

Chit-Chat

By Henriette Horak

Hollywood novel butchery has redeemed itself a bit with Columbia's high-brow, as well as box office triumph, "Crime and Punishment." Director Josef von Sternberg (of Marlene Dietrich fame) has digressed from the glorification of legs and proved that he has an understanding of the psychological. Or perhaps all the laurels should be wrapped around the bullet shaped, closely cropped head of Peter Lorre, the Raskolnikov of the novel.

Lorre, an almost uncanny combination of the brute and the highly sensitive genius, portrays the Russian "type" better than a native Russian, reared in the soil of the steppes.

It is difficult to find among the great roster of actors, one that could equal the performance of Lorre, as he gradually breaks and confesses to the murder of a pawnbroker hag. (Mrs. Patrick Campbell). The constant staccato, like-water-dripping-in-the-head questioning of fat Inspector Sametov, (Edward Arnold) aimed at the conscience, drives Raskolnikov just where the inspector wants him.

In one instance only does Lorre fail to make his face the mirror of his feelings—his attempt at exaltation when his conscience is cleared. But then, his face is not made for exaltation!

Garbo to Return

Greta Garbo "tanks she will come home" to Hollywood from her castle in Sweden. Reason—Irving Thalberg has a picture under his hat starring Greta Garbo, based on the life of Countess Marie Walewska, Polish sweetheart of Napoleon. With "Romeo and Juliet" and "Marie Antoinette" the new picture will give Thalberg three period costumes to his schedule.

Music for Westerns

Something novel in the line of galloping westerns; Walter Putter is going to try something new with his next Hoot Gibson range epic. It's going to be a yodeling opera with cowboy Gibson set to sing the plot. According to Putter, the music will not be incidental but an integral part of the plot—all of which makes even an iceberg shudder. The arias for Hoot are being written by Archie Gottler, and the story is from the fertile brain of Ben S. Cohen.

Sword Play

Claude Rains (Crime Without Passion) is suffering from facial lacerations received in a rapier duel with Louis Hayward for a scene in "Anthony Adverse" at Warner's studios. Actors were rehearsing when the melee waxed warm and became too realistic.

"Paradise Lost" Bothers Critics; Odets Takes Rap

Last year when the three plays of Clifford Odets were produced simultaneously to Broadway audiences, the public gave him a tremendous ovation, and the newspaper critics acclaimed him as the only white hope of American drama. Reason: Odets dealt with realism as it exists today in social and economic life of the proletariat.

Critics Grow Loud

This year when the Group Theatre presented his "Paradise Lost," the general newspaper verdict is against Odets. Critics denounced him for depicting an inchoative and futile state of the middle class family, which is so immature and futuristic. They further condemned him for brooding too much on Marxism and the eventual collapse of the bourgeoisie group. Krutch of the Nation, in summarizing the main features of this play, which is based on the middle class family of the Bronx, said in part: "Adultery, murder . . . sexual repression, sleeping sickness and whatever it is that causes middle-aged men to pinch girls in the subway."

Whatever potent charges are flayed on the morals of Odets, the group still maintain that "Paradise Lost," judged according to social values, is a great portrait of the liberal middle-class.

Alpha Delta Sigma will give a free lunch for members at the Del Rey cafe today noon.

Shakespeare In Hollywood Finds Exuberant Reception; Reinhardt Directs "Dream"

Joseph Krutch, in the Nation, says, " . . . the fate of Shakespeare is even now hanging in the balance—of the box-office books." "We wonder what the combination of Reinhardt, Cagney, Kenyon, and Hollywood will do to 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' It might be worth the prices to go and satisfy ourselves that the intellectual giants of Hollywood haven't changed it into a nightmare.

Among those critics that have seen the extravaganza there is a fairly unanimous agreement that, in order to be successful on the screen, there is need for greater transmutation than was attempted in the "Dream", as the filmom press-agents so fondly call it. The fault seems to be in a duplicity of art form; giving a visual representation and yet leaving in the descriptive passages written by Shakespeare.

Picture Is Long

In looking over the cast we are not surprised, since Reinhardt has a hand in the production, to find a Nijinska ballet. But when critics and theatregoers alike complain about the length of the film (2 1/2 hours) we wonder if spectacle is favored over the real meat and matter of the story. Shakespeare's works are movie material without the addition of Warner Brother mechanics. Filmom's problem is not the addition of the musical comedy traditions, but the adaptation of essential elements to their artistic medium—the camera.

The advertisements and reviews headline Cagney, and the other hams in his group. Why not sacrifice the rest of the play to a farce or a strip act? Shakespeare was more risqué than either, and funny about it, but his comedy was not intended to overshadow the main plot.

Box Office Success

It is our guess, however, that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" will be a box-office success. Cag-

ney fans, Powell fans, and Reinhardt addicts will attend in order to see the latest master piece of their favorites. Shakespeare lovers will go to boo and hiss in best Elizabethan tradition. Whether Hollywood will repeat or not depends on which element is fooled.

Joseph Smith.

Lily Pons Movie Uses Opera Hits; Different Story

An inspiration from a newspaper interview with Lily Pons, world renowned opera singer, prompted Elsie Finn and David Whittell to write "I Dream Too Much." Now, Lily Pons does justice to herself in this newly released production of Pandro S. Berman.

The screen debut for the famous diva brings to movie audiences the whole second act of Delibes' "Lakme" and arias from Verdi's "Rigoletto." This to Hollywood isn't enough to insure success to an opera star, so a clever stage contraption makes it possible for Miss Pons to render in soul-like manner, "I Got Love," and "I'm the Echo."

Plot Reversed

The story is charming, directed with the usual John Cromwell ease. For the sake of difference, the plot has been reversed from the usual story. The heroine vainly tries to escape fame and fortune to lead a happy normal life with her husband, (Henry Fonda) whom she married one night on a drunken spree.

Reproductions of the famous opera houses of the world will be seen in the screening. The Paris Opera house, Convent Gardens, the Metropolitan and those in Milan, Vienna and Berlin are among them.

Blond Gets Laughs

"Many good laughs are supplied by Eric Blore and his trained seal, who are in the supporting cast with Osgood Perkins, Luci Le Ball, Lucien Littlefield, and Esther Dale.

To some, the bits of opera in "I Dream Too Much" will be too little, but the disappointment may be eased with the success of the sparkling romance which plays with the heart strings.

Dorris Bailey.

Hollywood Goes Highbrow with Artistic Shows

Can it be that "highbrow cinema" is becoming popular? Within the last two years films of exceptional artistic merit have emerged from the relative obscurity of club and neighborhood theater showings to nationwide popular billings. Until recently, American producers would have left the filming of "The Scoundrel" and "The Informer" to less box-office-conscious countries. Who could have foretold the enthusiasm which they were destined to excite?

New Films Arrive

The trend away from pictures produced for a twelve year old public was foreshadowed by American showings of the German-made films, "Maedchen in Uniform" and "M," and Eisenstein's pictorial masterpiece, "Thunder Over Mexico." About the same time New Yorkers interested in films "whose aims are progress rather than profit" formed the Film Forum and the Film Society, organizations which offered their members an opportunity to see "foreign and domestic films of superior quality which would not otherwise be shown."

Coward Plays "Scoundrel"

"The Scoundrel," produced by Hecht and McArthur, with Noel Coward in the leading role, was an amusing satire on the brittle, shallow, pseudo-sophisticates among the New York literati, and as such was well received by a considerable audience. In "The Informer," which was a box-office success throughout the country, much of the mood was created by novel lighting effects. "The atmosphere of hushed terror of Dublin under the Black and Tans" and the guilt of the protagonist, who has sold his friend's

Find Any Familiar Faces?



Above is a conglomerate group of Hollywood "hams" who will take important and minor parts in "Midsummer Night's Dream," Hollywood's first venture into Shakespeare.

Peter Lorre Wins Praise In New Film

One of the masterpieces of psychological interpretation, "Crime and Punishment" at the Hellig theatre, will probably remain as one of those pictures often heard about but seldom seen.

Peter Lorre, through his superb performances in past films, has become firmly entrenched in the esteem of the better class of American movie-goers, but he is no Karloff—thank God!

Lorre Looks Part

The soapy-eyed European actor, with the physiognomy of a startled gargoyle, displays his usual amount of sinister immobility. But in "Crime and Punishment" he has established another side to his facile nature: ironic humor. Originally billed as the lead, Edward Arnold still gives a pleasing performance, but this comes from the mere comparison of his technique with Lorre's. The two are opposites, yet adapted to each other—an effective contrast.

Story Holds Attention

The story, briefly, concerns a young criminologist (Peter Lorre), who, as a brilliant university graduate, finds himself out of work in the old, aristocratic Russia. He commits what starts out to be the perfect crime, as he slugs a rapacious old she-pawnbroker. Then, after a brief period of prosperity, the evidence begins to close in, while the chief of police, (Edward Arnold), plays a cat-and-mouse game. The picture comes to a conclusion as Lorre decides to pay for his crime.

Settings Effective

The plot only indicates the direction of the story. It does not tell of the trip-hammer psychological pressure, that has not been rivaled since "The Informer." From the time of the murder, on, the strain on Lorre is realistically interpreted. The stage setting is effectively simple, rightly putting the emphasis on the portrayal of the human mind.

freedom, is suggested by semi-darkness relieved by the faint glow of street lamps. As in most of the revolutionary artistic cinema offerings dialogue is reduced to a minimum, and periods of complete silence are employed to increase suspense or add emphasis.

Edward G. Robinson has signed managerial contract with the William Morris office in Hollywood, and will free lance after his next and final contract picture for Warner's "Bullets or Ballots."

Subscription rates \$2.50 a year.

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Dickens' Stories Easily Adapted To Cinema Needs

There is one primary reason why Dickens' stories are successful in movie adaptations. It is because they are so sentimental. First of all a master in the art of securing sympathy for the weaknesses and misfortunes of his characters, Dickens combined this power with a deft ability at characterization to give, unconsciously, to Hollywood a ready-made guarantee of box office receipts.

Dickens Sentimental

Consider that the majority of theatre goers judge a picture by how much they cry, how scared they are in the crises, or how angry they become with the villain (or, with the prolific Dickens, villains). Thus judged, Dickens films rank at the top of the list of cinematic successes, and will continue to do so.

Artistically, Dickens' tales are easily adapted to the screen. There is ample opportunity for character actors to "strut their stuff," usually with admirable effect. (Note: Uriah Heep and the idiot in "David Copperfield" and the hag in "A Tale of Two Cities.")

Condensation Helps

Dickens in any form is better condensed, and certainly the movies care for this phase of the business efficiently. A little prone to over-do this condensing process as a rule, with the filming of Dickens the result is less damaging than flatterings.

Capable direction is all that remains to insure the success of a Dickens film for a Dickens lover. Superb direction and superb acting can make attendance at a "David Copperfield" or a "Tale of Two Cities" worthwhile for others in search of an evening's entertainment.

Mary Rogers, daughter of Will Rogers, suffered a nervous breakdown in Philadelphia and withdrew from the cast of "Three Wise Fools."

Reason: couldn't stand the strain of constant stream of well wishers who wanted to reminisce about her father.

That rooster discovered crowing at midnight in the city hall of an eastern city undoubtedly was just another victim of the daylight saving system.

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Street Scene Is Cross Cut Of Tenements

"Street Scene," to be presented here by the University players February 7-8, made blasé mid-season Broadway forget to yawn, won a round of applause from London audiences, and was a success in the cinema adaptation. And why? Because it is real. Its aim is to present a cross-section of life as it is in lower New York.

It has but one setting, that of a nondescript "walk-up" apartment house typical of the ugly, brownstone houses built in the early nineties and since deteriorated into tenements. There are nearly fifty characters, some twenty of whom are clearly drawn, yet Mr. Rice successfully focuses the attention upon one of the families, and from this domestic drama emerges the tragedy of the play.

Setting Familiar

It is an every day group of people that we are shown, doing every day things but around them over the forces of love and hate, of life and death. The Murrant family are the principals in this tragedy. Frank Murrant demanded obedience and exacted it at the cost of love and of life itself. Mrs. Murrant asked only a kind word in return for her love; but despairing of this, her need drove her to accept the friendship of Sankey.

The conversation of the tenants and the realization of the discord of the temperaments of the Murrants prepare for the tragedy, yet the climax comes with such force and vividness that it would move the most hardened bystander. Rose Murrant moves away to the suburbs so that her younger brother will grow up in a better environment and leaves Sam Kaplan, whose reason for living is his love for Rose. But life goes on.

Details Noted

Elmer Rice shows remarkable mastery in his selection of detail toward realism. He has chosen type characters, but they are so finely shaded that they remain individuals. The idea of the play and the manner in which he has carried it out make "Street Scene" a real drama.

M. Riopelle.

Two-year courses in traffic safety have been introduced in Milwaukee public schools in an effort to reduce the number of deaths in automobile accidents.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" Cracks Endurance Record; Offered Good Acting; No Cushions

"Good and long" sighed the audience as the curtain swished together on the 27th scene of Harriet Beecher Stowe's tear-jerking drama of slavery, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," directed by Dr. W. E. Buchanan Jr., and presented by the Very Little theatre in a seven-day run at their new hideout at 13th and Monroe.

Marred only by a four-hour sit-

ting, nasty kinks in the neck and places, fleeting visions of much-desired punchy pillows to ease the strain of puritanical prayer-meeting benches, the play provided fine entertainment.

Characterization Good

Character interpretations were a cross-section from life, good, bad, and indifferent. The stars: Roaring Simon Legree (Dr. W. E. Buchanan, Jr.) bellowed through his bewhiskered mouth with such elegance and force as to make the bravest egotist shudder. As loyal, kindly, pious Uncle Tom, former Oregon pigskin carrier, "Shy" Huntington in his rheumatic shuffling and the use of a tremulous voice was always "in character."

Topsy (Mary Bennett) with her hallelujah gestures, spunk, and oft repeated "Ah's so wicked!" twirled the audience around her black finger.

Malcolm Bauer as St. Clair, a smooth southern gentleman, made a fine showing, putting life into a dead role. Prissy Miss Ophelia (Mrs. Genevieve Tugman) reeked with Yankee prudence, beautifully clucking out "shiftless" to all the black-boys. Quaker Phineas, (Mr. A. B. Holeman) a "teetotaling" drunkard reeled out an excellent performance as a red-nosed tobacco-chauvinist comedian.

Songs Give Atmosphere

Negro spirituals and southern songs by a cotton-pickers' quartet and an orchestra provided through the efforts of Mr. Rex Underwood, Mrs. Edna Brockman and Miss Janet Smith whipped the audience into an atmosphere of the old South.

One suggestion for the future—either cut the lines or provide pillows.

Roberta Moody.

Subscription rates \$2.50 a year.

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