over here in ‘Bama,’ E. V. has surrounded these matrons with titles of dignity; with employment that becomes their social station, and they have taken over the jobs formerly held by high school boys and girls in the theatres. They know all the folks in these southern cities. They greet their friends most becomingly. They fill a place that brings dignity and class to his theatres, and above all, they are a lot of Southern ladies, who would not even deign to talk to the average labor organizer.

So in this section of the South, there are at least some very important posts in the Saenger Circuit, under the very able leadership of E. V. Richards, that do not offer a very fertile field for Sancho Panzas of Green, Lewis and Co. And with this master stroke of Mr. Richards, he has brought greater dignity to his theatre operation; brought a new clientele through these fine, but economically insecure belles of the Southland, and last but not least, stopped the strong arm of organized labor reaching further into his organization, to dictate to him, how and by what means he may conduct his theatre operation.

AGITATION SIMMERS OVER SALESMEN UNION IDEA

Atlanta, Ga.—Dec. 2.—“It Happened One Afternoon!”

These conversations on film row in Atlanta. All different, but all

about this cockeyed industry, in which order is sought out of the Babylon of ideas, hopes and desires, of those who are in it, or just out of it and trying to return to it—that they may not starve.

Standing on the restaurant corner, (there is one on every film row in America), an ex-booker, idle since ground hog’s day of ’39, after 12 years with one of the major companies, and many times an award winner, remarked, to the writer, “I see by your story the salesmen are about to organize. If I had been in a union, I would still have my old job. I booked for a dozen years. I won a lot of prizes. I made the mistake of telling exhibitors which were good pictures and which were lemons, and how to use their playing time to the best advantage. I told them which pictures to cancel out. They only had 52 good booking days. I tried to help them, I got the ax,” and he changed to the other foot, hoping something would happen to get him a job.

About that time an appointment hour had arrived and I walked into Mr. Wilby’s office. There, an astute business man was busy with his associate Mr. Harrison, arranging his bookings for the next month. He started right off discussing the importance of booking pictures, correctly, on days of the week, that fit peculiar audiences; on playing westerns and out of door product, where it would please, and divers other problems, that had just been discussed and were seemingly the cause of the dismissal of this Booker.

Mr. Wilby pointed out, that one of the frequent mistakes bookers and exhibitors make, is improper placing of product. The result is not only loss of playing time to the exhibitor, but loss of revenue to the exchange. “I recall once a Booker tried to replace ‘Wanderer of the Wasteland’ with a love story,” spoke up Mr. Harrison. “If the days required a picture like this fine outdoor one, certainly a sweet little love story would be most inappropriate. Bookers should know better than to try to book theatres thusly,” he remarked. But to the ex-booker, it had been “Love’s Labor Lost.” Yes, it’s a cockeyed industry, even at best.

A little later the same day a high official of one of the major

distributing companies, was discussing the Hollywood union problem, and how the industry had had to take it on the jaw, as the result of the labor war just settled on the coast. I remarked to him that there was considerable talk among the salesmen throughout the country about their forming a union. A union, I told him they said, not so much to secure greater wages, but to insure economic security, such as was needed in the story I had heard earlier in the day from the ex-booker.

AND HERE’S THE NEW YORK ATTITUDE TO THE PROBLEM

“Those fellows walking the streets did not make good or they would not be there,” snarled the New Yorker. “The good employees keep their jobs okay. Do you think they would keep me if I was not delivering?”

I did not debate the question. The executive thought he was serving his company, but he like thousands of others, does not hear the groans from semi-hungry lips, of former faithful employees, who talk to the insecure employees. It all has its effect. Today is the time to make the correction. Today is the time for plans like Proctor and Gamble and the Telephone Company, and hundreds of others, that provide for retirement of the faithful. Ten percent of the waste would create a reserve for retirement, and dissipate this talk of economic insecurity, before more severe methods are imposed.

Had George the Third of England recognized Edmund Burke’s speech in Parliament on “The Conciliation of the American Colonies,” the Boston Tea Party perhaps would be as absent from the history of this country as it is from the history of the West Indies.

WAY DOWN SOUTH THEY CAN ALL BE FRIENDS

Atlanta, Ga., Nov. 30.—There is something about this South, that I have not been able to fathom. It is the peaceful method by which millionaires secure their fortunes, without the blare of trumpets, the acrimonious opposition of their contemporaries or the fan fare attending the activities of the Northern, Eastern and Western big wigs.

(Continued on Page 13)

Nichols Continues to Give Startling Angles On Southern California Booking Situation

We'll get into the story of Zone 17 without any fan fare, and if you can figure out this screwy zoning set-up, then "you are a better man than we are, Gunga Din."

In this zone we find the Crystal 750, Monterey 900, Garden 400, Jewel 800, Unique 1200, Bonita 750, Strand 990, Center 650, and Boulevard seating 900. A total of 7340 seats.

These houses are all located in East Los Angeles, unincorporated, with the exception of the Crystal and Monterey, which are in the city limits of Los Angeles. Starting with the Strand and one block east of that theatre is the beginning of a business section, stores and business houses on both sides of Whittier Boulevard. Continuing east we pass the Boulevard and Center Theatres, and when we get to the head of this business section we run right smack into the Golden Gate 1600, United Artists 900, and the Royal seating 800, all three being operated by Fox West Coast. This group has a total of 3300 seats and are located in a different zone, without a number. Just a special dispensation and without a single independent theater in the zone.

Now friends, we have read and re-read some three zoning books for the Southern California territory, and we can't find another situation like it in the greater L.A. area, and nowhere can we find a county situation being zoned into Los Angeles proper from an unincorporated city.

ZONING PROBLEMS NEED AN EINSTEIN IN L.A.

This statement is a fact. Even if you were fooled for years, into believing Zone 17 was entirely in the county. Get out your zoning maps and you will find that line, that you have always thought was a mistake, is really Indiana Avenue, separating L. A. from East Los Angeles, an unincorporated city, and may cause no end of trouble in Government circles in the very near future.

So this leaves us with two orphan theatres, the Crystal and the Monterey, with no zone to go to. There is already trouble enough in Zone 18. We have before us some 14 zoning schedules from other cities throughout the country, and they all carry a definite rule concerning any attempt to

zone a county section into a city schedule, but this is Southern California and the home of the Blue Book, "property of Fox West Coast Agency Corporation Booking Department." And they further state, "And is for exclusive use of its district managers and bookers." Why should this be the Bible for dictating the zoning and clearance schedules of this territory?

SOME HISTORY ON THE CLEARANCE TECHNICALITIES

On the 18th of June, 1934, a book called the Proposed Clearance and Zoning Schedule for the L.A. territory, was prepared by the L. A. Clearance and Zoning Board, pursuant to Article VI of the Code of Fair Competition. Now comes along another book, that was adopted by the Board on August 17, 1934. We now enter the period of the Blue Book, which has on its title page the following wording: "N.R.A.—Schedule of Clearance and Zoning—for the L. A. Exchange Territory, with changes to September 1, 1936. Based upon the Schedule proved by the Code Authority for the M. P. Industry, April 23, 1935."

Yes, dear readers, you that have only one Clearance Book back East, learn that Southern California does things in a large way—they have two. There is the White Book or N.R.A. Schedule, and some of the local exchange managers told us this White Book was used only in situations where F. W. C. or its affiliates were not in competition to independent exhibitors. We are still looking for these independents. No doubt we will find some when we go up into the desert and mountain country.

Now, let's get back to our knitting, or 7,340 seats versus 3,300, comprising a zone within a zone. What the reasons were for Fox West Coast getting their own exclusive zone, which is unquestionably, geographically or otherwise a part of Zone 17, we won't attempt to analyze. With a seven-day first run after L. A. first run and no first or second run in Zone 17; we thumbed and thumbed the local zoning books to find a precedent for such an unusual booking situation.

Originally F. W. C. had only two theatres in their zone, the

U. A. and the Golden Gate; but there entered an independent named Cantor, not the comedian whom you know, but an individual that gave the boys around Aberdeen, Washington, many a laugh, especially the Warner Bros. F.W.C. doesn't go in much for merriment, so they bought Cantor out and placed the Royal at fifteen cents, and thereby hangs a tale.

Now in an area such as we have described, unquestionably over-seated, competition is keen and nasty charges are hurled back and forth among exhibitors against exchanges and vice versa. Especially bitter was M. A. Kurstin, who owns the Boulevard.

Zone 17 gave us one of those pitiful situations where greed and its allies strike and ruin a young man's opportunity to build a business of his own making. We are not speaking solely of the forces that you might think, we also include in this group a rather sharp independent exhibitor.

THE TALE OF ONE INDEPENDENT EXHIBITOR

Jack Goldberg has been running the Garden Theatre in Zone 17 for the past four years. He tells us that he had a little money and put it into the Garden Theatre, that was leased by Fred Hershon. Along with the money went all the hard work of putting over a house in a highly competitive zone. Jack tells us he did a good job of it and was doing all right until the Royal, in an adjoining zone came into the picture. He told us the Fox product was his meal ticket, their stars clicked in his theatre. And further, that when Fox Films was sold to F.W.C. Royal and played ahead of him at the fifteen cent break, this deal and others were the beginning of the end for him and his wife and baby. The night we were out there he told us he had only five dollars to his name. The next day we told the right people about this young man's predicament, and a fund was made immediately available so that Jack and his family would have the necessities of life. So Mr. Goldberg is now out of the Garden, with nothing to show for four years of hard work and the money paid for his interest in the Garden to Mr. Hershon, who is now operating the Garden. There may be a sequel we can publish in an



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

early issue regarding this same Garden and concerning another major company that is very much interested in this situation.

Ridge Reports on Richards

(Continued from Page 12)

Down here in Atlanta one sees "Bill" Jenkins taking off in his plane for Mexico City, the Bermudas, Havana or Hollywood. His office folks scarcely know where to wire him, if it need be done. He is an exhibitor and a rich one. His partner, Col. Lucas, leaves all the worries of the organization to their General Manager, Mr. Whitaker, while he looks after his personal estate. "Bob" Wilby spends more time in his colorful garden, than anywhere else. Harry Balance, Fox District Manager, once in a while at the office, and a lot of the time flying his private plane over the balmy south.

Yet with all this seeming easy going activity these operations make as much money or more than the ones ruled over by the barn storming Skouras Brothers, the Brothers Schine of the east, or the driving Balabans in the Windy City. All these folks are neighborly. They get along, and help one another out, when time and occasion requires.

"Bob" Wilby, "Mike" Kinsey's partner, is equally worthy of the expression printed in recent weeks issues of The Digest, about fair dealing with independents. Mr. Wilby is located here. Operates about fifty of the Wilby-Kinsey Publix theatres. He fights and fights hard for his own rights, but respects the independents and their rights and fights for them, when they are attacked.

Highlights

(Continued from Page 4)

... Speaking of "sure-fires"—are we right or wrong in the impression that the producers are neglecting Edgar Kennedy, who can wrap up a scene and save a picture with the ease of a flying trapeze worker? ... Some of the producers seem to think of Kennedy as a two-reel comedian lately, but do they remember that rich spot in "A Star Is Born?" ... And was that a money picture! ... Raoul Walsh is under way with "Dark Command" at Republic, and if the effort Republic is putting behind this one pays out as it deserves, there's a hit a'coming 'round the mountain. ... Walsh, John Wayne, Claire Trevor, months of preparation, all the elements are sound. ... If our memory is right it was Winnie Sheehan and Raoul Walsh who first brought John Wayne to the screen. ... A good omen for "Dark Command." ... Richard Dix is hot again as a result of recent pictures, and it's stupid the way producers let a year or two go by before they rediscover the solid box office value of this perennial. ... He now has propositions for his own company if and when he concludes his current RKO deal. ... Eddie Small lifts George Bruce's writing option. ... The capable Bruce will soon call it a steady job. ... Phil Rosen is back at Universal for another picture. ... Hope they don't let him get away. ... Rosen has never made a bad picture in a decade. And many hits. Yet this industry, scouring the cradles for directorial brains, lets him wander from one studio to another. ... Ernest Scanlon is firmly set in his new post as Studio Treasurer at Selznick-International, and marking a new step he has made in deserved progress up the ladder since joining RKO under Frank O'Heron from the banking field.

"One Hour To Live" Below Average Programmer

(Continued from Page 6)

adequate, with few opportunities given him to do anything out of the ordinary by the routine story supplied him.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Just run-of-the-mill gangster and copper stuff. Previewed November 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Excellently turned out in all departments, 'One Hour To Live' is a first class programmer that will furnish audience satisfaction in support of more lavish productions."

REPORTER: "Director Harold Schuster would have to perform a miracle to create any interest in a story of this type, which has been done so often by practically the same actors, that the audience is one step ahead of each situation."

Do You Want to Know? . . .



- EVERYTHING about every current release available for theaters?
- WHO MADE IT, the associate producer, the director, the cast, the original BOX OFFICE DIGEST estimate of its box office value, the actual figure at which it opened in theaters, the current figure of performance?
- DO YOU WANT TO KNOW what The Digest's reviewer said, what the other reviewers said at the time of preview?
- DO YOU WANT all this handy in form, so that it can rest on your desk?
- YOU WILL GET IT IN THE NEW YEAR'S MID-SEASON SUMMARY.
- NOW IN PREPARATION — out in mid-January.

P.S.: The hearty response indicates that the advertising pages will be all-representative of this industry's workers, so that by the time we get through the NEW YEAR'S MID-SEASON SUMMARY should be a Who's Who and What's Who Doing of picture production. Come along, and join the band wagon!



The Radio Reporter: REPORTS GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH WEEK'S PROGRAMS THOUGH NO HIGHLIGHTS

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations of each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard for that particular program.

SILVER THEATER
(International Silver)
M.C., Conrad Nagel; stars, Ginger Rogers, Elliott Lewis; program of December 3rd.
Rating: 100%.

The playlet was only an average selection, but Ginger and Lewis did a nice job of it. Seems most of these glamour veterans of the screen, Ginger Rogers, Loretta Young, etc., know how to handle themselves before the mike better than the male stars. Commercials, which have been a model for length and appeal, may soon benefit by changing the routine. In danger of becoming a bit stereotyped.

★ ★ ★
SCREEN GUILD
(Gulf Oil)

M.C., Roger Pryor; guest stars, Gertrude Lawrence, Herbert Marshall, Johnny Mack Brown. Program of December 3rd.
Rating: 100%.

"Accent on Youth" was a good suggestion for the playlet, with Herbert Marshall getting excellent support from Gertrude Lawrence, while Johnny Mack Brown turned in a surprise performance. Except for the quality of the playlet, this unit should have its rating lowered, because the asinine amateurishness of the final "quiz" may be great stuff in the studio where they can see the players clowning, but it comes over the air like sub-Major Bowes. Commercial is also too long by far.

★ ★ ★
CHASE AND SANBORN

M. C., Rudy Vallee; stars, Bergen and McCarthy; Robert Ambruster's music; Donald Dixon; guest stars, Maureen O'Hara, Arthur Treacher. Program of December 3rd.
Rating: 96%.

This was on the way to going ten per cent below the mark when Arthur Treacher sparked it with a good routine, and the burlesque of

"Jamaica Inn" by Bergen-McCarthy et al, sent it through to a flying finish. . . Maureen O'Hara's personality was appealing, but the choice of vehicle none too happy.

★ ★ ★
JACK BENNY
(Jello)

M.C., Jack Benny; featured, Mary Livingstone, Dennis Day, Phil Harris and his music. Program of December 3rd.
Rating: 110%.

Benny is hitting on high these days, with material and delivery. . . Even without Devine and Rochester, it just kept stepping along. . . And the climax playlet, "Murder on the Gridiron" was a good topper.

★ ★ ★
CECIL DeMILLE
(Lux Products)

M.C., Cecil DeMille; playlet, "A Man to Remember," with Bob Burns and Anita Louise. Program of December 4th.
Rating: 102%.

Whoever does the scripting job on these DeMille programs, with the hand of the master evident also, is in danger of hitting such a consistent standard that the rating will be automatically 100%. It lifts above the fine standard this week because of Bob Burns' work in the lead and the subtle means by which the script retained a theme without preaching or sacrificing movement. . . Commercials effectively brief.

★ ★ ★
BING CROSBY
(Kraft Products)

M.C., Bing Crosby; featured, Bob Burns, Annabella, Harry Carey, Florence George, John Scott

Trotter's music. Program of November 30th.
Rating: 95%.

Bing improved over the previous week with Bob Burns back on the rostrum, but Annabella as a guest star was quite a strain for him to carry. . . Florence George warbled effectively and was worthy of her spot.

★ ★ ★
GOOD NEWS
(Maxwell House Coffee)

M.C., Edward Arnold; stars, Fannie Brice, Connie Boswell, Warren Hull, Meredith Wilson's music; guest stars, Lou Holtz, Benny Rubin, Fay Wray. Program of November 30th.
Rating: 107%.

Edward Arnold's smooth delivery is helping this program, and helping to sell his likeable personality to hinterlanders who always think of the unctuous screen heavy. . . The Lou Holtz-Benny Rubin routine, instead of the usual playlet, lifted the program above the average. . . Connie Boswell her usual dependable self. Fannie Brice at her best, and few know their ether music like Meredith Wilson. . . The Fay Wray routine was not so hot as it came over the air.

★ ★ ★
PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS
M.C., Burgess Meredith; stars, Franchot Tone, Louis Armstrong, Maxine Sullivan. Program of December 3rd.
Rating: 98%.

Here's a program suffering a slight two per cent drop, despite real appeal, just because its early weeks hit such a high mark. That's tough on the creators, but we hope it will just spur them to come

back with more knockouts. . . "Man Without a Country" was effective, but it is the type of subject that dramatically is in danger of becoming a monotone. . . Fatal to armchair listeners. . . Louis Armstrong and Maxine Sullivan okay, but just sliced into the program this week.

★ ★ ★
KATE SMITH
(Grape-Nuts)

M.C., Ted Collins; star, Kate Smith; featured, Abbott and Costello; guest unit, Group Theater in "Awake and Sing." Program of December 1st.
Rating: 85%.

"Awake and Sing," may have been a good selection for New York, particularly the Bronx, but it died an awful death coming over a California microphone—maybe it broke down on the way through the Nebraska airways. . . Balance of program at usual standard. . . Ted Collins commercials always of top standard.

★ ★ ★
BOB HOPE
(Pepsodent)

M.C., Bob Hope; featured, Judy Garland, Professor Colonna, Skinnay Ennis and his music. Program of December 5th.
Rating: 98%.

Bob Hope has hit a consistent stride that keeps him pretty near tops for general week in and week out satisfaction. . . This week's material dropped the fractional points. . . The beauty parlor playlet may have been fine for the studio audience, but it didn't come over the air with a bang. . . Gags about ugly women are never universally safe, anyway, and when stretched into a playlet they at least require visual presentation.

★ ★ ★
EDWARD G. ROBINSON
(Rinso)

Big Town series of melo plays, starring Edward G. Robinson, with Ona Munson, and Noel Madison. Program of Dec. 5th.
Rating 100%.

Swell show, well scripted, with Robinson and Munson coming through in their usual fine style, and Noel Madison scoring a standout in a gangster role. . . Why is this fine actor neglected on the screen?

The Radio Reporter Thinks:

—That Chase and Sanborn have made a mistake in not coming to terms with Don Ameche for a new period. . . There is an intangible difference—known to veteran showmen—between a "hit show" and a "good show" and while the difference cannot always be analyzed, it can be felt.

—The difference on the Chase and Sanborn hour since Ameche's absence—due to a rest period for health reasons—has been very definitely felt. Very definitely.

It is not that a capable topnotcher like Vallee has missed, it is the fact that he stepped into a show cold that had the shadow of Ameche's personality hanging over it.

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Jesse James	FOX	182
Gunga Din	RKO	180
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	COL	169
The Rains Came	FOX	165

Dodge City	WAR	158
The Women	MGM	158
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	MGM	156
The Wizard of Oz	MGM	156
Babes In Arms	MGM	153
Drums Along the Mohawk	FOX	151
Stanley and Livingstone	FOX	151

Union Pacific	PAR	145
Kentucky	FOX	138
Destry Rides Again	UNIV	135
Idiot's Delight	MGM	133
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	UNIV	131
Four Feathers	UA	130

Bean Geste	PAR	126
Second Fiddle	FOX	128
Bachelor Mother	RKO	127
Stagecoach	UA	126
Hollywood Cavalcade	FOX	125
Another Thin Man	MGM	123
Inarez	WAR	123
Rose of Washington Square	FOX	123
Stand Up and Fight	MGM	123
Man About Town	PAR	122
The Star Maker	PAR	122
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	121
Each Dawn I Die	WAR	120
When Tomorrow Comes	UNIV	120
Love Affair	RKO	120

Elizabeth & Essex	WAR	119
Only Angels Have Wings	COL	119
Little Princess	FOX	118
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA	117
Alexander Graham Bell	FOX	117
The Roaring Twenties	WAR	116
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	RKO	116
The Real Glory	UA	112
Made For Each Other	UA	112
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	WAR	112
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	WAR	192
Housekeeper's Daughter	UA	112
Flander Alford	UA	112
(Foreign Release)	MGM	133
Midnight	MGM	111
Oklahoma Kid	PAR	111
East Side of Heaven	WAR	110
UNIV	UNIV	110

Fifth Avenue Girl	RKO	108
Donahue	MGM	107
Topper Takes A Trip	UA	106
A Day at the Circus	MGM	103
Invitation To A Whippersnapper	PAR	102
Whispering Willows	RKO	102
Warnering Heights	UA	102
Paris Honeymoon	PAR	102
In Name Only	RKO	102
Rulers of the Sea	PAR	101
Lady of the Troopies	MGM	100
Falstaff	FOX	99
Captain Fury	UA	98
Zaza	PAR	98
Man of Conquest	REP	96
Eternally Yours	UA	95
Young Mr. Lincoln	FOX	94
Wings of the Navy	WAR	94
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM	93
Tarzan Finds A Son	MGM	91

Intermezzo	UA	87
St. Louis Blues	PAR	87

Broadway Serenade	MGM	84
Let Freedom Ring	MGM	83
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	83
	FOX	81

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	WAR	139
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	MGM	133
Pygmalion	MGM	131
The Hardys Ride High	MGM	130

Dark Victory	WAR	128
First Love	UNIV	127

Daytime Wife	FOX	120
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Huckleberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110
Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Golden Boy	COL	102
Jamaica Inn	PAR	102
Tower of London	UNIV	102
Honeymoon In Bali	PAR	99
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
The Cat and the Canary	PAR	98
Disputed Passage	PAR	98
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	98
Maisie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Remember	MGM	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
What A Life	PAR	92
Fast and Furious	MGM	91
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	87
Blackmail	MGM	87
The Flying Deuces	RKO	87
Our Neighbors—The Carters	PAR	87
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off the Record	WAR	85

Daughters Courageous	WAR	112
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Huckberry Finn	MGM	111
The Beachcomber	PAR	110

Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR	106
Golden Boy	COL	102
Jamaica Inn	PAR	102
Tower of London	UNIV	102
Honeymoon In Bali	PAR	99
It's A Wonderful World	MGM	99
The Cat and the Canary	PAR	98
Disputed Passage	PAR	98
Son of Frankenstein	UNIV	98
Lucky Night	MGM	98
Dust Be My Destiny	WAR	98
Maisie	MGM	97
Hotel For Women	FOX	97
Remember	MGM	97
Good Girls Go To Paris	COL	95
Hound of the Baskervilles	FOX	92
They Made Me A Criminal	WAR	92
What A Life	PAR	92
Fast and Furious	MGM	91
On Borrowed Time	MGM	90
Wife, Husband and Friend	FOX	90
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	90
Frontier Marshal	FOX	88
Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO	87
Blackmail	MGM	87
The Flying Deuces	RKO	87
Our Neighbors—The Carters	PAR	87
Naughty But Nice	WAR	86
Fast and Loose	MGM	86
Off the Record	WAR	85

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

U-Boat	29	COL	60
Hell's Kitchen		WAR	82
Blonde Meets the Boss		COL	81
Chicken Wagon Family		FOX	80
Pack Up Your Troubles		FOX	80
Devil's Island		WAR	78
Blondie Brings Up Baby		COL	78
Blackwell's Island		WAR	77
Pardon Our Nerve		FOX	77
Legion of Lost Flyers		UNIV	77
Man They Couldn't Hang		COL	77
On Dress Parade		WAR	77
Beware Spooks		COL	77
Tropic Fury		UNIV	76
You Can't Get Away With Murder		WAR	76
Meet Dr. Christian		RKO	76
Flight at Midnight		REP	75
Inside Story		FOX	75
Pacific Liner		RKO	75
Charlie Chan in the City in Darkness		FOX	75
The Day The Bookies Wept		RKO	74



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**Rowland
H.
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Producer-Director

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A NEW UNIVERSAL PICTURE

The Box Office
DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 15.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 18, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

Kyser-Butler Picture
Tops Box Offices
For RKO-Radio

SEE PAGE 5

“Freedom of the Press”
As Shown By
Los Angeles Papers

SEE PAGE 3

“Gone With the Wind”
Heads Gala Week
For the Previewer

SEE PAGES 6-7-8-10

●
**THE
ONLY
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BOX
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●

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

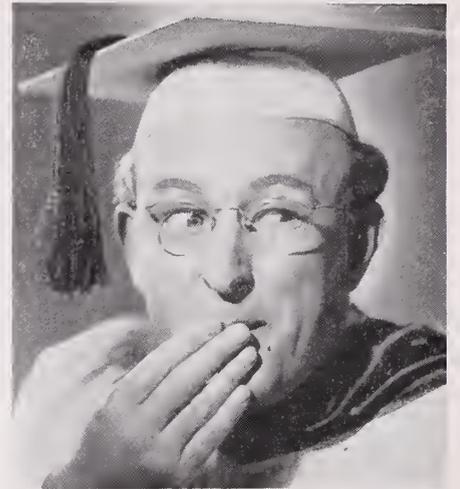
THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week RKO Wins With

"THAT'S RIGHT—YOU'RE WRONG" 126%



DAVID BUTLER
Producer-Director



KAY KYSER



Featured

LUCILLE BALL
DENNIS O'KEEFE
ROSCOE KARNs
MORONI OLSEN
HOBART CAVANAUGH

Screenplay

WILLIAM CONSELMAN
JAMES V. KERN

Original Story

WILLIAM CONSELMAN
DAVID BUTLER

Photography

RUSSELL METTY

Musical Arrangements

GEORGE DUNNING

Film Director

IRENE MORRA



ADOLPHE MENJOU



MAY ROBSON



EDWARD EVERETT HORTON

The Box Office DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

"FREEDOM OF THE PRESS"

An Editorial by **ROBERT E. WELSH**

We respectfully call the attention of such nationally read columnists as Westbrook Pegler, Walter Winchell, Heywood Broun—and with due deference, even Mrs. Franklin D.—who are always so valiant in their championship of a free press, to a situation currently existing in Southern California.

It is a situation so peculiar that it is almost comical; so comical that it is almost tragic to lovers of an untrammelled press.

And seriously tragic, if one considers the future implications in connection with our vaunted press, that sees all, knows all and TELLS all.

* * *

We are referring to the conspiracy of silence, the deaf mute attitude that has been adopted by the usually alert Los Angeles dailies towards the screen production of "Grapes of Wrath."

You do not actually believe, out there in the hinterlands of Nebraska, Ohio, and on to New York, that enterprising newspapers, located in the heart of the world's motion picture production, could be unaware that their readers are interested in news concerning what has been done on the screen with "Grapes of Wrath?"

We do not blame you for disbelief. But it is all too true.

Is it because of obtuseness on the part of a group of newspaper workers who constitute the most capable picture news chroniclers that could ever be gathered in one spot? Such as Edwin Schallert, Harrison Carroll, Jimmy Starr, Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons, Erskine Johnson?

That can't be the reason. These writers know their readers. They also know NEWS.

* * *

Let's consider all the angles of the case.

"Grapes of Wrath" as a book has held first place in the best seller lists throughout the country for so long a period that this mere statement is no longer news. Not since "Gone With the Wind" has any novel hit such a stride, and publishers' estimates are confident that "Grapes" will soon pass the "Gone With the Wind" figures.

It has a lively controversial theme that has brought radio comment, Washingtonian discussion, and in a million homes has been an after-dinner topic of conversation.

It is LIVE NEWS when such a subject comes to the screen. It has come to the screen—at a cost of well over a million dollars.

AND THIS MILLION DOLLARS HAS ALL BEEN SPENT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA—put into the payrolls of Los Angeles workers and Los Angeles advertising patrons, in the face of the fact that Los Angeles newspapers do not know that the picture is being made.

Is there something screwy in Denmark?

Is the State of California still ruled by an oligarchy similar to the freebooter days of its formation, an almighty clique that can tell the world which buys its picture news, "You can't hear about this subject, because we don't like it. It never rains in California; our earthquakes are fires; our floods are gentle tears from heaven; we have no industrial problems like other states, because we have no human beings; we just have pixies dancing in the eternal sun beneath showers of orange blossoms."

* * *

Let's look at the most important angle.

Darryl Zanuck is, to our mind, the most sincerely four-square creator of motion picture entertainment this history has produced in its modern phase.

Zanuck sets out to make ENTERTAINMENT; he adheres so close to that line that he would not take seriously any suggestion that he might veer a hairs-breadth towards propaganda; he adheres so closely to that thought that he has never made a picture for the glorification of a pet personal ideology, a favored player favorite, a freaky "high art" idea sold him over a bridge table.

He stakes his cards—and his life—on that aim: ENTERTAINMENT.

Can you imagine Darryl Zanuck spending over a million dollars of his stockholders' money on the making of a subject that,

at least in his own sincere judgment, would not be a credit to the motion picture industry?

He has had the guts to tackle a story that millions are ready and anxious to see visualized. He will be rewarded by those millions.

Is the reward of California's newspaper oligarchy to such a sturdy citizen of California to be—SILENCE?

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	16 Releases.....	97
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	45 Releases.....	96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	46 Releases.....	95
4. Paramount	47 Releases.....	86
5. Warner Brothers	49 Releases.....	85
6. RKO-Radio	37 Releases.....	81
7. Universal	40 Releases.....	80
8. Columbia	34 Releases.....	78
9. Republic	22 Releases.....	69
10. Monogram	18 Releases.....	67
11. Grand National	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases.....	65

360

The Highlighter: PONDER'S EXHIBITOR WORRIES ON "GONE WITH THE WIND" --- THEN SKIRTS NEWSFRONT

Of course, there can be no question about the HIGHLIGHT for this week. . . . The review on another page covers the picture insofar as the picture should be covered; but no two or four pages could answer the questions we are receiving from exhibitors. . . . "Gone With The Wind" has proven a hurricane for exhibitor thought.

EXHIBITORS' REAL WORRY ABOUT THE PRECEDENT

Sifting through all the questions, and there are so many, we find that the chief worry of the exhibitor is not so much the seventy per cent of his box office asked for the Selznick epic, as it is regarding the possible establishment of a precedent for all coming super-super attractions. . . . In other words, the exhibitor seems to be resigned to the fact that there are so many hungry souls awaiting "Gone With the Wind" that he will be happy to take Metro's guarantee of a ten per cent profit over agreed-upon-overhead, but he hopes that all the other sales managers don't use the same brand of marihuana in the future on lesser attractions. . . . That's his chief worry. . . . Is he opening his gates to a precedent that will eventually take all the bigger hit pictures out of his hands, and relegate him to the position of janitor in a community theater that is available several times a year for visiting epics at "ten per cent above the overhead." . . . Second important worry in the exhibitor letters concerns the length of "Gone With The Wind." . . . Three hours and forty minutes. . . . "Can any picture hold up that long with present day audiences?"

THE HIGHLIGHTER SHYS AT GIVING THE ANSWERS

Those are questions not easy to answer. . . . It could be said with a fair amount of assurance about the 70% terms not establishing any precedent to worry about, because it will be a long time before any picture comes along with the advance build-up, the automatic pre-sold value, the tremendous screen qualities of "Gone With the Wind." . . . But that is not entirely an answer, because undoubtedly, other producers of big hit attractions who find it necessary to spend well beyond the million dollar mark to achieve their goal, will watch with interest the success of Metro in pushing up the break to 70%. . . . "If they can't get 70%, why not 50%, as cartoon biggies are doing?" . . . That's a fear the exhibitors are justified in having. . . . As to the length, you may say that many double bills of less importance run just as long as "Gone," but the theater man counters that his double bill, with shorts, offers variety of interest, and it doesn't bother the customer much to walk out on the second feature. . . . There is only one reply to that, which is that "Gone With The Wind" must be considered as a SHOW, a something completely out of the ordinary,

10 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. Babes In Arms	MGM 156	159
2. After the Thin Man	MGM 123	148
3. First Love	UNIV 127	131
4. The Flying Deuces	RKO 87	91
5. Return of Dr. X	WAR 82	85
6. Angels Wash Their Faces	WAR 80	82
7. Dress Parade	WAR 77	82
8. Main Street Lawyer	REP 66	71
9. Three Sons	RKO 68	70
10. Sabotage	REP 67	69

to be presented by methods out of the ordinary. . . . It is not just another booking.

STUDIOS TURN ON DELUGE OF BIG ATTRACTIONS

"Gone With The Wind's" arrival is not alone in the Highlight classification this week, the studios turned on a veritable deluge of hit attractions for the reviewers, and all headed for extra early dates at the theaters. . . . There will be no stalling, the companies need the revenue, and quickly. . . . But feast on a six-day period that could bring "Gone With the Wind," "Gulliver's Travels," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," "Batalaika," a new Judge Hardy, a new Sonja Henie, and which closes just before we go to press with the new Bergen-McCarthy opus. . . . If the patrons want attractions they will get them starting next week. . . . We only hope they don't all cut one other's throats and still leave box offices starving for real attractions in late April and early May. . . . Fairly quiet on the labor front in Hollywood this week, aside from the withdrawal of the Screen Actors Guild from the A.F.L. Central Labor Council. . . . The maneuvers happened too frequently and with too much suddenness for your Highlighter to keep up with them, so he grasps the mantel of valor and disdains comment. . . . James Roosevelt becomes a producer on his own right. . . . Why not? . . . No experience is needed for a producer's job these days. . . . All you need is the bankroll, a United Artists release, and off you go. . . . The Fox big shots huddled in town with Darryl Zanuck this week. . . . Sid Kent, Herman Wobber, Charles McCarthy, etc. . . . There's a gang that isn't going to wait to find out what the war will mean to revenue. . . . They are out to prevent it meaning too much.

4 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. The Roaring Twenties	WAR 116	113
2. Rulers of the Sea	PAR 117	104
3. Jamaica Inn	PAR 102	98
4. The Day the Bookies Wept	RKO 74	72

QUICK JOGGING AROUND THE STUDIO CORNERS

Warners have made a long term extension of the Raoul Walsh contract, effective when he returns from his outside chore on Republic's John Wayne-Claire Trevor special. . . . Walsh has put a lot of money into box offices and the canny Warners have always hewed pretty close to the box office line. . . . So "The Roaring Twenties" sets up a future association that has some great possibilities. . . . Paramount signs Basil Rathbone to a three picture contract, and in our humble way we express the hope that they plan to bolster his subjects with romantic leading names. . . . Exhibitors are not slow to tell The Highlighter in their letters that Rathbone as a solo star is a heavy burden for the box office to carry. . . . Apparently he is just a sneering heavy to the cash customers, and they will pay to see the right hero do him dirt, but they'll stay home if he is the attraction and let him have his villainous way without benefit of cash. . . . The Digest published a story several weeks ago about the wild fervor that has gripped Atlanta over the preview of "Gone With the Wind," but apparently we didn't tell half of it judging by the nationwide columnists who flocked to Gawjia this week to be in on the most historic event since somebody pulled a trigger at Fort Sumter. . . . Zanuck is going to repeat that hot radio stunt which sent "Drums Along The Mohawk" off to such a flying start to christen "Swanee," which comes up for preview next week. . . . What an ether pair to lead off to: Don Ameche and Al Jolson, with a queen in the hand in Nancy Kelly. . . . William Holman, who is remembered clear back through the glorious Christie days, when Christie was Hollywood, moves from Columbia to join Frank Capra's independent activities as business manager. . . . There are few in the ranks who know as much, and can move as smoothly as Bill Holman, in handling the money end of picture production. . . . His acquisition is a sign that the Capra unit is moving near to the starting gate.

RADIO THROWS ITS HAT INTO THE RING

On top of the spectacular "Hunchback of Notre Dame" previewed this week come hot reports that Radio has a crasher coming up in "Swiss Family Robinson," which Director Edward Ludwig has just completed for the dazzling producer-writer team of Towne and Baker. . . . The pipe-line boys are real hot on this one. . . . It won't surprise your Highlighter who has considerable respect for the talents in those names, Towne, Baker, and Ludwig. . . . Frank Lloyd talking a four picture deal at Paramount that will involve over four million in negative costs. . . . That's show news, too, in these days when so many hinterlanders have decided that Hollywood has stopped looking ahead.

The Box Office: KAY KYSER RINGS THE BELL WITH SMASH HIT IN RKO's "THAT'S RIGHT--YOU'RE WRONG"

RKO—2 RELEASES

RKO-Radio has two new releases this week, one a box office sensation.

Dave Butler's production of "THAT'S RIGHT—YOU'RE WRONG," starring Kay Kyser and his troupe, has opened in over 45 first-run situations and in spite of the pre-Christmas lull is really doing big box office business, being held over in most instances.

Evidently Kay Kyser's radio following is much stronger than we had anticipated, for while we estimated this picture at 100%, it is already averaging 126% on its first key city bookings. So it looks as though RKO has another box office champion in "THAT'S RIGHT—YOUR WRONG," for which much credit should be given to Producer-Director David Butler's method of starring the famous Mr. Kyser in a feature motion picture.

Writer Bill Conselman, who collaborated with David Butler on the original and with James Kern on the screenplay, also deserves considerable praise. Co-starred along with Kyser is Adolphe Menjou, and the featured cast includes May Robson, Lucille Ball, Dennis O'Keefe, and Edward Everett Horton.

Exhibitors should certainly welcome this box office bonanza from RKO to build business in the two or three dismal weeks preceding Christmas.

RKO's second release this week is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit, "SUED FOR LIBEL," which is just another filler, at a 72% average. Kent Taylor, Linda Hayes, Richard Lane, and Keye Luke are featured, so you can take these names for what they are worth.

Cliff Reid acted as associate producer and Les Goodwins directed.

MGM—3 NEW RELEASES

MGM comes through with a banner week with two good money pictures and one fair programmer. Leo's top release is the new Garbo comedy drama, "NINOTCHKA" (Don't pronounce it—see it—as Howard Dietz' ad campaign reads.)

"NINOTCHKA," which we only estimated at 110%, is actually averaging 123% all over the country. This evidently proves that Garbo is okay at the box office if she has the right vehicle. Her last release, which was almost two years ago, was a French costume picture of the Napoleon era, "Conquest," and only averaged 86% in the U.S.A., which was too bad for most exhibitors who pay such a high rental or a percentage for Garbo's pictures.

Seen opposite Miss Garbo is Melvyn Douglas, with Ina Claire, Bela Lugosi, and Sig Rumann featured. Ernst Lubitsch, who is now producing his last picture for MGM ("The Shop Around The Corner") acted as producer-director on "NINOTCHKA," and he deserves considerable credit for bringing the humorous

Of Seven New Releases in the Past Week, Two Rated Over 100%; Two Came Thru Okay; and Three Were Very Weak.

side of la Garbo to the American audiences. MGM's second release this week, "THE SECRET OF DR. KILDARE," is the third of this popular series which is produced by the Joe Cohn unit. Incidentally, next to the Judge Hardy series, the Kildare pictures are the most popular with the exhibitors and public alike, of the many different series now being turned out by the various Hollywood studios.

"THE SECRET OF DR. KILDARE" is doing a little better than the last of this series, averaging 92%. As usual, Lew Ayres and Lionel Barrymore are co-starred, and Lionel Atwill, Helen Gilbert, Laraine Day, and Nat Pendleton are featured. Exhibitors who have been running this popular MGM series know best where to spot this one. The Kildare pictures are not exactly "A" product, but are much stronger than the average "B" picture. Harold Bucquet, who directed the former pictures in this series also handled this one.

MGM's third and last release this week, "BAD LITTLE ANGEL," 73%, is a very fine programmer that isn't getting any place because of the weak cast. However, it will make a pleasing filler, and word-of-mouth on this one won't hurt your theatre a bit. It is especially ideally suited for the "nabes" catering to family trade, and should definitely be booked on a Fri-Sat run, as it will delight the kiddies.

The cast includes Virginia Weidler, Guy Kibbee, Ian Hunter, Henry Hull, and Reginald Owen. Albert Levoy produced for the Joe Cohn unit and Bill Thiele directed.

WARNERS—I RELEASE

Warner Brothers-First National's only new release this week, "WE ARE NOT ALONE," is very disappointing at a 92% average, almost 30% below what we had anticipated. We were of the opinion that if Paul Muni could run around 135% with "Emile Zola," "Louis Pasteur," that "WE ARE NOT ALONE" would not run very far behind. We were evidently wrong as practically all the figures on this picture have been very poor. This may be due to one of two reasons. One that

the public prefers Muni as a straight character actor instead of a leading man; or two, that the public in these times of depression doesn't especially care for pictures with an unhappy ending. Yet we do have to consider the big business that "Dark Victory" played to. Some years ago Producer Richard A. Rowland of the old Metro regime said, "Every time we make a picture with an unhappy ending we are certain to lose between one hundred and one hundred and fifty thousand dollars," and such is "WE ARE NOT ALONE" when in the finale Paul Muni and Jane Bryan are doomed to death.

The fact that this popular James Hilton novel has an English background, the action taking place almost entirely in London and its suburbs, probably won't enhance its box office possibilities in the U.S.A.

Flora Robson, who has been seen in several English pictures, appears as Muni's wife in an exceptionally fine characterization, while the feminine lead is that up and coming Warner star, little Jane Bryan, of "Brother Rat" fame. Ray Severin, Una O'Connor and Montagu Love are featured.

Exhibitors should book a much lighter picture with "WE ARE NOT ALONE," preferably a musical or a feature comedy.

UNIVERSAL—ALSO 1 RELEASE

Universal's only new release this week is just a fair programmer entitled "LAUGH IT OFF," 68%, and at best can be spotted in as a filler. The cast is made up of competent featured players but with no particular marquee strength; they include Johnny Downs, Constance Moore, Edgar Kennedy, Marjorie Rambeau, and the popular columnist and actress, Hedda Hopper. Al Rogell acted as producer-director.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Due to the fact that 90% of our circulation is in the United States we have made it a strict policy, more or less, to quote only figures received from American exhibitors.

However, there is a new picture that has been released in Canada in the past ten days by United Artists that we thought might be of interest. This picture is Alexander Korda's war propaganda picture, "THE LION HAS WINGS," which has just been completed in England, and deals with the duties and operations of the R.A.F.

Following successful runs in Britain this picture has opened up very strongly in Canada averaging over 170%.

When Mr. Korda recently arrived in Los Angeles to visit his wife, Merle Oberon, who is now making a picture for Warner Brothers, he brought a print of "THE LION HAS WINGS" and exhibited it for a number of very enthusiastic Hollywood

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7 New Releases Not In Last Issue

		%	We Est.
1. That's Right, You're Wrong	RKO	126	100
2. Ninotchka	MGM	123	110
3. We Are Not Alone	WAR	92	120
4. Secret of Dr. Kildare	MGM	92	90
5. Bad Little Angel	MGM	73	75
6. Sued For Libel	RKO	72	75
7. Laugh It Off	UNIV	68	70

'Gone With the Wind' Gloriously Lives Up To Wildest Expectations; Will Be B. O. History

Now it can be told! After the years of anxious waiting, the cymbals can sound, and the multitude can hear from the rooftops that David Selznick's screen "Gone With The Wind" is all that they could have hoped for, and probably many, many times more than they could have imagined.

Adjectives clamor to be heard, but probably the best way to sum up the living version of Margaret Mitchell's novel which Director Victor Fleming has brought to the screen is the simple statement: "No matter what readers and lovers of the book may have expected, they will find sincerely and clearly: no matter what vivid paintings their own imaginations may have conceived as they read the book, they will find the broad panorama of the screen production surpassing them."

It was a stupendous undertaking. The picture now runs three hours and forty-five minutes, yet so closely does the picture's fascination parallel the absorbing qualities of the lengthy novel, that it seems some form of literary sacrilege to even think of any point at which it could be cut.

Three hours and forty-five minutes of running time, even with an intermission, is a heavy burden for any screen entertainment to carry. It almost calls for some form of education for present day picture-goers. But so well have Selznick, Fleming, Scriptor Sidney Howard, and the players, one and all, performed their chores that the tale moves on with a majestic strength holding the interest taut until the final frame of celluloid.

It is difficult to distribute the orchids. Victor Fleming's direction is so sure-handed that it is unobtrusive—these people seem to be living before your eyes. The late Sidney Howard's script is something of a miracle. Until your reviewer saw the picture, he would have deemed it impossible to adhere so closely to the action and the spirit of the novel, while gently winnowing minor elements that will never be missed. He would have thought it impossible also, to tell such a story without the feeling of "episodic" development. Yet here it is, moving with the smooth steadiness of a story created originally for the screen. And the players?

That is when the reviewer must go to town. Clark Gable would appear to have been created and prepping all these years for the role of Rhett Butler. Vivien Leigh, the question mark in all the long months of discussion before the

part of Scarlett O'Hara was cast, is Scarlett, none other. Olivia De Havilland displays a depth of quality in the story's most important sympathetic role that results in a performance challenging the stars.

It is that sort of a cast. They are the people of the book. Leslie Howard is Ashley, just as you would visualize Ashley; Thomas Mitchell a shamrock-inspired Gerald O'Hara; Hattie McDaniel a scene-stealing Mammy. Others seen to advantage in an extraordinarily big cast include Barbara O'Neil, Victor Jory, Carroll Nye, Laura Hope Crews, Harry Davenport, Ann Rutherford, Evelyn Keyes, Butterfly McQueen, and Jane Darrow, though it must be recorded that so careful has been the casting that even the smallest of bits are in the hands of trouper-ers who make the parts actualities.

The entire production is on a scale of eye-catching magnificence. The old South is re-created in all its glories, and in all its tragedy following the "march to the sea" with such fidelity and at the same time broadness of scope as to baffle description. Depicted in Technicolor at its best, the picture leaves a viewer fresh from the theater a bit breathless in his search for words.

The veteran Ray Rennahan, and the up-and-coming Wilfred Cline, share credit for the Technicolor triumph.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: It's a SHOW MAN'S proposition, to be handled, because of its length, with all the care and preparation worthy of one of those "once in a lifetime" SHOWS. Reviewed December 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "There are no words which can truly portray something which is at one and the same time an overwhelming emotional experience, the peak milestone in motion picture achievement, an unforgettable picturization of a gracious way of living—the most gracious America ever has known—which is gone and the desolating tragedy of its violent passing, and the living incarnation of a group of human beings who

"GONE WITH THE WIND"
Selznick International-MGM
(The Digest Estimates 250%)

ProducerDavid O. Selznick
DirectorVictor Fleming
ScreenplaySidney Howard
NovelMargaret Mitchell
Stars: Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable.

Featured: Leslie Howard, Olivia DeHavilland, Hattie McDaniel, Thomas Mitchell, Barbara O'Neil, George Reeves, Fred Crane, Everett Brown, Zack Williams, Oscar Polk, Victor Jory, Evelyn Keyes, Ann Rutherford, Butterfly McQueen, Howard Hickman, Harry Davenport, Alicia Rhett, Rand Brooks, Carroll Nye, Marcella Martin, Laura Hope Crews, Leona Roberts, Jane Darwell, Albert Morin, Mary Anderson, Terry Shero, William McClain, Eddie Anderson, Jackie Moran, Cliff Edwards, Ona Munson, Ed Chandler, George Hack-

thorne, Roscoe Ates, John Arledge, Eric Linden, Tom Tyler, William Bakewell, Lee Phelps, Paul Hurst, Ernest Whitman, William Sterling, Louis Jean Heydt, Isabel Jewell, Robert Elliott, George Meeker, Wallis Clark, Irving Bacon, Adrian Morris, J. M. Kerrigan, Olin Howland, Yakima Canutt, Blue Washington, Ward Bond, Cammie King, Mickey Kuhn, Lillian Kemble Cooper.

PhotographerErnest Haller
Technicolor Associates: Ray Rennahan, Wilfrid M. Cline.
Special Photographic Effects: Jack Cosgrove.

Fire EffectsLeo Zavitz
Musical ScoreMax Steiner
AssociateLou Forbes
Production designed by William Cameron Menzies.

Art Director: William Cameron Menzies.

Film EditorHal C. Kern
Time: 3 hrs. and 40 minutes

Radio's 'Mexican Spitfire' Wild and Wooly Slapstick Fare

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

ProducerCliff Reid
DirectorLeslie Goodwins
Screenplay Joseph A. Fields, Chas. E. Roberts.

StoryJoseph A. Fields
StarLupe Velez

Featured: Leon Errol, Donald Woods, Linda Hayes, Elizabeth Risdon, Cecil Kellaway, Charles Coleman.

PhotographerJack MacKenzie
Film Editor: Desmond Marquette
Time67 minutes

Leon Errol, grand old star of the glorious Ziegfeld days of the New York stage, who has yet to be really discovered by Hollywood, steps into a B-plus attraction, built on sandy slapstick soil, and goes to town.

"Mexican Spitfire" is slapstick and screwiness on a high wide

have become the intimates of millions through the pages of Margaret Mitchell's book."

VARIETY: "In some ways the most herculean film task every undertaken, 'Gone With The Wind' appears finally as one of the screen's major achievements, meriting highest respect and plaudits, and poised for grosses which may be second to none in the history of the business."

and handsome scale. It goes a little too far overboard to be considered really good; it goes far enough to give a whale's size of satisfaction in many houses.

If you have something heavy on the other end of the bill, you can do no worse than grab this one. There is nothing heavier nor more logical than a custard pie about it. In fact, it even has the custard pies.

Errol starts out in the picture as the individual tycoon of a family which has objected to Donald Woods marriage to Lupe Velez, and who is really in sympathy with her. Before the picture is over he is also playing the part of an eccentric English Lord, whose business deal seems tremendously important to the plot. Lupe is herself—right up to the hilt. Woods adequate in the juvenile role.

Acting, in relation to plot, ends at about the above statement when all concerned go berserk on a round of crazy farce situations, rough, ready, and rowdy, and ending in the pastry barrage. It never aims above the average of picture audiences as estimated by the statistician, and it does not at

• Continued on Page 10

'Hunchback of Notre Dame' Spectacular In Size; Magnificent in Playing and Direction

Powerful in dramatic intensity, sweeping in size, "The Hunchback" is easily one of the best pictures of this or any year. The solid box office value of its star, Charles Laughton, the money attraction is the immortal classic, and the glorious memories of the silent day version, present a combination that should also make it one of the biggest of money makers, in this or any year.

With the directorial reins in William Dieterle's hands, RKO-Radio has played fair with the customer, both exhibitor and patron, and comes through with an achievement that will be a bright mark on the studio's calendar.

Despite its heavy theme, we believe that "The Hunchback" transcends any minor worries about the present market on horror subjects. "The Hunchback" is Victor Hugo, it is a title clinging in memories that date back to school days, it is in a class by itself in potential draw.

Dieterle, ably assisted by the Sonja Levien script, has turned in one of those jobs that is a craftsman's delight. The script knits the interminably lengthy novel together in a fashion that delivers all of the Hugo classic that any dramatization could, the direction paces it to consistently forward movement, to a steady building towards the climax, with powerful stop-overs for build-up sequences.

Cast has been selected with rare discretion. There is little need to wonder what Charles Laughton would do with a meaty character like "The Hunchback." He is dominating. But the story also requires a girl lead who will wring the pity ducts to achieve its best, and in Maureen O'Hara the girl was found. She measures up to all requirements.

Of the support, Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Thomas Mitchell get the standout spots, with Edmund O'Brien as the poet lover of Maureen, also in an important situation. All three rate tops. Hardwicke in particular, for his skilful ability to maintain the heaviest of menaces, together with a sneakiest of feelings that the son-of-a-gun may be human somewhere under that shell.

Harry Davenport has one of the fattest parts as King Louis XI, and it comes through a richly human kingly role.

Walter Hampden's portrayal of the Archbishop is the sum total of that stage star's acknowledged pre-eminence as an actor. The part of Phoebus has been subordinated in comparison with the silent version, but Alan Marshall

RKO
(The Digest Estimates 160%)

Producer **Pandro S. Berman**
 Director **William Dieterle**
 Adaptation **Bruno Frank**
 Screenplay **Sonja Levien**
 Star **Charles Laughton**
 Featured: **Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Thomas Mitchell, Maureen O'Hara, Edmund O'Brien, Alan Marshal, Walter Hampden, Harry Davenport, Katharine Alexander, George Zucco, Fritz Leiber, Etienne Girardot, Helene Whitney, Minna Gombell, Arthur Hohl, Rod LaRocque, Spencer Charters.**
 Photographer **Joseph A. August**
 Special Effects.....**Vernon L. Walker**
 Art Director **Van Nest Polglase**
 Music **Alfred Newman**
 Film Editor: **William Hamilton, Robert Wise.**
 Time **114 minutes**

manages to make it so likeable that an audience would have welcomed more of him. Minna Gombell gives the fire of real trouping to the role of consort to the King of the Beggars, Mitchell.

And the summation must be: A deep bow to Dieterle for his creation, another bow to Radio for the generous courage they put into the production on such a spectacular scale.

"The Hunchback" is the final picture on Pan Berman's current Radio deal, and he can bow from the seat of the mighty with full realization of bowing out in glory.

Not the least of the strong values of the picture is the musical score by Alfred Newman, which sets a real high mark in graphic blending of music to the picture.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Should be a clean-up. The horror angle must be considered in setting your days. Previewed December 14.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The sheer immensity of this production of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and the majestic manner in which it has been handled mark it as a motion picture of distinction. There never have been greater sets nor larger crowds, nor have

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CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Gone With The Wind	MGM.....250
2. Gulliver's Travels	PAR.....175
3. Hunchback of Notre Dame	RKO.....160
4. Judge Hardy and Son	MGM.....140
5. Everything Happens at Night	FOX.....125
6. Balalaika	MGM.....110
7. Barricade	FOX.....90
8. Mexican Spitfire	RKO.....75
9. Married and in Love	RKO.....70

20th-Fox 'Barricade' Okay As Action Melodrama

20th CENTURY-FOX
(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer **Edward Kaufman**
 Director **Gregory Ratoff**
 Story and Screenplay: **Granville Walker.**
 Stars: **Alice Faye, Warner Baxter**
 Featured: **Charles Winninger, Arthur Treacher, Keye Luke, Willie Fung, Doris Lloyd, Eily Malyon, Joan Carol, Leonid Snegoff, Jonathan Hale, Philip Ahn, Moroni Olsen, Harry Hayden.**
 Photographer **Karl Freund**
 Film Editor..... **Jack Dennis**
 Time **70 minutes**

"Barricade" illustrates as well as any picture could, the truism that "the less the average reviewer knows about the making of a picture, the more intelligent his review."

"Barricade" has been a long time emerging from the Twentieth Century stages to the cutting rooms and then from the shelf. The reviewers knew it: it colored everything they said.

But stripped of the importance of the Twentieth Century trademark, and disregarding the expectations that might be aroused by the presence of Alice Faye and a top-hole cast, the same picture would be receiving run-of-the-mill average reviews as a satisfactory action subject.

Maybe that fellow Zanuck has set himself too high a standard.

Don't mistake us, "Barricade" is not "cream of the bottle" motion picture production. But it is, at least as reconstructed for release, rattling good action stuff, with a picturesque background, a cast of troupers, and many a spot where it will give exceptional satisfaction. And, aside from all else, we would like to know who can put Alice Faye, Warner Baxter, and Charles Winninger in a picture and not satisfy audiences.

It is a Richard Hardin Davis yarn, this time transplanted to China. Winninger is the American Consul, whose job has been so soft for years he has almost forgotten what it is, but who has never forgotten the American flag; Warner Baxter is the war correspondent; Alice Faye, the girl in trouble.

The theme of the picture is the one hundred per cent faith in that American flag, magnified by the perilous position of these citizens when the guns begin to pop. And pop they do, before the picture is over and achieves a smash climax.

The accent is on action and movement, the performances keyed to that aim.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Will be a sleeper for some wise exhibitors with action audiences because of the general atmosphere surrounding its delayed release. Previewed December 8th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "After some 16 months of sporadic production, patching and cutting, this picture, which has had almost as many titles as it has had periods of re-takes, has finally reached the screen in about the shape one would expect of a picture which had been produced, patched and cut over a period of 16 months. In spite of all this, due to three sterling performances by Warner Baxter, Charles Winninger and Alice Faye, a plentitude of action and considerable suspense, it is not uninteresting, though it leaves one dissatisfied."

VARIETY. "Inconsequential programmer, despite its several important names, which is by no means up to par for those connected with its production. What it picks up at the b.o., will be pure salvage."

'Gulliver's Travels' Good Food For Box Office

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 175%)

ProducerMax Fleischer
DirectorDave Fleischer
Story Adaptation: Edmond Seward.

Screenplay by Dan Gordon, Cal Howard, Ted Pierce, Izzy Sparer, Edmond Seward.

Music and Lyrics: Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin.

Song, "It's a Hap-Hap-Happy Day" by Sam Timberg, Al Neiburg, Winston Sharples.

Singing Voice of Princess Glory: Jessica Dragonette.

Singing Voice of Prince David: Lanny Ross.

Atmospheric Music Composed and Conducted by Victor Young.

PhotographerCharles Schettler

Songs by Rainger and Robin: "Faithful," "Forever," "Faithful Forever," "I Hear a Dream," "All's Well," "We're All Together Now," "Bluebirds in the Moonlight."

"Gulliver's Travels" will be a welcome Christmas package to both audiences and exhibitors, with its monetary benefits carrying on well into next year as its travels to subsequent runs. The second adventure of the animated cartoon into the feature field can

safely be reported as highly successful.

With the sensational novelty that marked "Snow White's" daring debut in that field cannot be recaptured, it must be remembered that many months have passed since that time, and the ticket buyers who flocked to that hit should have sharpened appetites. Besides, "Gulliver's Travels" has a sufficiency of good points of its own to stand squarely on its own two feet.

Comparisons are usually bad critical taste, but if we are to satisfy our exhibitor desires we know they must be made in this case. Magnificent in its technical achievements, with many delightful high moments, "Gulliver's Travels" is not quite on "Snow White's" plane as showmanship.

Chiefly is this evident in the failure to punch home any particular song numbers with the country "Snow White" conscious with such hits as "Whistle While You Work."

But enough of the comparisons. "Gulliver" has its own virtues. The handling of the fantastic perspective between the towering

Gulliver, and the myriads of Lilliputians is a technical and audient astounding feat that leaves one gasping. There are too many moments in which this contrast is highly effective to tell them all here, but the highlight is the monster engineering achievement of the Lilliputians when they hogtie the sleeping Gulliver and make him their prisoner. This sequence was a daring imaginative attempt on the part of the producers, their execution of it defies any order powers of description to retell. You must see it for yourself.

There is also a central comic character who will be taken to the hearts of America's youngsters, as was Dopey, and this time he is Gabby. No imitation. But a sly little Puck with his own distinctive appeal. There is a sub-comic, Snitch, whose screen life deserves to be prolonged. There is Twinkletoes, a carrier pigeon of whom we could have seen more.

Song numbers are plentiful and of good quality. Our mention of the lack of musical sock concerned presentation, rather than the numbers. The voices of Lanny

Ross and Jessica Dragonette guarantee the quality of the renditions.

Producer Max Fleischer and Director Dave Fleischer, together with a veritable army of assistants, can rest on the rewards of a gigantic task bravely attempt and competently accomplished.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Will stand up for all the pressure you give it if you choose your spots. Previewed December 15.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

VARIETY: "Offers delightful, novel entertainment for adult and youngster and presents technical marvels to establish the cartoon feature as an endless source of entertainment. . . . Should fare exceedingly well. . . . Grosses in various situations will depend greatly on individual showmanship."

REPORTER: "Another glorious adventure in the realms of enchantment. . . . Any lingering doubt as to whether the feature length cartoon can and should become a permanent part of film-dom's repertoire is happily and completely dispelled."

'Balalaika' Appeals to Lovers of Class Music

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

ProducerLarry Weingarten
DirectorReinhold Schunzel
Screenplay: Leon Gordon, Jacques Deval, Charles Bennett.

Book and Lyrics.....Eric Maschwitz
Stars: Nelson Eddy, Ilona Massey

Featured: Charles Ruggles, Frank Morgan, Lionel Atwill, C. Aubrey Smith, Joyce Compton, Dalies Frantz, Walter Woolf King, Phillip Terry, Abner Biberman, Arthur W. Gernitz, Roland Varno, George Tobias, Paul Sutton, Willy Costello, Paul Irving, Mildred Shay, Alma Kruger, Zeffie Tilbury.

Photographers: Joseph Ruttenberg, Kraul Freund.

Music: George Posford, Bernard Gruen.

Musical Adaptation and Score: Herbert Stothart.

Conducted by.....Dr. William Axt
Additional Lyrics: Gus Kahn, Bob Wright, Chet Forrest.

Film Editor.....George Boemler
Time102 minutes

On the credit side of the ledger "Balalaika" can record some of the best musical moments of the year, the emergence of director Reinhold Schunzel as a masterful interpreter of music, and the blossoming of Ilona Massey as a star with whom to reckon.

On the debit side, list the fact

that "Balalaika's" chief appeal will be to what we used to call "the carriage trade," that its Russian theme is unfortunately out of key with the times, that it will have to fight for what it gets at the box office if the rating of 83% earned by his last picture, "Let Freedom Ring" is any criterion.

So it sums up as a worthy effort of picture production, with its destination in current hotly competitive weeks a trifle hazy.

The story is real screen operetta, with the virtues and the faults of such a form. Laid back in the days of the Czars, it concerns the not unfamiliar pattern of the girl of lowly birth, a singer, and the masquerading noble who wins her love, followed by the inevitable clash. Eddy is the noble commander of Cossacks, Miss Massey is the cafe singer who eventually reaches opera.

Theme is the effort of the masses to overthrow the Czaristic regime. (This is the unfortunate part, because there are cash customers of the movies who will forget the fact that it is operetta, that its time is before 1914, and will gather a misty impression that they are being asked to cheer for the Communists.)

Eddy is in fine voice for the picture, and plays with ease in his role. This Ilona Massey seems a definite bet. She grows on the reviewer as the picture progresses. Possessed of a superb voice, appealing beauty, she measures neatly to her dramatic moments also.

Charlie Ruggles and Frank Morgan gather in the lighter moments of the picture with neat effectiveness, with Lionel Atwill and Joyce Compton also seen to advantage.

Director Schunzel comes off with the evening's main awards, however. He has an appreciation for pictorial beauty, the ability to keep his subject moving forward smoothly and with some semblance of pace, and studs the picture with frequent highlight scenes that will be remembered. Mr. Schunzel has given Leo a new star in Ilona Massey, and he has given a more smoothly working actor in Nelson Eddy.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Music lovers will like it, but strictly a class subject. Previewed December 13th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Balalaika" is absolutely the tops of any picture

this industry has ever had containing the ingredients which MGM has worked into the creation of this show. It has everything for fine entertainment."

VARIETY: "Balalaika" offers an opulent musical drama laid against the period when old Tsarist Russia was on the brink of change to its Soviet complexion. Coming after a lull in filmicals, it should be well received here among the more discriminating audiences as a melodic treat."

KAY KYSER RINGS THE BELL

(Continued from Page 5)

personages. But due to the fact that it is a propaganda picture, it is possible this picture will not be exhibited in the United States. If it should meet with the approval of this government it would probably be sold in the United States by your local United Artists exchanges, although up to publication time they have received no definite word.

The point here is that since American exhibitors cleaned up on MGM's "Thunder Afloat" and Columbia's "U-Boat 29," there may be money awaiting "THE LION HAS WINGS," provided the propaganda does not run counter to America's intention to avoid war hysteria.



JEAN HERSHOLT

STARRING IN SCREEN AND RADIO VERSIONS

OF

"DR. CHRISTIAN"

'Judge Hardy and Son' Maintains Standard of Series

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 140%)

DirectorGeorge B. Seitz
Original story and screenplay:
Carey Wilson.

Based on the characters created by
Aurania Rouverol.

Featured: Mickey Rooney, Lewis
Stone, Cecelia Parker, Fay Hol-
den, Ann Rutherford, Sara Ha-
den, June Preisser, Maria Ous-
penskaya, Henry Hull, Martha
O'Driscoll, Leona Maricle, Mar-
garet Early, George Breakston,
Egon Brecher, Edna Holland,
Marie Blake.

PhotographerLes White

Musical Score.....David Snell

Art Director.....Cedric Gibbons

Film Editor.....Ben Lewis

Time87 minutes

Back in the directorial hands of
George Seitz, the Judge Hardy
chronicle regains its elemental

humanness, and comes through
with one of the most satisfying
episodes of the series in "Judge
Hardy's Son."

Mickey Rooney again dominates
and carries the picture steadily on
his youthful shoulders, scene by
scene, while the background gives
a sufficiency of homely family at-
mosphere and small town doings
to round out the show.

It is perhaps too late a date to
cavil much at the quality of stor-
ies provided for the family. They
have all been the slimmest of plot
structures on which to hang the
intimacies, they have frequently
been a bit on the high school side
in quality as well as atmosphere.

The present story is again "just
a peg." It starts out by promising
too much in the way of plot when
Judge Hardy becomes interested
in the plight of a poor old couple
whose daughter has apparently

forgotten them. This gives Andy
the opportunity to become an
amateur sleuth in his search for
the daughter. For no particular
reason, except possibly to sell the
theme of mother love, Mrs. Hardy
goes through a critical siege of
pneumonia. All ends happily in
a haphazard sort of round-up of
the plot elements, but who cares?
If they bought tickets to see Mick-
ey and the home life of the Har-
dys they will see plenty, and they
will be happy.

Running parallel with the plot
is Mickey's effort to win a high
school essay contest to recoup
rather shattered finances. His
sleuthing efforts also bring him
into contact with a charming
group of young girls, refreshing
to any audience eye and ear. In
addition to chic Ann Rutherford,
there is a cute package of giggles,
June Preisser, Margaret Early

with a broad Southern "you-all"
accent, and a promising young-
ster, Martha O'Driscoll.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion:
Rates with the best in the Hardy
series for general satisfaction; you
know the rest. Previewed Decem-
ber 12th.

**WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS
SAID:**

REPORTER: "MGM continues
its consistent quality entertain-
ment in this latest of the issue of
the trials and tribulations of the
Hardy Family. 'Judge Hardy and
Son' maintains the decided lead
over the other family series which
was set by the initial picture."

VARIETY: "As strong in enter-
tainment values as any of its pre-
decessors, 'Judge Hardy and Son'
offers a decided change of mood
and an emotional pitch which to
many of the series' steady custom-
ers will probably rank it tops."

'Everything Happens at Night' Sparkling Fun

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

ProducerDarryl Zanuck
Asso. Producer Harry Joe Brown
DirectorIrving Cummings
Original Screenplay: Art Arthur,
Robert Harari.

StarSonja Henie

Featured: Ray Milland, Robert
Cummings, Alan Dinehart, Leo-
nid Kinsky, Maurice Mosco-
vitch, Fritz Feld, Jody Gilbert,
Victor Vareoni, William Ed-
munds, George Davis, Paul
Porcasi, Michael Visaroff.

Time77 minutes

In many ways, the most enjoy-
able Sonja Henie picture to date.
And this despite the fact that
Sonja presents only one big skat-
ing number in the course of the
evening's entertainment.

So we must explain.

"Everything Happens At Night"
presents a corking story. In the
hands of Director Irving Cum-
mings it is a comedy that could
happily stand on its own regard-
less of the presence of the fam-
ous skating nymph. Secondly, the
same combination of story and
direction results in the presenta-
tion of a new Sonja Henie. This
time it is Sonja the comedienne,
and a right smart one, who can
incidentally do a bit of dazzling
skating for you now and then.

Yes, all in all a delightful eve-
ning. Without any advance trump-
eting of their aims, Darryl Zan-
uck and his associate producer,
Harry Joe Brown, have written
a new chapter advancing the ca-

reer of the petite Scandinavian.
They have done it with the skill
of veteran showmen.

The story, which gives equal
opportunity with the star for fine
performances by the dependable
Ray Milland and the up and
coming Robert Cummings, con-
cerns the rivalries and the con-
niving of two newspaper men
who have been sent to a Nor-
wegian village to ferret out the
secret hiding place of a scientist
who has won the Noble Prize but
is now in fear of his life from
terrorists.

The boys lose some of their
interest in the rivalry and the
search when Sonja appears on
the scene, and they change their
aims from business to romance.

Clever scripting, neatly paced by
Cummings, and delightfully
played by the principals keeps
the complications and the laughs
piling pretty rapidly on one an-
other before the thrills of an ac-
tion finish.

The one spectacular skating
number, probably all the more
effective because it has hungrily
awaited, makes impressive use of
the "Blue Danube" waltz. It is
a brilliantly impressive number,
yet does not interrupt the crisp
pace of the story.

Support is excellent, with such
dependables as Alan Dinehart,
Leonid Kinsky, and Fritz Feld
getting the standout spots.

The picture has a refreshing
and richly enjoyable background.

technical achievements are on a
high plane.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion:
Will rank as one of the best Son-
ja Henies. We can't tell you any
more.

**WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS
SAID:**

REPORTER: "Mild entertain-
ment and will need strong sup-
port. Miss Henie's prowess as a
skater has been sacrificed in an
effort to transform her into a
dramatic actress."

VARIETY: "Running light on
story, and holding Sonja Henie's
skating to a minimum, it must
depend upon the splendid portray-
als turned in by its principals and
supporting players as its main
bid for b.o. coin."

'Mexican Spitfire' Wild and Wooly

• Continued from Page 6

tempt any camouflage about its
aim.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion:
Wise bookers know this kind.
There are spots where it will be
a family riot; there are many
where it will send them away
saving "such silly rot." Previewed
December 6th.

**WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS
SAID:**

REPORTER: "It's rowdy farce
of the broadest and most unsubtle
variety, and it winds up with a
good old-fashioned, pie-throwing

climax, a big-scale affair dressed
in evening clothes. It doesn't pre-
tend to be refined or polished. It's
just funny, with the belly laughs
so frequent and prolonged that
many a line was lost. The preview
audience ate it up."

VARIETY: "Totally lacking in
rhyme or reason, 'Mexican Spit-
fire' is as screwbally as they come,
and, as such, had its preview audi-
ence in stitches as soon as its
rather draggy beginning was out
of the way and it got down to its
elemental nonsense. . . . It's strict-
ly a programmer, but spotted in
its proper niche on duals it will
more than satisfy."

'Hunchback' Spectacular--- Magnificent

• Continued from Page 7

such been used more competently
and effectively. Entirely aside
from its story value, this is a
production, directorial and pho-
tographic masterpiece."

VARIETY: "A mighty horror
tale from the master pen of Vic-
tor Hugo—the greatest story of
frightfulness ever to be shuddered
over by folk all over the world—
is reared upon the screen in elo-
quent and shuddersome magnifi-
cence in this RKO production."

Wichita Exhibitors Tell Nichols Appreciation Of Digest's Aid in Frame Fair Practice Code



HARRY E. NICHOLS
Field Investigator

In its October 16th issue THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST published my contribution under the head "Nichols Finds Territory Where Epics Sell at Two for Fifteen Cents; Read and Weep."

The account concerned the Wichita, Kansas, territory and many things that were happening there.

I believe you will be interested in a most unusual occurrence—and one that is a credit to all concerned—which has come about since the publication of this article. To let you know the subsequent happenings just in the order that Digest has learned them, we first give you a letter received the other day from O. F. Sullivan, president of the Wichita Independent Theater Owners Association. The letter follows:

"Enclosed you will find a story regarding the results the Independents have secured in eliminating the unfair trade practice here in Wichita, and the breaking down of unreasonable protection.

"We feel that you, in a way, have helped us secure this because of the publicity BOX OFFICE DIGEST has given this cause in the past.

"I wish to express to you the sincere appreciation of our Independent Organization here in Wichita for the interest you have taken in our problem. Mr. McCollister, vice-president, also requested that I express his appreciation for your past favors when I send you this story.

"Yours very truly:

O. F. SULLIVAN, President,
Wichita Independent Theater
Owners Association.

Here's a Set-Up For Intelligent Cooperation:

We now give you the official statement of the new set-up in that populous Wichita territory as sent to us:

TO ALL MOTION PICTURE TRADE JOURNALS:

The exhibitors of Wichita, Kansas, recently proved that the spirit of cooperation between Operators of Theatres is not entirely dead. The Independent Exhibitors were called together, an organization perfected, two letters sent to all film companies and to their competitive circuit operators. Fox Theatres Corporation, requesting their cooperation in the establishment, in Wichita, of a Fair Trade Code and more liberal clearance and zoning schedule.

A joint meeting was called for November 28, between the Independents and Representatives of Fox Theatres Corp., and after a three hour conference a much more liberal clearance schedule was agreed to, as well as a Fair Trade Practice Code. These agreements were officially signed by all exhibitors in Wichita on December 5th, just three weeks from the date letters were mailed, by the independents, requesting a conference.

In the New Fair Trade Practice Code all exhibitors agree to eliminate all two for one admissions, one cent sales, script books of more than 10% discount, premiums, and all plans or schemes whatsoever that would in any way be an evasion of the actual adult admission price charged at the box-office.

The New Clearance and Zoning Schedule is much more liberal as 25c subsequent run theatres are now permitted to run product 60 days after the close of a first run 40c theatre, and a proportionately greater protection over theatres charging lesser admissions.

There was no ultimatum or threats resorted to, for as soon as Mr. Rhoden, of Fox Theatres Corp., realized that the Independent Exhibitors had for the first time in 15 years agreed unanimously to work together and abandon cut-throat practices he manifested a very agreeable attitude and approved a new clear-

ance that was satisfactory to all parties.

The New Clearance is to become effective on pictures completing first run on and after December 15th, and the Fair Trade Practice Code is to become effective December 24th.

Signed,

O. F. SULLIVAN, President
Wichita Independent Theatre
Owners' Association.

Folks CAN Get Together Around a Table

We hope no one overlooks the important part of this action in what many big shots may consider an unimportant territory.

The big point is: That it just required a 'get together around the table' to settle what might have become a boiling ulcer.

Of course, there must have been

lengthy discussions, there were probably even many loud arguments. But when showmen got around the table—circuit man and indie—they were all showmen.

The circuit man has to make money to hold his job; the independent has to make money to keep his family.

Here's hoping that the coming year will see more of these "round the table" discussions that will iron out a lot of the industry's problems before they reach the hands of the lawyers.

And here is a double hope that THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST will continue to help toward that end.

It's a big country—these United States—but in the cause of all concerned with this industry, THE DIGEST will keep plowing along. Because of our faith in those who make the industry.

'Married and in Love' Welcome 'B'

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)
Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus
Associate Producer.....Robert Sisk
DirectorJohn Farrow
Screenplay and Story S. K. Lauren
Stars: Alan Marshal and Barbara Read.
Featured: Patric Knowles, Helen Vinson, Hattie Noel, Frank Faylen, Carol Hughes.
PhotographerJ. Roy Hunt
Film Editor.....Harry Marker
Time60 minutes

Was it Shakespeare or Mark Hellinger who said, "The play's the thing?" And who was it who added; "And the telling of the play is pretty important, too!"

Well, whoever the professor is, he can have a case history in this picture. An unpretentious subject from the RKO B unit, it illustrates all points entering into the argument. S. K. Lauren, supplying both original story and screenplan, confined himself to the making of a play concerning human beings in human situations: John Farrow, director, TOLD the story.

It's a peach of a family picture for many bills. One of those intimate family things that John Stahl used to make when John first set himself on the directorial trail. Conceived and scripted with a knowledge of the "Mister and Missus" part of the picture audience; directed with skillful re-

straint that continues it as human as the people in the audience.

The story? So simple it can readily be recognized for family audience values. Alan Marshall, in college, is the fiance of Helen Vinson. But they both marry otherwise. Comes the problem in later years—Vinson wants her man back. She isn't satisfied with the one she got. Barbara Read is the wife with the problem of fighting to hold Marshall—HER man.

All was handled under the capable hand of Bob Sisk.

The cast is excellent in every spot, with Barbara Read probably taking the highlight for her work as the valiant wife of Marshall, and under Farrow's direction, reaching really top moments in her big scenes. This gal is coming along rapidly.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Safe and sane programmer that will find a welcome spot on many programmers.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Married and in Love,' John Farrow has handed over to RKO one of the most unusual pictures that company, or any other, has ever released."

VARIETY: "Pointing its main appeal at femme patronage, 'Married and in Love' reaches the screen as a really worthwhile programmer."

The Radio Reporter: KEEPS YOU POSTED ON ACTIVITIES OF PICTURE PERSONALITIES ON THE AIR WAVES

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations for each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard for that particular program.

KEN MURRAY

(Texaco)

Ken Murray, M.C.; featured, Frances Langford, Kenny Baker; guest stars, Walter Connolly, Margaret Anglin. Program of December 6th.

Rating: 95%.

This particular period ran along in average form and would rate the standard 100% except for the unfortunate choice of "The Bishop Misbehaves" for the half-hour playlet. Connolly and Miss Anglin were as fine as could be expected, but this drawing room subject—also a high school amateur favorite—is not exactly live 1939 ether material.

★ ★ ★

KAY KYSER

(Lucky Strike)

Program of December 6th.

Rating: 105%.

A consistently good audience program, with its air of spontaneity and intimate good fellowship, this particular chapter seemed to have been pepped up—maybe it was because of the sensational success Kyser has made in his screen debut. "The boy's got sumthin'."

★ ★ ★

GOOD NEWS

(Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.: featured, Lou Holtz, Fannie Brice, Walter Houston, Connie Boswell, Warren Hull and Meredith Wilson's music.

Rating: 95%.

Satisfactory, but falling below the line in the rating because practically all of the material fell into the "just fair" classification. . . . The troupers on this program are good enough to hold almost anything up, but they can't hit highs with average material.

BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, M.C., and star; featured, Bob Burns; guest players, Jackie Cooper and Madame Ouspenskaya; John Trotter's music. Program of December 7th.

Rating: 102%.

Jackie Cooper provided a peppy new ingredient, giving Crosby and Burns an opportunity to swing right into their best stride. Madame Ouspenskaya was a neat balance to the lighter moments of the program, even giving it something of a lift in her inspirational message to youngsters.

★ ★ ★

GEORGE JESSEL

(Vitalis)

George Jessel, M.C.; guests, Maxie Rosenloom and George S. Kaufman. Program of December 8th.

Rating: 100%.

Georgie got his chance to go to town with two such attractions so widely at extremes as Slapsie Maxie and the erudite G. S. K. All elements combined into one of the best shows of the series. Slapsie just talked and mispronounced, while Kaufman gave witty advice on playwriting.

★ ★ ★

KATE SMITH

(Grape-Nuts Products)

M.C., Ted Collins; star, Kate Smith; guests, Helen Mencken, Fordham coach, Jim Crowley. Program of December 8th.

Rating: 103%.

This was the occasion of the annual football awards to thirty-three All-American players, with Coach Crowley proving a capable commentator for the purpose. . . . Program could have stood up anyway, without this live timely interest, on the grand job turned in by Helen Mencken. . . . She is one of the few who can sell heavy feminine tragedy over the air and make it pathos and not bathos. . .

Kate really needs no comment, though her selection of numbers didn't give her the best of opportunities.

★ ★ ★

SILVER THEATER

(International Silver)

Conrad Nagle, M.C.; guest star, Clark Gable, with Mary Taylor in playlet by True Boardman. Program of December 10th.

Rating: 105%.

The value of creating originals for the airwaves was well illustrated in this program, since it was tailored for the talents of Clark Gable which the listeners expect, and neatly delivered with Mary Taylor. An enjoyable period.

★ ★ ★

GATEWAY TO HOLLYWOOD

(Wrigley)

Jesse Lasky, M.C.; guest star, Chester Morris. Program of December 10th.

Rating: 90%.

Just an average number in this series, with a rather hackneyed and obvious mystery court room drama for its theme.

★ ★ ★

SCREEN GUILD

(Gulf Oil Products)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; stars, Bing Crosby, Andy Devine, Jean Parker, Chick Chandler, Raymond Walburn. Program of December 10th.

Rating: 95%.

The players' personalities put over a rather naive attempt at "air-operetta," or call it just horse play, if you want. . . . All the players right in stride, and apparently very happy to be on the program. . . . All satisfying the listener on the whole, even if the lines provided did not have that socko quality.

★ ★ ★

CHASE AND SANBORN

Rudy Valle, M.C.; stars, Bergen and McCarthy, Dorothy Lamour; guests, Joan Blondell, Vera Vague, Lansing Hatfield.

Rating: 100%.

The Bergen-McCarthy routine from the hospital held this up to average and a healthy 100%, though it would have gone over the mark except for the poor vehicle given Joan Blondell. . . . Vera Vague came back to bring the program to the spirit that left it finishing on the 100% grade.

★ ★ ★

JACK BENNY

(Jello)

Jack Benny, M.C.; featuring Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris music. Program of December 10th.

Rating: 105%.

There is apparently no stopping Jack, Mary, et al., these days. The material continues top notch, the delivery and pacing of the entire show of the best. . . . The concluding chapter of "Murder on the Gridiron" justified expectations aroused by the opening chapter. A good show for anybody's money. Material and showmanlike delivery is doing it.

★ ★ ★

CECIL B. DeMILLE

(Lux Products)

Cecil B. DeMille, M.C.; guest stars Carole Lombard, Gary Grant, Kay Frances. Playlet: "In Name Only."

Rating: 96%.

As a picture, "In Name Only" was a "director's picture." . . . On the air it's nakedness was exposed. . . . Even the charm of a stellar galaxy of stars could not cover the wrinkles. . . . A new low for this usually consistent DeMille program. . . . Lengthy, pseudo-dramatic commercials do not help either. . . . They try to put as much acting in the commercials as they do in the play. . . . Both suffer.

★ ★ ★

BOB HOPE

(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C., featured, Judy Garland, Professor Calonna, Skinnay Ennis music. Program of December 12th.

Rating: 100%.

Ran along as smooth as a twelve cylinder car on a velvet highway. . . . Material on this program is consistently good, and Hope's infectious personality keeps it popping. . . . Miscues handled in a friendly family way that kept the intimacy without stressing the slips.

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No Cover - No Minimum

Field Investigator Ridge Finds Leo and The Lambs on Friendly Terms in the Southland



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Charlotte, N. C., Dec. 6.—Chivalry in business in the South, extended most graciously by its Cavaliers, even in this cockeyed business in which we find an existence, was in evidence at the exhibitors convention in Charlotte this week.

William F. Rodgers had just finished a fine talk to the fellows. It was well received, heartily applauded by every person present (200), and no Al Steffes interrogations were hurled at him or his policies. But when hand shaking time arrived after the session, this little colloquy was overheard, when "Mike" Kinsey came forward, fervently grabbed Mr. Rodgers hand and said to him: "A splendid speech, Will, but you have made one very very great mistake; you could have gotten 75% for "Gone With the Wind," as easily as 70%."

Others were there to shake Mr. Rodgers hand. Mr. Kinsey joined the crowd. There was no more discussion, at least publicly. But as one who marketed "Covered Wagon," "The Ten Commandments," and was out on a road show of "Four Horsemen," I can imagine just what is going to take place when Mr. Rodgers gets behind closed doors with "Bob" Wilby and Mike Kinsey and starts setting in play time for "The Wind" in their 150 houses.

Right now exhibitors all over the country are doing more figuring as to just how high their overhead really is, than any time since the days of "Ben Hur." 70% of the gross receipts, with a guarantee that the exhibitor will make no less than 10% profit of the gross receipts, if MGM and he can agree on his overhead, can

easily become a 50-50 deal, if MGM will accept a high enough figure on overhead.

Independents Would Like To Know Chain Deals

Some of the highly informed exhibitors of the independent variety, were asking the question, whether, when the big chains, producer-owner, play "The Wind" it will be reckoned on the Master Agreement, and the profits to both MGM and the Producer operated theatre, come under those terms when the Annual Settlement day arrives next May. If it is, then it matters little upon what terms it is played by the big boys, just so long as standards are set up that will bring the independent exhibitor in line, so that the maximum returns may be had for MGM.

Mr. Rodgers is a smart distributor, and his plan has not provoked the independent, rather, in this section, it seems to please him, in view of MGM's present plan of adjusting prices, if over-sold.

Another Exhibitor Makes Blue Ribbons Pay

Aiken, S. C., Dec. 8.—Here is another one of those Southern Paradises, where the scions of the Yankee Northerners bask in the sunny climes of the land that Sherman laid low three-quarters of a century ago, enjoy its milk and honey, and pay enormous prices for their entertainment. Like Pinehurst, there are hundreds of estates of the heirs of the Rogers; the Mellons; the Rockefeller; the Vanderbilts and so on down the line.

H. B. Ram, a former booker of Paramount in Buffalo, N. Y., saw this Showman's Eden; came here, kept the chains out, gives the idle rich that which they want in entertainment, admits them to

his theatre in pajamas, or bathing suits, any way their little hearts desire, and gets the "Dough."

"I'll show "Gone With the Wind" for \$3.00 a seat, if they will let me have it ahead of Augusta, Ga., which is 17 miles away," quoth the happy Mr. Ram.

It is not uncommon for Aiken, South Carolina to have a sell out performance at \$2.00 with no box office open after the show starts. Just advance sale.

What a spot for a showman, who likes to fish and hunt, live the life of Riley, and be the "Cinema Caterer," to those folks who inherited Old John D. and Andy W. money!

Exhib Says Producers Okay In Their Own Backyard

Charlotte, S. C., Dec. 9.—In one of the oldest cities of America, there lives an exhibitor, who does not want to see the producer decapitated at dawn. He wants to see him prosper, live long and make lots of money. In fact he wants him to have every wish gratified, that even his sixth cousin cherishes—SO LONG AS HE STAYS IN HIS OWN BACK YARD.

Albert Sotille is this exhibitor. He is a director of the Carolinas Exhibitors. He owns and operates personally the five houses in the shadow of Fort Sumter in Charleston. He has been here for 30 years. He has not gone even five feet outside this city to operate theatres. He has no opposition and wants none. He neither covets the other fellows domain. And it is to guard this precious privilege for others, that he is for the Neely Bill, or one that is similar.

"Those of us who have investments in this industry, should have some protection, through Government supervision. You cannot trust the over ambitious,

They sometimes forget their rights. They sometimes forget to stay in their own back yards. We need the Neely bill to keep them on their side of the fence. We just want to be left alone as exhibitors. We want the producers to make a lot of money. We want them to make us good pictures, but we do not want them to take away from us, the property we have accumulated, nor the business we have built up over so many years. That should go to our children, like the producers wealth should go to his. That is why I am for the Neely Bill. It may have some flaws in it. It may have to be amended, but on the whole, it can be made workable, so that the producer and distributor, in their own back yards, can make a lot of money, and we can be assured through government supervision of the industry, that the over ambitious will not come hopping over the line fence, into our ranch just because we have a good stand of clover for our stock."

Mr. Sotille Covers A Lot Of Territory

Mr. Sotille is one of those men who gets on quite well with all the exchanges. Of course Jack Dempsey does not have much trouble with bad boys in his place either. You see Mr. Sotille came to the City of the Calhouns thirty odd years ago. He started in a small way, built in the theatre business, as the industry went forward, always keeping one step ahead of other surrounding cities. He not only have five fine theatres, but he is fortified other ways. He owns the historic old Charleston Hotel. He has property to the right of you, property to the left of you, property all around you, as you look the city over. Just let any one come to this city by the sea and start something, they will soon feel the power of an unselfish man, but one who does not intend being pushed around by the avarice minded operator of chains, be they private or producer owned. Albert Sotille built Charleston Amusements and Albert Sotille and his children are going to enjoy the fruits of that pioneering.

**The Fastest Growing Paper
in the Industry**

The Box Office DIGEST

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

A. OVER \$500,000

Iesse James	182	FOX
Gunga Din	180	RKO
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	167	COL
The Bull's Game	165	FOX
Babes In Arms	159	MGM
Dodge City	158	WAR
The Women	158	MGM
Goodbye, Mr. Chips	156	MGM
The Wizard of Oz	156	MGM
Drums Along the Mohawk	153	FOX
Stanley and Livingstone	151	FOX
After The Thin Man	148	MGM
Union Pacific	145	PAR
Hollywood Cavalcade	145	FOX
Kentucky	138	FOX
Idiot's Delight	133	MGM
Three Smart Girls Grow Up	131	UNIV
First Love	131	UNIV
Four Feathers	130	UA
Destry Rides Again	128	UNIV
Beau Geste	126	PAR
Second Fiddle	128	FOX
Bachelor Mother	127	RKO
Stagecoach	126	UA
Interez of Washington Square	123	WAR
Stand Up and Fight	123	FOX
Man About Town	122	MGM
Man About Town	122	PAR
The Star Maker	122	PAR
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	121	UNIV
Each Dawn I Die	120	WAR
When Tomorrow Comes	120	UNIV
Love Affair	120	RKO
Only Angels Have Wings	119	COL
Little Princess	118	FOX
The Man in the Iron Mask	117	UA
Alexander's Weekly	117	FOX
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle	116	RKO
Elizabeth and Essex	115	WAR
The Roaring Twenties	113	WAR
The Real Glory	112	UA
Made For Each Other	112	UA
Confessions of a Nazi Spy	112	WAR
(Nazi Spy foreign average)	112	WAR
Housekeeper's Daughter	112	UA
Thunder About	112	MGM
(Foreign Release)	111	MGM
Midnight	111	PAR
Oklahoma Kid	110	WAR
East Side of Heaven	110	UNIV
Fifth Avenue Girl	108	RKO
Honolulu	107	MGM
Floppe Takes A Trip	106	UA
Rollers of the Sea	104	PAR
A Day at the Circus	103	MGM
Invitation To Happiness	102	PAR
Allegheny Uprising	102	RKO
Withering Heights	102	UA
Paris Honeymoon	102	PAR
In Name Only	102	RKO
Lady of the Tropics	100	MGM
Fairplay	99	FOX
Captain Fury	98	UA
Zaza	98	PAR
Man of Conquest	96	REP
Eternally Yours	95	UA
Young Mr. Lincoln	94	FOX
Wings of the Navy	94	WAR
Ice Follies of 1939	93	MGM
Tarzan Finds A Son	91	MGM
Intermezzo	87	UA
St. Louis Blues	87	PAR
Broadway Serenade	84	MGM
Let Freedom Ring	83	MGM
Susannah of the Mounties	83	FOX
Three Musketeers	81	FOX

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

The Old Maid	139	WAR
Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever	133	MGM
Pygmalion	131	MGM
The Hardys Ride High	130	MGM
Dark Victory	125	WAR
That's Right, You're Wrong	126	RKO
Daughters Courageous	112	WAR
Huckleberry Finn	111	MGM
The Beachcomber	110	PAR
Yes, My Darling Daughter	106	WAR
Daytime Wife	102	FOX
Golden Boy	102	COL
Tower of London	102	UNIV
Honeymoon In Bali	99	PAR
It's A Wonderful World	99	MGM
Jamaica Inn	98	PAR
The Cat and the Canary	98	PAR
Disputed Passage	98	PAR
Son of Frankenstein	98	UNIV
Lucky Night	98	MGM
Dust Be My Destiny	98	WAR
Maisie	97	MGM
Hotel For Women	97	FOX
Remember	97	MGM
Good Girls Go To Paris	95	COL
Round of the Bakervilles	92	FOX
They Made Me A Criminal	92	WAR
What A Life	92	PAR
Secret of Dr. Kildare	92	MGM
Fast and Furious	91	MGM
We Are Not Alone	91	RKO
The Flying Deuces	91	RKO
On Borrowed Time	90	MGM
Wife, Husband and Friend	90	FOX
Calling Dr. Kildare	90	MGM
Frontier Marshal	88	FOX
Nurse Edith Cavell	87	RKO
Blackmail	87	MGM
Nighty But Nice	86	WAR
Fast and Loose	85	MGM
Off The Record	85	WAR

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

U-Boat	29	COL
Hell's Kitchen	82	WAR
On Dress Parade	82	WAR
Angels Wash Their Faces	82	WAR
Blondie Meets the Boss	81	COL
Chicken Wagon Family	80	FOX
Pack Up Your Troubles	80	FOX
Devil's Island	78	WAR
Blondie Brings Up Baby	78	COL
Blackwell's Island	77	WAR
Pardon Our Nerve	77	FOX
Legion of Lost Elyers	77	UNIV
Man They Couldn't Hang	77	COL
Beware Storks	77	COL
Tropic Fury	76	UNIV
You Can't Get Away With Murder	76	WAR
Meet Dr. Christian	76	RKO
Flight at Midnight	75	REP
Inside Story	75	FOX
Pacific Liner	75	RKO
Charlie Chan in the City in Darkness	75	FOX
Chan in Treasure Island	74	FOX
One Hour To Live	74	UNIV
Boy Slaves	73	RKO
Disharred	73	PAR

EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.
The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

D.

BELOW \$100,000

Return of Dr. XWAR.....85
The Kid From KokomoWAR.....85
Five Game BackRKO.....85
Espionage AgentWAR.....84
Sergeant MaddenMGM.....84
Four Girls in WhiteMGM.....84
Return of the Cisco KidFOX.....82
These Glamour GirlsMGM.....81
Cafe SocietyPAR.....81
King of the UnderworldWAR.....81
Dancing Co-edMGM.....80
Arizona WildcatFOX.....80
The GorillaFOX.....80
The UnderpupUNIV.....80

Missing DaughtersCOL.....73
Blondie Takes VacationCOL.....73
Island of Lost MenPAR.....73
Television SpyPAR.....73
Those High Gray WallsCOL.....73
Bad Little AngelMGM.....72
The Day The Bookies WeptRKO.....72
Two Bright BoysUNIV.....72
The Witness VanishesUNIV.....72
The SpellbinderRKO.....72
It Could Happen To YouFOX.....72
King of ChinatownPAR.....72
Society LawyerMGM.....72
Persons in HidingPAR.....72
Society SmugglersUNIV.....72

Mr. Moto's Last WarningFOX.....72
Twelve Crowded HoursRKO.....72
Ex-ChampUNIV.....72
Call A MessengerUNIV.....72
Little AccidentUNIV.....72
Sued For LibelRKO.....72
Nancy Drew, ReporterWAR.....71
Pirates of the SkiesUNIV.....71
Sorority HouseRKO.....71
Nancy Drew, Trouble ShooterUNIV.....71
Mystery of the White RoomWAR.....71
The Girl and the GamblerRKO.....71
Quick MillionsFOX.....71
Blind AlleyCOL.....71
Million Dollar LegsPAR.....71
Charlie Chan in RenoFOX.....71
Hero For a DayUNIV.....71
Main Street LawyerREP.....71
Hawaiian NightsUNIV.....70
The EscapeFOX.....70
Nancy Drew and the Hidden StaircaseWAR.....70
Full ConfessionRKO.....70
Unexpected FatherUNIV.....70
Chasing DangerFOX.....70
Unmarried of the RedwoodsPAR.....70
Romance of the RedwoodsCOL.....70
Winner Take AllUNIV.....70
Big Town CzarUNIV.....70
On TrialWAR.....70
Torchy Blane in ChinatownWAR.....70
AmbushPAR.....70
They Made Her A SpyRKO.....70
Torchy For MayorWAR.....70
The Girl From MexicoRKO.....70
Within the LawMGM.....70
Grand Jury SecretsPAR.....70
Buffdog Drummond's BridePAR.....70
Cowboy QuarterbackWAR.....70
The Saint in LondonRKO.....70
Call A MessengerUNIV.....70

Some Like It HotPAR.....69
Bulldog Drummond's Secret PolicePAR.....69
Everybody's BabyFOX.....68
Stop, Look and LoveFOX.....68
Death of a ChampionPAR.....68
No Place To GoWAR.....68
News Is Made At NightFOX.....68
The Saint Strikes BackUNIV.....68
Undercover DoctorPAR.....68
Mr. Moto in Danger IslandFOX.....68
Adventures of Janc ArdenWAR.....68
Fixer DuganRKO.....68
For Love or MoneyUNIV.....68
Forgotten WomanUNIV.....68
Smashing the Money RingWAR.....68
Kid NightingaleWAR.....68
Three SonsRKO.....68
Lone Wolf Spy HuntCOL.....67
ConspiracyRKO.....67
Playing With DynamiteRKO.....67
Almost A GentlemanRKO.....66
A Woman Is A JudgeCOL.....66
Mr. Moto Takes A VacationFOX.....66
Code of the StreetsUNIV.....66
Beauty for the AskingRKO.....66
Sudden MoneyPAR.....66
They Asked For ItUNIV.....66
The Ware CaseGB.....66
Boy TroublePAR.....65
Burn 'Em Up O'ConnorMGM.....65
Secret Service of the AirWAR.....65
Tell No TalesMGM.....65
They All Come OutMGM.....64
Exile ExpressGN.....64
Sweepstakes WinnerWAR.....64
6,000 EnemiesMGM.....63
Night WorkMGM.....61
The Kid From TexasPAR.....60
Miracles For SaleMGM.....60

Inspector HornleighFOX.....54
This Man Is NewsPAR.....54
CareerRKO.....53

Whispering EnemiesCOL.....75
Homicide BureauCOL.....71
Mysterious Mr. WongMONO.....71
Woman DoctorREP.....71
North of ShanghaiCOL.....71
Heaven With a Barbed Wire FenceFOX.....71

She Married A CopREP.....70
Hidden PowerCOL.....70
The Sunset Murder CaseGN.....70
Pride of the NavyREP.....70
Tough KidMONO.....70
Mysterious Miss XREP.....70
Frappe in the SkyCOL.....70
Orphan in the StreetREP.....70
Five Little PeppersCOL.....70

I Am A CriminalMONO.....69
Fighting ThoroughbredsREP.....69
Gambling ShipUNIV.....69
Convict's CodeMONO.....69
SabotageREP.....68
Parents On TrialCOL.....68
Streets of New YorkMONO.....68
Inside InformationUNIV.....68
I Was A ConvictREP.....68
Navy SecretsMONO.....68
Federal Man HuntREP.....68
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Forged PassportMONO.....68
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Calling All MarinesREP.....68
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My Wife's RelativesREP.....67
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Wolf CallMONO.....66
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Wanted by Scotland YardMONO.....66
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The Girl From RioMONO.....62

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King of the TurfUA.....70
One Third of a NationPAR.....70
Clouds Over EuropeCOL.....70
Stronger Than DesireMGM.....70

Shipyard SallyFOX.....68

Our Leading CitizenPAR.....67
Stolen LifePAR.....57
Hotel ImperialPAR.....56
ZanobiaUA.....56

Gracie Allen Murder CasePAR.....64
Way Down SouthRKO.....64
Spirit of CulverUNIV.....63
The Flying IrishmanRKO.....63
Smiling AlongFOX.....63
Climbing HighGB.....63
Women in the WindWAR.....62

Return of Dr. XWAR.....85
The Kid From KokomoWAR.....85
Five Game BackRKO.....85
Espionage AgentWAR.....84
Sergeant MaddenMGM.....84
Four Girls in WhiteMGM.....84
Return of the Cisco KidFOX.....82
These Glamour GirlsMGM.....81
Cafe SocietyPAR.....81
King of the UnderworldWAR.....81
Dancing Co-edMGM.....80
Arizona WildcatFOX.....80
The GorillaFOX.....80
The UnderpupUNIV.....80

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The Kid From KokomoWAR.....85
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King of the UnderworldWAR.....81
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Dancing Co-edMGM.....80
Arizona WildcatFOX.....80
The GorillaFOX.....80
The UnderpupUNIV.....80

JOHN TWIST

Screen Plays

1939

RENO

THREE SONS

TWELVE CROWDED HOURS

THE SAINT STRIKES BACK

THE GREAT MAN VOTES

PACIFIC LINER



The Box Office

DIGEST

VOL. 10. NO. 16.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 26, 1939

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

The Editor Suggests
Some Thoughts
For a Happy 1940

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Interesting Week
Of Previews

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“Geronimo” Winner of
Honor Box Award
For Paramount

SEE PAGES 5

●

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

●

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

* *The Box Office*

DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

This Week **PARAMOUNT** Wins With

"GERONIMO" 117%



Executive-Producer
WILLIAM LeBARON



Producer-Director
Original Screenplay
PAUL SLOANE



ELLEN DREW



PRESTON FOSTER



WILLIAM HENRY



RALPH MORGAN

Featured:

**GENE LOCKHART
PIERRE WATKIN
MARJORIE GATESON
KITTY KELLY
ADDISON RICHARDS
MONTE BLUE**

Photographer
HENRY SHARP

Film Editor
JOHN LINK



ANDY DEVINE

DIGEST

The Industry's
Distinctive Weekly

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

The Editor put a question mark behind that "Happy New Year" statement not because of any innate pessimism, or any fears that there will be too much grief in the year just dawning for it to be a pleasant twelve months.

He was asking himself a question. Something like this:

"What are the things that we can all do, each and every one of us, in the scattered branches of the industry, to make certain that it WILL be a Happy New Year?"

Of course, it would be easy to say, "Let the producers make more hit pictures; let the exhibitors sell them for all they are worth."

But that is as practical as the copy book maxims we wrote on the blackboard in the little red schoolhouse days.

Let's see what things could happen to bring about that ideal condition.

* * *

We will start with the tough end of the situation—the exhibitor's problem.

Facing the European deficit, it is our solid conviction that the most important task this industry could accomplish in the happy New Year coming, would be a sincere revival of the Fair Trade Practice Code. This time carried through on a basis that would make it impregnable to sharp-shooting from exhibitors who are too political, and untainted by a few distribution executives who are scuttlers at heart.

There's a job for some real industrial leader. The Hays office can't do it, or apparently won't do it.

But, properly performed, it is a task that would have a two-fold effect: It would take off the neck of this industry much of the Governmental interference that costs it millions in legal expenses every year, and never solve a thing; it would rearrange buying and selling conditions in a manner that would uncover countless hidden revenue.

Every distribution executive uses his experience and his brains to get the utmost in revenue from any given territory for his company's product; but no distribution executive will deny that there are many zoning and clearance situations, many local czar-dominated spots, where his hands are tied today.

And most of these troubles could be solved, with gain not

only to the distributor, but also to all exhibitors concerned, if we could bury the double-edged chisel, and sit around a table.

Will somebody lead the way in 1940?

It is the route to the Promised Land.

Then, let us look over what might be done in Hollywood to make it a Happier New Year. There is so much that might be done, that we are overwhelmed.

Supposing we start in on what seems a minor matter, and get out of the Hollywood consciousness that ghoulish feeling that delights in reporting that "the other fellow" has a flop?

It would help the payrolls all around. But, of greater importance than sordid money, it would leave us with cleaner tastes in our mouths.

No individual with many years of experience in Hollywood needs to be told of the situation that we are rather vaguely trying to point up—because the proper language is too torrid for this holiday season.

We refer to the members of the whisper chorus who evidently start their day with breakfasts of undiluted sour fruit juice considering the manner in which they carry through the days and finish them.

How do you best get attention at a Hollywood lunch table? By knocking last night's preview. How do you best become the life of the evening party? By gleefully whispering some knock about somebody or other—provided it is a Big Somebody-or-Other—which your maid heard from a third cousin in Phoenix who heard it from a hitchhiker passing through town on his way to the Black Hills.

Is this minor?

Do you know of any other industry in which the occupants of its payrolls spending their nights and days KNOCKING? KNOCKING? KNOCKING? And all of the clowns so dumb that they don't realize that when I knock the fellow against whom I have a grudge, he may be doing the same to me, and I have just become part of a circle. And circles have no termination.

There are so many thoughts about means to insure a Happy New Year. But here are two: One for distribution; one for Hollywood. We say: "Take 'em or leave 'em," but we have the faint and hopeless feeling that we can keep this Editorial in type and repeat it next year. Anyway: "Happy New Year!"

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939

1. United Artists	16 Releases.....	97
2. Twentieth Century-Fox	46 Releases.....	96
3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	46 Releases.....	95
4. Paramount	50 Releases.....	87
5. Warner Brothers	49 Releases.....	85
6. RKO-Radio	37 Releases.....	81
7. Universal	42 Releases.....	80
8. Columbia	34 Releases.....	78
9. Republic	22 Releases.....	69
10. Monogram	19 Releases.....	67
11. Grand National	4 Releases.....	66
12. Gaumont British	2 Releases.....	65

367

The Highlighter: TALKS ABOUT THE DEATH WATCH ON "B" PICTURES AND OTHER PROBLEMS FOR 1940

What are the problems looming over the 1940 horizon for a Hollywood Highlighter to foresee? . . . One of the most important is the probable fate of B product on the part of the bigger majors. . . . Already Warners has made its move by upping Bryan Foy to the important post of assistant to Hal Wallis, which is sort of saying, "There ain't gonna be no more B's." . . . Fox is expanding the budgets on the Sol Wurtzel pictures, which is sort of saying, "If there are any B's, they will be bigger and better B's." . . . MGM reports tendencies to reduce the number of pictures which they naively term B's. . . . Paramount, Universal, RKO will continue their excellent B units, the product of which seems to consistently find an appreciative and profitable market. . . . And so what? . . . How much of this vague tendency will translate itself into box office language?

WHAT MAKES AN "A"— AND WHY IS A "B"?

Fundamentally, all our thinking about A and B pictures is superficial. . . . There is the too-easy solution that the difference between an A and B is the amount of money spent on the respective pictures. . . . That may be the final ledger analysis, but it is not the cause. . . . The basic premise is STAR VALUE. . . . There just are not enough automatic box office stars in the player ranks to make any more A pictures than are being made. . . . Producers have even swung from all-star studder casts, to a thin spreading of such magnets as they possess. . . . Occasionally the expenditure of money on a really big theme can provide the exception to the axiom. . . . With such offerings as "Stagecoach," or the overnight development of new stars as happens every now and then, but not too frequently now and then. . . . But then these new stars only move up into the select group often enough to give fair replacements for the top ones who are slipping. . . . So it is a circle, built on MARQUEE value. . . . And whether you decide this bright and sunny morning that you are going to make an A or a B attraction, box office speaking, it makes no difference if you decide to spend more or less money, more or less time, the question is: "What are you giving the box office in automatic draw?"

THEREFORE, THE HIGHLIGHTER THINKS WE'LL STILL HAVE B'S

Let's face the fact that the mechanics of exhibition and the necessities of creation have combined to create a situation where this industry must have groups of pictures that may be termed B's, B-pluses, A-minuses, or what-have-you in your alphabetical soup. . . . Exhibition needs them, because of the double bill situation among other reasons, and there

10 Features "Going Up"

	Was	Now
1. That's Right, You're Wrong	RKO...126	133
2. Jamaica Inn	PAR... 98	103
3. Remember?	MGM... 97	99
4. Eternally Yours	UA... 95	98
5. Secret of Dr. Kildare	MGM... 92	94
6. Intermezzo	UA... 87	89
7. \$1,00 A Touchdown	PAR... 77	81
8. Meet Dr. Christian	RKO... 76	80
9. Coast Guard	COL... 76	78
10. Jeepers Creepers	REP... 66	68

are other: production cannot escape them because it has neither the star values, the epic possibilities, or the straight mechanical ability to make every picture an AAA. . . . Production needs them to develop the up and coming directors, the hidden ability in future writer greats: production needs them to meet that Ol' Debbil Overhead. . . . Distribution needs them to pay the exchange rent, the sales overhead that so frequently keeps the machine rolling while awaiting the million dollar flopperoo. . . . So let's not ring the New Year bells by attempting to sound the death knell of B pictures.

THE YOUNGSTER 1940 BRINGS OTHER PROBLEMS

Turning aside from that fundamental problem, let's look at some of the other clouds and sunbeams on the 1940 horizon. . . . We should not forget that the recent settlement of union labor troubles left the cat hanging high in the air with a request by producers to resume discussions in February, on the basis of facts about the foreign situation discovered by that time. . . . That is not a pleasant outlook. . . . We should not forget that the industry flopped on its plans for a Fair Trade Code last year, with the result that Uncle Sam's more meaney nephews are still on our neck and kicking our shins. . . . With an election year coming up it may be tempting to some politicians to make movies the Biggest Baddest Wolfest Wolf. . . . And while looking forward, consider the number of majors who have many millions tied up

8 Features "Going Down"

	Was	Now
1. The Real Glory	UA...112	108
2. We Are Not Alone	WAR... 92	90
3. Flying Deuces	RKO... 91	88
4. Nurse Edith Cavell	RKO... 87	85
5. Legion of Lost Flyers	UNIV... 77	75
6. Beware Spooks	COL... 77	75
7. Bad Little Angel	MGM... 73	71
8. Fugitives at Large	COL... 72	70

in current and soon-coming releases that were essentially aimed at the gravy in that luscious British market, and whose sad error won't be disclosed until the first quarter statements of the coming year show what the American ticket-buyers paid to see these Piccadilly Empire-builders. . . . That's a coming headache calling for an advance purchase of aspirin. . . . Hollywood has its extra problem, which should be settled intelligently early this coming year, because if it isn't it will be just too good fodder for election-year headline hunters. . . . Someone of these days someone will write a "Rapes of Wrath" novel that will picture our extras as two degrees below Okies, and we will all be sorry for shilly-shallying on this problem.

JOGGING AROUND THE STUDIO CORNERS IN HOLIDAY WEEK

Probably the most eagerly awaited headline in Hollywood concerns the announcement George Schaefer will make in mid-January concerning the new production chief at RKO-Radio to succeed Pan Berman, retiring for a rest to be followed by independent activities. . . . Nominations are numerous. Your Highlighter hears many, he has his own hunches, too. . . . So he displays his monumental intellect by not attempting even a guess. . . . But he will guarantee that canny George Schaefer has a man in mind who will fit in with his long-range method of planning, with his ideas of what is due the financial bagholders in the coming years. . . . From Republic we hear that Rudy Vallee has signed a producer-director ticket to start with "Hit Parade of 1940." . . . It has always been your Highlighter's hunch that the showmanship Vallee displayed in discovering and presenting new stellar personalities, that was evident in his own program, could find a real outlet in New York stage production or pictures some day. . . . A nod to Herb Yates for being the man to realize the fact. . . . Up at Universal they tell us that Bing Crosby will take on Gloria Jean as co-star in his next. . . . One thing about Bing, he'll gamble with scene-stealing youngsters, or scene-stealers of all ages. . . . He can take it, and he does in top stride. . . . For the sake of the entertainment. . . . Universal elevates Dan Kelley, veteran casting director, to important new duties. . . . That's of interest to your Highlighter who has watched the career of this capable Dan Kelley through many years—so many—of this industry's development. . . . And good news for Universal. . . . Sam Goldwyn announces his final break with United Artists and is looking for an outlet on "The Westerner" with Paramount. . . . Shucks, there's no news any more in anything Sam does. . . . It's new when he doesn't do anything for a period.

The Box Office: PARAMOUNT'S "GERONIMO" LEADS BOX OFFICE IN SLOW PRE-CHRISTMAS WEEK BUSINESS

PARAMOUNT—2 NEW RELEASES

Paramount takes top honors this week with two new releases, one of which is turning in very fine box office reports.

Paramount's winner this week is a new super-western "GERONIMO"—the story of a famous Apache Indian chief. "GERONIMO" has opened in quite a number of different types of houses from first runs on down to smaller western towns, and in several instances is running considerably above 100%, averaging 11% at this time.

While "GERONIMO" doesn't boast such big star names, still it has big production values and enough excitement and thrills to more than satisfy the average audience. And exhibitors that fared well with such super-westerns as "Wells Fargo" and "Stagecoach" should do likewise with this one.

The romantic leads are portrayed by Ellen Drew and Bill Henry; but it is really Preston Foster and Ralph Morgan and Andy Devine who carry most of the picture in strong character roles, and the combination of these names plus big production values is apparently spelling box office.

Paul Sloane and William LeBaron jointly conceived the "Geronimo" idea and Sloane carried it through, writing the original screenplay as well as producing and directing. So Mr. Sloane certainly deserves considerable credit for bringing this type of production in for less than five hundred thousand dollars, which will mean profit for both Paramount and the exhibitors.

Paramount's second release this week is a much better than average programmer, "NIGHT OF NIGHTS," 82%. This one co-stars Pat O'Brien and Olympe Bradna. Roland Young, Reginald Gardiner and George E. Stone are featured. In some houses this picture might deserve top billing, provided that it has a strong second featured with it; otherwise it is not quite strong enough to hold up on its own.

George Arthur produced and Lewis Milestone directed.

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX—1 RELEASE

Twentieth Century-Fox has this week finally released a picture known as "BARRICADE." This production was originally sold to exhibitors on their 38-39 contract as

Of Six New Releases in the Past Week.

One Ran Over 100%, Two Came Through Okay, and Three Were Very Weak.

"The Girl From Brooklyn" and later was transferred over to the 39-40 group under the title "The White Lady of the Orient." As the release of this picture has been held up for the past seventeen months, the majority of local critics took a crack at it, figuring that it might not be so good. However, "BARRICADE" has opened up in quite a number of first run situations and is averaging quite well at around 88%. It co-stars Alice Faye and Warner Baxter and it is bound to sell a number of seats regardless, and in action houses this thrilling war story of the Orient will probably run even higher than it is at present. Supporting Faye and Baxter are Charles Winninger, Arthur Treacher and Keye Luke, which makes a well balanced cast.

Edward Kaufman produced and Gregory Ratoff directed.

UNIVERSAL—2 NEW RELEASES

Universal has two new programmers this week, neither of special importance and yet pictures that will make very satisfactory fillers for the average double program.

The best of the two is the "MAN FROM MONTREAL," 78%, which is the latest in the series co-starring Richard Arlen and Andy Devine.

Ben Pivar produced and Christy Cabanne directed.

Universal's second release is "MISSING EVIDENCE," 72%. This melodrama co-stars Preston Foster and Irene Hervey, with Chick Chandler and Inez Courtney featured.

Phil Rosen acted as producer-director.

MONOGRAM—1 RELEASE

Monogram's only new release this week is a new mystery melodrama with a race-track background, "HEROES IN BLUE," 68%. This one is a good action filler, especially for a Fri-Sat booking, but due to the lack of marquee names should be billed with a much stronger second feature. Dick Purcell, Julie Warren and Frank Kerrigan are featured.

Monogram's new producer, T. K. Williams, made this one and William Watson directed.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

- Everything about every current release available for theaters?
- Who made it, the associate producer, the director, the cast, the original BOX OFFICE DIGEST estimate of its box office value, the actual figure at which it opened in theaters, the current figure of performance?
- Do you want to know what The Digest's reviewer said, what the other reviewers said at the time of preview?
- Do you want all this handy in form, so that it can rest on your desk?
- You will get it in the New Year's Mid-Season Summary.
- Now in preparation—out in mid-January.

P.S.: The hearty response indicates that the advertising pages will be all-representative of this industry's workers, so that by the time we get through the NEW YEAR'S MID-SEASON SUMMARY should be a Who's Who and What's Who Doing of pictures production. Come along, and join the band wagon!

6 New Releases Not In Last Issue

		% We Est.	
1. Geronimo	PAR.	117	105
2. Barricade	FOX	88	90
3. Night of Nights.....	PAR.	82	85
4. Man From Montreal.....	UNIV.	78	80
5. Missing Evidence	UNIV.	72	75
6. Heroes In Blue.....	MONO.	68	70

The Radio Reporter: RAVES ABOUT LUM AND ABNER SHOW FOR CHARITY AND HOLLYWOOD'S ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations for each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard for that particular program.

SALVATION ARMY
(Sponsors, Station KNX and L. A. Times)

Lum and Abner, M. C.-ing; stars, all of Hollywood.

Rating: 200%.

A six hour show—10 p.m. till 4 a.m. for a great cause and finding the heart of Hollywood topping any such benefit effort we could ever imagine. . . . A tribute to all concerned, and we should not be so unfair to a host of stars who gave of their time as to pick out names. But aside from the orchids to the standard radio players we must drop a mention of surprise numbers from Lon Chaney, Jr., and Benny Rubin.

★ ★ ★

KAY KYSER
(Lucky Strike)

Program of December 13th.

Rating: 100%.

Up to usual standard and of particular interest to picture folk in that the professor put over some neat plugs for his RKO picture in entertaining and unobtrusive fashion.

★ ★ ★

BING CROSBY
(Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M. C.; featured, Bob Burns; guest players, Una Merkel, Jack Holt; program of December 14th.

Rating: 100%.

Bing and Bob, firmly in harness again, are swinging right back into stride, and the guest stars came over the airwaves effectively, and with something of personality.

★ ★ ★

GOOD NEWS
(Maxwell House)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; featured, Lou Holtz, Fannie Brice, Benny Rubin; guest stars, Allan Jones, Mary Martin; program of December 14th.

Rating: 95%.

Many pleasing elements in the coast to coast switch to present a Victor Herbert night, with the picture stars vocalizing from the East, but the program as a whole lacked some of the zip of previous efforts. Maybe Fannie and Lou need a shipment of new material.

★ ★ ★

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Burgess Meredith, M.C.; guest star, Gertrude Lawrence; featured, Joan Edwards, Philip Loeb, Anita Hall; program of December 17th.

Rating: 98%.

Gertrude Lawrence made an effective guest appearance, and Burgess Meredith continues to give that touch of the real trouper to his chore. We'll see Meredith this week in "Of Mice and Men," but the question still persists: "Why doesn't the screen give him to us more frequently?"

★ ★ ★

SILVER THEATER
(International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; guest star, Kay Francis, with Frank Nelson, Dickie Davis in "Once Upon a Time"; program of December 17th.

Rating: 100%.

Kay Francis registers very effectively on the air, and the support helped to put over a pretty good piece of playlet writing for sit-at-home listeners. Managed to get considerable "heart" into it, and story values, without being slow or over-plotty.

★ ★ ★

GATEWAY TO HOLLYWOOD
(Wrigley's)

Jesse Lasky, M. C.; guest star, Mary Boland, balance of cast talent discoveries; program of December 17th.

Rating: 90%.

This is an up-side-down pro-

gram, probably unavoidable due to the amateur talent that must be presented. The task of trying to give four girl aspirants an equal chance in this one threw the writers for a loss. . . . Mary Boland okay.

★ ★ ★

SCREEN GUILD
(Gulf Oil)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; guest stars, Norma Shearer, Basil Rathbone, Louis Hayward; program of December 17th.

Rating: 110%.

Very good. Not only because of the class of the players, and their "at home" feeling before the mike, but especially because of the script treatment that made an air gem out of the condensation of "Smiling Through." Orchids to all concerned and a suggestion that the script can be a model for later efforts along this line.

★ ★ ★

CHASE AND SANBORN

Don Ameche, M. C.; stars, Bergen and McCarthy, Dorothy Lamour, Donald Dixon; guest stars, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Billy Gilbert; program of December 17th.

Rating: 100%.

Don Ameche's return and the effect of his personality, together with a general pepping up of the program, would have lifted this above the 100% mark had it not been for the unhappy choice of the playlet for Miss Fitzgerald. She was pleasing herself, but the material was a wasted spot for fireside listeners.

★ ★ ★

ORSON WELLES
(Campbell Products)

Orson Welles in a detective mystery with Marie Wilson as guest star; program of December 17.

Rating: 90%.

A new low for the Master. . . . Probably because detective mysteries on the air must be low down Nick Carter stuff or be forgotten. Don't try anything too intelligent. The troupers trouped, but the shadings and nuances were lost

in the static. Welles is becoming even more verbose than ever in his announcements, and that doesn't help. He sounds like a sophomore's Thesaurus.

★ ★ ★

JACK BENNY
(Jello)

Jack Benny, star and M. C.; featured, Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Don Wilson; program of December 17th.

Rating: 100%.

Just standard, which is really saying a plenty when you consider the way this Jack and Mary unit holds its consistent pace. . . . The routine Jack, Mary, Rochester put on the night before for the Salvation Army cause, was a wow probably entitled them to an average day.

★ ★ ★

BOB HOPE
(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; featured, Judy Garland, Professor Calonna, Skinnay Ennis' music; program of December 19th.

Rating: 100%.

Would have gone over the mark on general excellence except for a sag in the moments given the department store routine. . . . Material writers should remember that the listener spending an evening at home during the pre-Christmas season receive the gamut of shopping jokes. Aside from this interlude Bob's own material was up to par, and his delivery gave an infectious feeling to the stay-at-home listener who figured all the folks at the studio were having a grand time.

★ ★ ★

BIG TOWN

Edward G. Robinson starred, with Ona Munson, in continued plays of newspaper life; program of December 19th.

Rating: 105%.

Some clever chap on the writing staff came up with a corking idea and cinched it with a good scripting job. The players did the rest to wrap up a fine Christmas package. The idea was something of a modernized "Scrooge," with the relationship not so prominent as to hurt.

"EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT NIGHT"

a picture thrillingly different

starring

SONJA HENIE

in an attraction perfect for any season
...designed especially for Holiday time!

Released
DEC. 22



ALL WRAPPED UP
AND READY
FOR CHRISTMAS!

Sonja HENIE in
"EVERYTHING
HAPPENS AT NIGHT"

Ray MILLAND • Robert CUMMINGS
with

MAURICE MOSCOVICH • LEONID KINSKEY
and
ALAN DINEHART • FRITZ FELD

Directed by Irving Cummings

Associate Producer Harry Joe Brown • Original
Screen Play by Art Arthur and Robert Harari
Skating Numbers staged by Nicholas Castle

Darryl F. Zanuck
in Charge of Production

More *BREATH-TAKING* than
"ONE IN A MILLION"

More *ROMANTIC* than
"THIN ICE"

More *HAPPINESS* than
"HAPPY LANDING"

More *DAZZLING* than
"MY LUCKY STAR"

More *THRILLING* than
"SECOND FIDDLE"



THE KEYSTONE
OF YOUR FUTURE

20th's 'Swanee River' Great Job of Showmanship, Has Technicolor, Melody, Stars and Production

20TH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 140%)

ProducerDarryl Zanuck
Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan.
DirectorSidney Lanfield
Screenplay: John Taintor Foote, Philip Dunne.
Stars: Don Ameche, Andrea Leeds, Al Jolson.
Featured: Felix Bressart, Chick Chandler, Russell Hicks, George Reed, the Hall Johnson Choir, Richard Clark, Diane Fisher, Charles Halton, George Breakstone, Al Herman, Charles Trowbridge, George Meeker, Leona Roberts, Charles Tannen, Harry Hayden, Clara Blandick, Nella Walker, Esther Dale.
PhotographerBert Glennon
Musical Director.....Louis Silvers
Film Editor.....Louis Loeffler
Time84 minutes

Exceptionally fine. A showman's job. Against the eye-entrancing Technicolor beauties of the South of the 1860's, and the Yankeeland of those same days, "Swanee River" projects the lovable melodies of Stephen Foster in flawless harmony. And thru the melodies weaves a story that gives you Don Ameche as the glorious creator of immortal songs, Al Jolson of the heart-throb voice singing them, and Andrea Leeds his romantic inspiration.

We repeat: A great job of showmanship.

Zanuck has plotted his story of Stephen Foster along straight lines, with the accent on simplicity, and avoidance of any effort at plot and counterplot that would intrude on the picture's real purpose, which is the presentation of an album of Foster's immortal folk songs visualized by pleasingly sincere troupers.

There is no "heavy" in the picture, unless we wish to give that role to Demon Rum, the cause of Foster's downfall. But even here, Director Sidney Lanfield has been given material in scripting that he handles with canny skill, to the extent that while the ol' Demon may be present, his effects are never maudlin, nor cheap. It is a deft piece of work, this retaining of the necessary story element, without allowing it in any way to become unpleasant.

One of the choicest characterizations has fallen to Don Ameche and he handles it with complete assurance. Many will consider it the best he has given the screen. Al Jolson, never completely lost to lovers of the sentimental song,

is far on the way to a top screen comeback if he gets more fat roles such as this rich characterization of a minstrel man. Andrea Leeds—gosh, what a beauty that gal is in Technicolor hues—gives warmth to her romantic role.

Support is excellent, with best opportunities in the capable hands of Russell Hicks, Felix Bressart, and George Reed.

Plot, as we have said, is simple, merely charting the career of Stephen Foster from the days on a Southern levee when budding romance inspires him to put the haunting harmonies of the negroes into written music, on to his triumphs, and then to his untimely end. The structure allows for the presentation of most all of the better known Foster melodies, they are neatly spotted for plot arrangement, with the climax "Way Down Upon The Swanee River." In between there are many highlights, a choice of a particular one depending solely on your personal preference among Foster's chant.

Production values are on a lavish scale, sound recording, so important in this case, exceptionally good. Lanfield directs with smooth consistency, though the planners could have helped him with a bit more comedy. This lack is the picture's one weakness.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Immortal music wrapped up in dazzling Technicolor, with three top names for the marquee. The coming nation-wide Kate Smith radio broadcast is also a factor to be reckoned with. Previewed December 19.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "About the best blending of story and song the sound screen has ever had is shown in the 20th Century-Fox production of "Swanee River." This story and song combination, that has been magnificently produced, acted and directed, should ring the box office bell in every quarter. It's swell entertainment."

VARIETY: "Under the title of his classic folk song of homesick yearning, Stephen C. Foster's music is presented in a production of striking beauty and charm. In well knit and strong drama it exploits the heart appeal of the melodies and simple lyrics sung and strummed by three generations in American and round the world . . . with its obvious exploitability, and aimed as it is for popular appeal with its venerable hokum, the picture can't miss."

CURRENT REVIEWS

	We Est.
1. Swanee River	FOX.....140
2. The Light That Failed.....	PAR.....125
3. Charlie McCarthy, Detective.....	UNIV.....105
4. Raffles	UA.....95
5. Of Mice and Men	UA.....95
6. Money To Burn	REP.....70

'Charlie McCarthy, Detective' Has Plenty of Good Laughs

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 105%)

Producer-DirectorFrank Tuttle
Asso. Producer.....Jerry Sackheim
Original Story: Robert White, Darrel Ware.
Screenplay: Edward Eliscu, Harold Shumate, Richard Mack.
Stars: Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd.
Featured: Robert Cummings, Constance Moore, John Sutton, Louis Calhern, Edgar Kennedy, Samuel S. Hinds, Harold Huber, Warren Hymer, Ray Turner.
PhotographerGeorge Robinson
Songs: Harold L. Block, Jacques Press, Eddie Cherkose, Sam Lerner, Ben Oakland.
Art Director.....Jack Otterson
Film Editor.....Bernard Burton
Time78 minutes

In "Charlie McCarthy, Detective," Frank Tuttle took on the tough assignment of combining story interest with the necessity of giving followers of the justly popular Charlie their fill, in abundance, of their favorite. He has come through with remarkable success.

The picture's box office values are pretty well set, its laugh provoking qualities will tickle the ribs and ears of many an exhibitor in coming months.

Tuttle, as evidenced in his musical successes, has a flair for this maintaining of intelligent story values, while spotlighting the more elemental showmanship angles of his material. In this case the plot germ concerns the murder of Louis Calhoun, a publisher, under circumstances pointing to the guilt of a reporter, John Sutton. It remains for Bergen and McCarthy, with assistance from Mortimer Snerd, to pin the crime on the real villain, Robert Cummings. Along the route of their search there are laughs aplenty, with only a few moments when the problem of hitching laughs and plot seems a bit too much. Picture mounts to a comedy sequence in which heavy Harold Huber, actually

knocked cold, is made by Bergen's ventriloquial art, to give instructions to his henchmen, that is one of the top belly laugh sequences of the year.

Romance is capably handled by Constance Moore, with all the supporting members mentioned already, delivering to advantage. Special mention must be reserved for Edgar Kennedy, in a detective role that he milks for laughs aplenty.

McCarthy, and in his subordinate role, Mortimer, are played in such manner as to leave a reviewer a bit woozy as to whether he is writing of human beings or prop dummies. Bergen is also seen without his aides, and the audience likes him.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Built for laughs, without any particular splash, it gives the laughs in abundance. Okay for all ages. Previewed December 17.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID

REPORTER: "If the exhibitors find nothing else in their stockings for Christmas, Universal's 'Charlie McCarthy, Detective,' starring the inimitable trio of Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd and Edgar Bergen, will more than live up to their expectations of a suitable gift from Hollywood."

VARIETY: "It will require the full potency of the Bergen-McCarthy entertainment label to make 'Charlie McCarthy, Detective,' pay dividends. That it will do business—and probably very good business in most situations—is to be assumed, on the basis of Bergen's vast and enthusiastic audience."

CLUB 17

1710 North Las Palmas

BABE HENSLEY, Mgn. Dir.

In New York It's Stork Club
 In Hollywood It's Club 17

HARRY LASH
 Dottie Long Lucille Best
 No Cover - No Minimum

THE HONOR BOX WINNER

Screen Play and Direction

PAUL H. SLOANE



Thanks for Everything

to

Bill Le Baron



''GERONIMO''

'The Light That Failed' Problem For Box Offices

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Producer-Director: William A. Wellman.
ScreenplayRobert Carson
 Based on the novel by Rudyard Kipling.
StarRonald Colman
Featured: Walter Huston, Muriel Angelus, Ida Lupino, Dudley Digges, Ernest Cossart, Ferike Boros, Pedro de Cordoba, Colin Tapley, Fay Helm, Ronald Sinclair, Sarita Wooton, Halliwell Hobbes, Charles Irwin, Francis McDonald, George Regas, Wilfred Roberts.
PhotographerTheodor Sparkuhl
Art Director: Hans Dreier, Robert Odell.
Musical Score.....Victor Young
Film Editor.....Thomas Scott
Time97 minutes

A high mark in picture production skill, representing Producer-Director William Wellman at his best, and backed by Paramount with ample staging, "The Light That Failed" is a problem for box office forecasters.

We refer to American box offices. The picture will probably be a clean-up in Great Britain when that market opens wider. But sitting on this side of the pond it must be recorded that the theme is heavy, the presentation and atmosphere almost too British. Those are the questions that arise, and they must be considered when box office is the determining factor.

Of course, the box office will have its Ronald Colman. That may over-ride some present worries.

There can be no question about the quality of the picture as a job of picture-making. Serving as both producer and director, William Wellman gave the famous Rudyard Kipling story everything he had of intelligence, understanding, and skill. His casting is superb, the trouping that cast returned to him could not conceivably be bettered, his script and direction tell the yarn with sincerity and powerful force.

The Kipling story is a saga of the British soul, and particularly of the British fighting man. It inevitably moves to a tragic climax, but, if audiences here will recognize the fact, it is the tragedy of triumph. Colman, one time soldier for Her Majesty in the Sudan, has his years of ease in London, as a socially popular artist, shattered by the knowledge that he is to become blind as a result of war wounds. On the heels of that knowledge comes a

blow that destroys his faith in humans, and sends him back to a wild, suicidal cavalry charge in which he gives his life to the tradition of British arms.

It is powerful, and Colman's portrayal perfect. Nor are the other members of the cast far behind. Walter Huston lends his thespian genius, Dudley Digges is prominent, and all through the roster are such troupers found. There is a newcomer, Muriel Angelus, who will be heard from.

We have reserved a special paragraph for Ida Lupino. This descendant of an illustrious line of British-cherished favorites has previously lent her charms and comedy ability to lighter roles. In "The Light That Failed" she

comes home with a dramatic performance that is outstanding among those of the year now drawing to a close.

Action scenes of the picture have been handled exceptionally well, this second unit being under the direction of Joe Youngerman, who shows skill worth watching for the future.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: The quality of the picture, Kipling and Ronald Colman may combine to ease our worries about the heaviness of the story and the slightly strong British propaganda. Watch the first city openings carefully. It's a fine picture. Previewed December 19.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The 'Light That Failed' is a fine effort. It is ultra-British in theme, mood and interpretation, and giving, as it does, some firm pats on the back to British soldiery, with an almost all-Triton cast, it should be a big war-time success in the United Kingdom. What its reception will be in the United States will depend largely upon the drawing powers of Ronald Colman, who gives a splendid portrayal, and the extent to which American audiences now wish to see and hear the Kipling story."

VARIETY: "Should there be need of further proof that the talkers have shed the final trace of their swaddling apparel, then that proof is indelibly stamped on Paramount's superb presentation to 'The Light That Failed.' No picture ever surpassed it."

'Raffles' Okay Picture But Not Up To Samuel Goldwyn Standard

UNITED ARTISTS

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

ProducerSamuel Goldwyn
DirectorSam Wood
Screenplay: John Van Druten, Sidney Howard.
 Based on story by E. W. Hornung
Stars: David Niven, Olivia De Havilland.
Featured: Dame May Whitty, Dudley Digges, Douglas Walton, Lionel Pape, E. E. Clive, Peter Godfrey, Margaret Seddon, Gilbert Emery, Hilda Plowright, Vesey O'Davoren, George Cathrey, Keith Hitchcock.
PhotographerGregg Toland
Musical Director.....Victor Young
Film Editor.....Sherman Todd
Time71 minutes

"Raffles" is good entertainment, produced on a class scale, and thoroughly satisfying to audiences if they merely come to the theater expecting a workman-like picturization of the famous English hero-crook.

But "Raffles" should not be sold to exhibitors, nor should they sell it to ticket-buyers, with the usual fanfare that accompanies a Samuel Goldwyn effort. Because it is merely good, while lacking that "oomph" that separates the good from the special.

However, there is reminiscent cash value in the title "Raffles," even if David Niven is not Ronald Colman for the box office draw. And Niven, with able support from Olivia De Havilland and Dudley Digges, and an all-British cast do right well with the material provided them.

There is little that is new in this 1939 escapade of the suave gen-

tleman crook, who again must use his wits and ply his trade in constant opposition to Scotland Yard. Romance with Olivia has decided him to go straight and take his proper place in the cricket playing British society, but there is one more job to be done, the retrieving of a stolen necklace to save Douglas Walton, brother of his Olivia. With Dudley Digges and E. E. Clive capably handling the more human characterizations, action is clever and kept moving, even if not exactly spine-tingling in suspense.

Production values are excellent with Sam Wood's direction on a

par with average material.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory class meller, but don't expect too much. Previewed December 18.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "John Van Druten and Sidney Howard have conceived a 1939 edition of "Raffles" for Samuel Goldwyn, who has given this new treatment of E. W. Hornung's highly successful gentlemen-crook yarn, 'The Amateur Cracksman,' a fine production, which should please all type of audiences."

VARIETY: "That screen perennial, 'Raffles,' is with us again, offering little that is new except for player faces."

The Fastest Growing Paper
in the Industry



The Box Office DIGEST

Ridge Reports Florida Happy Domain For Sparks With Exhibitor Conditions Unique In Country



J. MAURICE RIDGE
Field Investigator

Jacksonville, Fla., Dec. 18.—If Harry Ross had to keep his checking service alive financed from his Florida operations, he would not have enough gross business to keep himself in mail pouch tobacco. Down in the land of alligators and tropical storms, pictures just "ain't" played percentage. Even Warner product was not bought. That is not the Sparks way of doing things, not withstanding the much heralded pronouncements of the major distributors that they have one plan for all the folks, both plebes and overlords, in the field of exhibition.

As we got the story from exchange men in Atlanta, from where this state is sold and serviced, Frank Rogers, the genial generalissimo of the Sparks Circuit just buys a whole hunk of playing time on a lot of pictures for so much cash money. He may buy one for sixty days, take the prints allotted him and book them when and where and as many days as he deems proper. It's easy that way for the exchanges. They have no trouble whatsoever in shipping, checking; routing, etc. Just have to cash the check. The Sparks Circuit has upwards of a hundred theatres in Florida; all the towns except Miami, where they are not interested.

Mr. Rogers and his chief, General Sparks, have no trouble with the independent exhibitors in Florida. There are none to argue with them any more than there is opposition to Stalin. They gained control of this situation, long, long ago. They acquired these good situations, before the greedy independents, as some of the big wigs refer to them, got a toe

hold. So now it is easy going for the folks from the Sparks-Rogers Ranch.

THEY DON'T NEED SALESMEN IN FLORIDA

And salesmen! They are not to be found basking on the sunny beaches along Florida's coast. There is no need for them; just a few independents in the small places along the edge of the swamps, too trifling for the chain of Sparks and Co. to bother about. Frank Rogers takes care of the buying from the G.S.M.'s of the companies from New York, who find it mighty pleasant in Florida about the time contracts expire. And then it would be a trifle embarrassing too, if the salesmen were to handle an account like this one, and then later have to sit through a national sales meeting, and hear from the lips of their chiefs, that they had one policy: that all their customers, independents, chain operated, producer owned: big and little, had to toe the mark, play twelve "A" and twelve "B" pictures on percentage, and guarantees equal to the best price they received from the previous year's top picture.

And in the light of Mr. Will Rodgers' statement last week about that 70% of the gross, to be demanded for "Gone With the Wind," throughout the country during 1940, it will be interesting to see which one of them, the Rodgers of this spelling or the one with the "D" added between the O and G, follows precedent. We may never know, but if the "CASH and CARRY" policy of the Sparks Generalissimo Frank Rogers maintains, then another of the distributor much heralded national policies, will have "Gone With the Wind."

THE PUBLIC GETS BARGAINS FROM SPARKS

Folks down in Jacksonville have pictures any way they want them. First run pictures run single bill at the Sparks Florida and Arcade at 35c matinee and 40c at night. Then a little later such pictures as "Stanley and Livingstone," "The Rains Came" and so on, run double bill at the Capitol at 25c and at the Imperial at 20c. However, the Sparks Circuit runs all but one of the theatres in this

city, and no charge of unfair trade practice can be hurled at them. The public truly in this situation is the benefactor, and not at the expense of some lowly independent. And, as the story goes, neither does it matter to the distributors, in the light of the way they are said to buy, "so many days for so much money," in any theatre, as Sparks sees fit to run them.

BUT NOBODY IS UPSET ABOUT UNCLE SAM

So far as we have been able to ascertain, the Trust Busting Department under Lawyer Arnold, has not turned on the heat down in these parts. At least it has not been heralded to the public. We asked Frank Rogers of the Sparks Circuit, "How come?" Of course the answer was obvious. However, Tony Sudekum proclaims just as strongly that so far as he knows, they have been operating well within proper bounds. One thing is true of this Florida situation, these houses, or many of them, long, long ago, came into, and remained in Sparks' possession. So far as we can find out, there has been no great attempted expansion, in recent years.

SHOULD PRODUCERS SEEK LOST EUROPE AT HOME?

Jacksonville, Fla., Dec. 22.—Maybe the Exchanges are ashamed of it, and the chain operated theatres would be silly to disclose how low their film rentals are compared with the independents. It is impossible to get actual figures for comparison, but from all general information at hand, it seems that there is a wide disparity. This is not all just presumption, however. There is some information, which has been garnered from former exchange managers, who have been discarded in more recent years for one reason or another.

In discussing this situation with a former Exchange manager, who is now an independent exhibitor, he said that he had to laugh at the hue and cry of the distributor for great rentals, due to loss of foreign revenue.

"Why not set up this formula," he stated. "Let the 4000 odd theatres that are operated, or controlled by the producers, agree to pay for film rental the same per-

centage per thousand population, that is extracted from the Independents, and you would see how quickly about \$400,000.00 more money would be received by the Distributors, on each "A" release."

Continuing he barked, "Either the Independents are paying TOO MUCH for product, or the chain operated houses are paying TOO LITTLE. On the whole, I think the Independents are not paying too much. I do know from my past experience, however, that the producer controlled houses with their master agreements, blanket contracts and annual settlement days, pay infinitely less than the Independents. The Government's inquiry into the chain operation will likely bring this out. Whether this is a matter for the Department of Justice, I do not know, not being a lawyer. It is of concern to me, when I am asked to help make up that European deficit. I will do my share, if the producer makes his own theatre come up to our film rental level—and not until then. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

RIDGE IMPRESSED BY SOUTH'S OPERATING METHODS

Just Down South, Dec. 16th.—If we may be forgiven for discussing a matter that necessarily has to deal with personalities, it would be interesting to take a look behind the scenes, and see the operation of the chain owned houses all over the South, and compare them with the ones on the North, East and West. Especially with respect to the attitude of the personnel; its attitude toward the BOSS: his initiative, his freedom of action in the conduct of the house over which he presides, and his standing in the community in which he lives.

Take for example the managers in all the Wilby-Kincey houses in the Carolinas and George and Tennessee as well as over in Alabama. One of the rules is that the resident manager should live in his own home, if possible. If the manager is not able to buy it, he is encouraged through home office financing. He is encouraged to become a part of the civic and cultural life of the community. He belongs to the Kiwanis Club.

(Continued on Page 13)

'Of Mice and Men' Impressive But Heavy

HAL ROACH-UNITED ARTISTS

(The Digest Estimates 95%)
Producer-Director Lewis Milestone
Associate Producer.....Frank Ross
Novel and play.....John Steinbeck
ScreenplayEugene Solow
Featured: Burgess Meredith, Betty Fields, Lon Chaney, Jr., Chas. Bickford, Roman Bohnen, Bob Steele, Noah Beery Jr., Granville Bates, Oscar O'Shea, Leigh Whipper.
PhotographyNorbert Brodine
Photographic Effects: Roy Se-wright.
Edited by.....Bert Jordan
Time80 minutes

There are so many unpleasant facts in life, and so many of the most unpleasant seem to be known to John Steinbeck, that one must hesitate before making the slightest sort of guess as to the box office appeal of Hal Roach's "Of Mice and Men."

There need be no hesitation concerning the consummate skill of the production, in skillful adaptation of the original story, the powerful direction, and the telling performances of the cast.

It is a craftsman's picture. Milestone becomes Steinbeck as the transference is made to the screen. The players have the flesh and blood of the speaking stage, and that indefinable addition that camera and its back-grounds can give.

The result is a picture that is gripping from opening scene to final fade-out. Unpleasant, surely, at many points. Never cheerful, except in a wistful way, in painting a dream for the principals that one knows will never come to pass. And ending on a note that doesn't exactly send you out with sharpened appetite for dinner.

Aside from Milestone's sympathetically skillful job of direction, the highnotes of the picture concern the cast. Burgess Meredith—too long neglected by the screen when one remembers "Winterset"—turns in one of those Academy performances. His strength through repression, his shading, is marvelous to behold and to listen to.

Not far behind is the job turned in by Lon Chaney, Jr., in the role of Lennie. Perhaps some people will realize now what a showmanship trick it would have been to present Lon Chaney, Jr., in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." His characterization here is one of the sort that will hover in the memory.

Support is also excellent. Chas. Bickford subordinates himself to the general advantage of the whole. Roman Boehm, from the

Group Theater of New York, sells himself a future in screen character roles. Betty Field is satisfactory, but the delineation of her character given by the scripter is not as clean cut as the others, and to some extent she suffers.

The story, which leans a bit more to the novel than to the stage version, needs little retelling. The keystone is Lennie, the brute whose strength and whose heart are so big as to dwarf his mind. And, more importantly, it is the story of George, who alternately plays Legree, mentor, and nurse to the hulking brute whose

caresses mean death to the objects of his love. Lennie never wishes to "do anything bad," and George tries to watch that he never even does anything that others might consider bad, but tragedy enters through the ten-penny Jezebel who asks Lennie to stroke her hair. Death for the tart; and release in death for Lennie at the hands of his pal.

Regardless of the controversial angles concerning the appeal of this type of subject, it is not possible to give too much credit to Hal Roach, Associate Producer Frank Ross, and Director Lewis

Milestone for the sincerity and success of their adaptation of the subject they set out to make.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Hot for many spots where the sensational success of the play will sell. A masterful production, so you needn't worry on that score. But very heavy and unpleasant for most audiences. Not for the days the whole family comes. Previewed December 22.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

This review is going to press before the other local reviews have appeared. Extracts will be published in next week's Digest.

Latest 'Higgins' Subject OK Family Show

REPUBLIC

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate Producer-Director: Gus Meins.

ScreenplayJack Townley
Original Story: Jack Townley, Taylor Caven.

Featured: James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Lois Ransom, Tommy Ryan, Thurston Hall, Winifre Harris, Douglas Meins, Lucien Littlefield, Herbert Rawlinson, Jack Rice, Andrew Tombes, Gladys Blake, Jean Fenwick.

PhotographerErnest Miller
Film Editor.....William Morgan
Time60 minutes

"Money to Burn" is well up to standard in family audience values as established by the Higgins Family series, and takes on additional value through a clever premise presented by the original screenplay. This premise concerns the current "contest-craze" of so many million American families and what it does to their lives.

Exhibitors will realize that there is a theme here, because too many of their customers have to be baited to leave home and lose time on the many make-a-million contests that radios and magazines are offering these days. And the same folks sitting in the audience will appreciate the family bickerings that arouse from such contests.

Gene Townley and Taylor Caven supplied the original story. Townley put it in script form, and Gus Meins directed with the knowledge of pace diluted with slapstick memories that characterizes his work, and that is prob-

ably the best answer to making these Higgins yarns satisfactory dual entertainment.

Cast again has the Gleasons trouping with vaudeville ability in the leading family roles, Harry Davenport's grandparent giving it a touch of class, plotting aimed at avoiding any dull moment, laughs more loud than intelligent, and the good old formula chase for the finish.

Satisfactory entertainment, but it must be admitted that Meins and others were doing this same thing in two reel comedies ten years ago and with more compressed satisfaction.

Ridge Has Happy Florida News

(Continued from Page 12)

Chamber of Commerce, takes an active part in all Civic matters, and becomes an integral part of the community life.

Compare that with the leap frog operations imposed. Bill Zenner, manager of one of the Skouras Brothers good houses as well as many others in Southern California. Bill Zenner is typical out in that operation, of many, many managers, who scarcely stay long enough in one spot to pay his gas bill twice in the same city, much less gain a voting residence.

Then listen, if you will, to the praises you hear all over the South about their bosses in not only the Wilby-Kincey operation, but about Tony Sudekum, M. A. Lightman, E. V. Richards, Sparks and Rogers, Lukas and Jenkins,

and the Meyers Circuit in Miami. These men are treated like partners, and really feel that they are a part of the organization. They get vacations, receive unsolicited bonuses, frequently taken on excursions and fishing trips, with the Boss and generally treated like human beings. You could not tear one of these managers away from his employment, if you offered him a Rhett Butler part opposite Dorothy Lamour. They are just sold on their boss man, on their organizations and on their jobs.

I have made many inquiries among the customers in various chain operated cities in the south, about who operates the theatres. The people generally will tell you the managers name, and never mention it's a Sparks house, etc. Locally the manager dominates it, and is so accepted by the public.

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College of Arts and Sciences

It Was a
BLACKOUT *Xmas*
In Finland



Yes . . . it was really "Silent Night" in a sorrowful way for teeming thousands of the aged, the infirm, and the children.

Would you like to send a RAY OF LIGHT through that Blackout?

Perhaps a mouthful of bread, a warm garment to help against Arctic cold, a spark of human encouragement to fellow humans?

It Is Easy . . .

A motion picture FINNISH RELIEF COMMITTEE, under the chairmanship of Joseph Mankiewicz, has been organized and every branch of picture production and every section of Hollywood, is represented with chairmen ready to tell you how. Check with the representative in your own studio—and he will let you know how to play a part in lifting the BLACKOUT on human souls.