

America Discovers a Unique French Couple

(Continued)

in their household, and she takes them. That's why she wears no make-up, except a trace of eye shadow. She used to wear lipstick until Yves took soap and water one day and scrubbed it off. He was exasperated because it always looked smudged.

Nevertheless, Simone is an independent woman. Recently, she refused a Paris picture offer, partly because it would separate her from Yves, but mostly because "it was a bad script."

"If I had a choice between a good script and staying with Yves, I'd take the script!" she says with customary candor. "Unfortunately, there are so few good scripts."

Simone, who maintains she isn't a "dedicated" wife and never sacrifices anything for her husband, nevertheless seems to keep her magnetic husband contented. As Yves puts it—and he has been divorced, too—"I can't see myself married to any other woman!"

Yves, also 39, started entertaining as a volunteer cabaret singer in the waterfront district of Marseilles where he worked as a longshoreman—and, in a turnabout, as a ladies' hairdresser!

Italian-born but a resident of France since he was two, Yves had always wanted to perform for

an audience. As a boy, he imitated Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse on street corners. His first public performance as an adult was at the Alcazar, a rough-and-tumble Marseilles music hall.

The audience knew him, liked him, and Yves was on his way at 18. During the German occupation of France, he sang in small music halls and suburban cinemas, working on the docks when engagements were too few.

Arriving in Paris in June, 1944, Yves sang at the famous Moulin Rouge, where he met Edith Piaf, who was so impressed that she put him in his first film in 1945. It was not until 1951 that Montand presented the first of his now-famous one-man shows which made him the idol of Paris. His single show ran six months, and he traveled all over Europe and South America. The fact that he always did his complete show in French speaks volumes for Montand's electric personality and talented pantomime.

ALTHOUGH YVES' and Simone's careers have been kept apart deliberately, she has helped her husband in one area—his English. When Yves arrived here several months ago, he didn't speak a word of English. Nor was he known to American audiences. Simone was, thanks to "Room at the Top," and she knew the language.

"To help him out," Simone recalls ruefully, "I would attend press interviews set up for him. There was a tendency among American reporters to consider Yves as Mr. Simone Signoret. He didn't like it—he didn't like it at all!"

What annoyed Simone most were the questions put to him. "They were so peculiar! Like, was he



Praised by public and critics, "Room at the Top" starred Simone Signoret and British Laurence Harvey.

an opera singer? Or was he another Sinatra? Or Como, or Chevalier? I couldn't wait for his opening night. I didn't even care if it was a success. I just wanted them to see for themselves what my husband was. And they did. Everything changed after his first one-man show."

Montand's magic spellbound critics at his New York debut last September, and theatergoers were still lined up at the ticket office when other commitments forced him to move on. Judging by this success and the praise from his movie director, George Cukor, it's doubtful that Yves will ever be known as "Mr. Simone Signoret" again!

That, in itself, is quite an achievement for Montand because, regardless of where Oscar goes tomorrow, he's married to an actress who seems destined to overshadow many of today's stars.



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