



BURGESS MEREDITH and Betty Field, above, are shown in a scene from "Of Mice and Men," film made from John Steinbeck's play and novel which opens at the McDonald theater Wednesday.

Screen World

by Ridgely Cummings

In Which Is Discussed Double-Level Technique, Growing Old, Deanna Durbin, Men, Mice

When she grows too old to dream, Deanna Durbin will have lots of nice things to remember, if we may paraphrase an old song. One of the nicest should be "It's a Date," her current offering under the New Universal's aegis at the Mayflower theater.

In the four years since 1936, when she made her debut in "Three Smart Girls," the youthful miss with the million-dollar pipes has made six musical hits, and it looks like "Date" is the seventh.

The picture is a good example of the double-level or scatter-shot technique. It is aimed at the customer in the balcony who wants action and laughter and at the same time it pleases the esthete in the orchestra who likes adult dialogue, artistic settings, good photography, good music, thoughtful directorial touches. The balcony customer doesn't object to any of these things either, provided he gets his quota of thrills and laughs, so everybody is happy, including the exhibitor who receives proof of public approval at the box office.

Growing Up

Miss Durbin has her most mature role to date and does well by it. Not beautiful, not even exactly pretty, she has a charm all her own. Part of it is no doubt due to her exceptional voice, but even if she didn't sing a note she would still have something compounded of youth, freshness, naive self-assurance, a sort of starry-eyed faith in the essential goodness of the world that is very appealing.

Deanna, if we may refer so familiarly to one with whom we have only a sol-distant and celluloid acquaintance, struck fame at the awkward period of emerging adolescence. She has grown into budding womanhood under the watchful eyes of the \$5 million U. S. citizens who go to the movies each week. (The figures are from Will Hays' annual report.)

That she has gone through this critical period with nary a fumble nor false step is a tribute to the careful nursing and shrewd picking of stories for her by Universal, William Selter, her director, and her various script writers.

If "Date" is smooth entertainment, and it is, much of the credit must go to Norman Krasna, of whom more anon.

These Hating Years

Kay Francis, Walter Pidgeon, and Eugene Pallette head a strong supporting cast. Miss Francis plays Deanna's mother, who is also a rival for Pidgeon's affections, and we can just imagine her misgivings over the Mammy role, allowing herself to be typed as being "of a certain age." We don't think she made any mistake in abandoning the ingenue parts to those better suited to them; her last few pictures have not been howling successes and we doubt if Kay Francis is made of the same stuff as Sarah Bernhardt, who played Juliet at the age of sixty.

There is a big black-browed lug named Lewis Howard in the picture who turns in an excellent performance as Deanna's fellow drama student and would-be swain. In a misunderstanding over the French pronunciation of "Dauphin" and "dope fiend" he seizes the opportunity to do a bit of comic mugging that had the audience in stitches and kept this corner smiling every time he reappeared thereafter.

Samuel S. Hinds and S. Z. Sakall also do nice characterizations of a benevolent producer and a harassed playwright, respectively. Deanna sings Schubert's beautiful "Ave Maria," the high spot of the picture for us, and five other songs.

Boy Wonder

To get back to Norman Krasna, who authored the script which blends so nicely with Miss Durbin's talents. The press sheets modestly dub him a "boy wonder." At 21 he had been a drama editor, magazine editor, and playwright. On the verge of 30 now, he is established as one of Hollywood's best scenarists and has also been a producer. We don't know if he is a boy wonder, but he gets our vote as an able writer.

Orson Welles

Speaking of boy wonders and infants terribles reminds us of Orson Welles, an outstanding member of the species. They are apt to be very irritating at times, these boy wonders. Still and all, Mr. Welles must have had a cocktail too many before his recent speech in

Kansas City in which he referred to movie actors as "really the same class of people that wait on tables."

That was a very rash thing for Mr. Welles to do. If he had said the movie elite were "just like people who wait on tables" he might not have made anyone angry except a few snooty Hollywood notables who cherish a fond belief in their superiority to the rest of us.

Rag and Bull

But when he dragged in the word "class" Mr. Welles stepped out of bounds and it is not to be wondered at that he has been thrown for numerous losses in the public press ever since.

It was woefully undemocratic of the "man from Mars" to mention "class." Like waving a rumor before Paul Deutschmann, who immediately scents a story and is restive till he runs it down, this word "class" is a bloody rag to everyone who maintains there ain't no such animal.

Mayhap Mr. Welles believes in some sort of intellectual aristocracy, as some of his other public utterances might lead one to believe, but he is on soggy ground when he confuses intelligence with economic status.

In these United States the people who wait on tables like to believe they are just as good as the people they serve, as indeed they are in every respect except the size of their pay envelopes. Of course this opens up a wide field for discussion that would include the relative strength of heredity and environment, the question of whether one needs money to get culture, the availability of public libraries, museums and so on and so forth.

So we won't pursue it any further, except to say that we liked best the reaction of Bette Davis, who said there are an awful lot of nice waiters and waitresses and she hoped they wouldn't mind the comparison.

Reminiscence

A couple years ago, along in January or February of 1938, a Dollar line ship named the President Pierce docked in Hoboken after completing a round-the-world cruise and the fellow who is writing this column paid off before the U. S. shipping commissioner, packed his belongings in a pair of battered Shanghai bags, and took a ferry to Manhattan. That evening he went to a cut-rate theater ticket agency, I think it's called Gray's, on the subway level of Times Square, and looked over the boards which hang behind the counter to see what theatrical bargains were being offered.

It was winter, the season of shows, and there were any number of flops, near flops, and plays that had opened weak and were hanging on hoping for belated recognition. You could buy orchestra seats to them for the price of a balcony, and a balcony seat for the price of a movie. Bucking the critics and appealing over their heads to prospective audiences, producers with faith use this method to cover their empty rows of plush cushions.

On another black board were listed the more successful plays, at regular prices. Our undecided hero, who had not been exposed to any sort of play publicity for three months, wavered momentarily. Then he saw "Amphitryon 38," with Lunt and Fontaine, and was about to remove the safety



DEANNA DURBIN is the center of a triangle that involves Walter Pidgeon and Kay Francis in this scene from "It's a Date," musical drama now playing at the Mayflower theater.



A SCENE from "Gulliver's Travels," technicolor version of Jonathan Swift's classical satire on kings and commoners, is shown above. Produced by Max Fleischer, the picture opens Thursday at the Rex theater.

pins from his wallet when out of the corner of his eye he read "Steinbeck."

Investigation showed that "Of Mice and Men," with Wallace Ford and Broderick Crawford, was on. He knew of Wallace Ford only as a minor movie comedian, and of Broderick Crawford nothing. But for some strange reason, possibly a predilection for the realistic as against the fanciful, he picked that play to see.

Nor was he sorry. Steinbeck's stuff plays itself. The lines are so genuine, they ring so true, that anybody who reads them sincerely can put them over.

"Of Mice and Men" is coming to town this week, Wednesday at the Mac, and if Hal Roach, who produced it, and Lewis Milestone, who directed, have stuck anywhere near close to the script it ought to be one of 1940's ten best. Burgess Meredith, who did such good work in "Wintereset," is cast as George, the spunky little ranch hand who might have "lived off the fat of the land" if he hadn't had big dumb Lennie to keep out of trouble.

Lon Chaney Jr. plays Lennie, strong with the strength of a brainless Ebbinghag. "Guys like us," the foneliest guys in the world," Steinbeck has George say, and much of the story is devoted to their efforts to win some land of their own, a mite of economic security.

This week offers exceptional screen fare all along the line. Now playing at the McDonald is "Rebecca," starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine. Alfred Hitchcock, as famed for his



THE DRAMATIC TALENTS of Ginger Rogers, above, are shown at the Heilig theater in "Primrose Path," romantic drama which is the hit of the same name.

from Life, two publications which seldom go overboard on derelicts, to stretch a metaphor. RKO-Radio produces, Gregory Le Cava directs, and Miss Bryan is said to be given a wide field in which to exercise her dramatic ability.

Then at the Rex this Tuesday an old favorite returns. It is "We Are Not Alone," from James Hilton's novel of the same name, with Paul Muni and Jane Bryan in the leads. We wrote at some length about this one a few months back, but it is worth repeating that it is first class adult entertainment. Muni gives a sensitive performance, Miss Bryan is very good, and the Edmund Goulding directing is worthy of the James Hilton story, which is saying a lot.

PENNER AT STATE

The plight of a pigeon-raising taxi-driver who is compelled to

become a horse-trainer again will make for much of the screaming comedy of "The Bookies Wept" Joe Penner's test RKO Radio vehicle, now at the State Theater today. Grable has the feminine lead.

Volcano Erupts In Film Climax

An earthquake, volcano erupts and desperate battles between savage natives and lions, and other wild beasts of the jungle are to be seen in the universal's adventure film, "The Bar," which comes Thursday at the Heilig Theater. Lola Lane seen as the woman explorer. Others in the cast of the film are James Craig, Ed Clanel, Samuel S. Hinds, Fadden and Clarence Muse.

This Week at the Theaters

MCDONALD
Sunday Through Tuesday
Rebecca.

Free, Blonde and 21.
Wednesday Through Friday
Of Mice and Men.
French Without Tears.

HEILIG
Sunday through Wednesday
Primrose Path.
Thursday through Saturday
Zanzibar.
Legion of the Lawless

REX
Sunday Through Monday.
Eternally Yours.
Barricade.

Tuesday, Wednesday.
We Are Not Alone.
All Women Have Secrets.
Thursday Through Saturday
Gulliver's Travels.
Submarine D-1.

MAYFLOWER
Sunday through Wednesday.
It's a Date.
Thursday through Saturday.
Primrose Path.

STATE
Sunday through Tuesday.
Hunchback of Notre Dame.
The Day the Bookies Wept.
Wednesday, Thursday.
Bad Little Angel.
Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence.

Friday, Saturday.
Chip of the Flying U.
Five Little Pipers at Home.

Medieval Paris Life In 'Hunchback'

A vivid picture of life in medieval Paris is presented in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," RKO Radio's spectacular version of Victor Hugo's novel, starring Charles Laughton, which is currently unreeled at the State theater. Dealing with a nobleman's persecution of a gypsy girl and how a deformed outcast, the bell-ringer of the cathedral of Notre Dame, rescues her, the tale has long been a favorite with readers all over the world.

Maureen O'Hara enacts the role of the gypsy girl and Sir Cedric Hardwicke that of the villain.

Dramatic Nights

Nights of drama never twice the same fill the lives of the exciting new lovelies at the hotel for women in "Free, Blonde and 21," the 20th Century-Fox film now playing at the McDonald Theater. Lynn Bari, Mary Beth Hughes, Joan Davis, Henry Wilcoxon and Robert Lowery head the cast.



CHARLES LAUGHTON, above, plays the deformed Quasimodo in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," RKO's historical spectacle which is now playing at the State theater.

Comic Hits Blackout

"French Without Tears," English-made film version of the stage success, opening Wednesday at the McDonald Theater, was the first picture to "crack the blackout" with a long run in London. Starring Ray Milland and Ellen Drew, its appeal to London audiences must have been great, for it tells a gay story in which a feminine huntress, Ellen Drew is turned loose in a school where a half dozen young men are studying French to enter the diplomatic service.

AMERICAN CONSUL
Charles Winninger, veteran character actor, portrays an heroic American consul in the action drawn, "Barricade," now at the Rex theater.

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Advertisement for McDonald Theater listing shows like 'Rebecca', 'Free Blonde and 21', and 'The Day the Bookies Wept'.

Large advertisement for State Theatre featuring Charles Laughton in 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' and Joe Penner in 'The Day the Bookies Wept'.

Advertisement for Rex Theater featuring 'Eternally Yours' with Loretta Young and David Niven.

Advertisement for Heilig Theater featuring 'Primrose Path' with Ginger Rogers and Joel McCrea.

Large advertisement for Mayflower Theater featuring Deanna Durbin in 'It's a Date'.

Large advertisement for Heilig Theater featuring 'Primrose Path' with Ginger Rogers and Joel McCrea.