

Lee Remick

IS SHE WORTH A \$3,000,000 GAMBLE?

Producer-director Otto Preminger is betting that this relatively unknown starlet can fill the role Lana Turner walked out on.

by Peer J. Oppenheimer

WHILE THE FOLKS in Ishpeming, Mich., stared at movie people shooting "Anatomy of a Murder" in their town, the Hollywood visitors were gawking at starlet Lee Remick.

Here was the relatively unproved actress chosen to replace Lana Turner, queen of the glamour girls, in Columbia's \$3-million version of the best-selling novel. Here was the 23-year-old who would have to work under Hollywood's toughest director, dictatorial Otto Preminger whose high-handed tactics had made Lana walk off the set in a rare temper tantrum.

Whether Lee Remick could ever emerge from Lana's shadow and whether she could weather Preminger's angry outbursts were questions fascinating enough for actors and technicians to wager money on.

Their bets, however, were peanuts compared to the gamble Preminger and Miss Remick were taking. Rightly or wrongly, Preminger was being blamed for losing the box-office sock of Lana Turner, a vital property when millions are at stake. If he could bring out the best in Lee Remick, he could scorn his critics and cast himself in his favorite role—the Pygmalion-like genius who "creates" actresses from nothingness.

Preminger has pulled off such long-shot gambles. Maggie MacNamara in "The Moon Is Blue," for example. But he's lost, too. Remember Jean Seberg, chosen as his "St. Joan" after a highly publicized, world-wide talent hunt? She helped create Otto's biggest box-office flop. With typical stubbornness, he cast her in his next production, "Bonjour Tristesse," and propped up her limited talents with Deborah Kerr and David Niven. Result: flop No. 2.

In the initial casting for "Anatomy of a Murder," Preminger seemed a little starlet-shy. He chose Lana Turner as a sure thing. It didn't work out like

that. Her job was to portray a wife whose virtue was in question. Would the public accept her in this role, knowing of her many marriages and recent tragic romance? After watching Lana act, Preminger didn't think so and, according to associates, he went about getting rid of her by devious ways.

Lana was costumed in a dowdy dress. She called Preminger and politely complained about the "disagreement" with the dress designer.

"Why, there's no 'disagreement,'" Otto admits saying. "I'm the producer, and I'll tell you what to wear. Take it or leave it!"

Lana got the hint. She left. Any star would have. As she parted, Lana got in a barbed rejoinder, "If Lee Remick is right for this role, then I was definitely wrong."

WITH THE previous flops and the tempest over Lana's purge, Lee Remick had to pay off for Preminger. In the excitement, people forgot that she had to pay off for herself, too. Since she was 16, Lee has hammered at the theater's front door with only backdoor success. Summer theater, national companies, two Broadway flops, TV, and roles in three motion pictures gave her experience without stardom.

Yet the handicappers at Ishpeming were impressed. Through the years, this girl had learned acting. As for glamour, well, she could fill Lana Turner's retired sweater any time, and she imparted that electric quality, too, which Hollywood calls "sex appeal." But as Lee went through her first scenes under Preminger's thoughtful scowl, few believed the protagonists could win their gamble. Lee had a steel-like quality, the wise ones noted. When she and Otto clashed, there would be fire, not just the smoldering exhibited by Lana.

The first sparks between them had

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Jimmy Stewart and Lee Remick are directed by Otto Preminger in "Anatomy of a Murder," the film that may make Lee a star.