

Why Can't the Movie Be

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Director George Englund (left), a man with an abiding interest in international politics, gives Marlon Brando some pointers during filming of "The Ugly American."

haste and with some anger—and it showed. But we believed in the book's indictment of America's performance overseas. As a result, it has some impact, and we wanted that impact in the picture.

We finally sold the property (a book is never called a book in Hollywood) to Universal-International—largely because we were impressed with George Englund. He is a young, restless producer-director; a man more handsome than most actors and more interested in world affairs than most professors of international relations. He has traveled a good deal in Southeast Asia and knows little quirks of Buddhist religion, Malay personality, and Communist politics, which we thought would add authenticity to the book.

Englund also has a scalding sense of honesty. "As drama, this book is a mess," he said during the negotiations. I winced. "Too many characters, too many lectures, too many episodes. Don't," he said with a grin, "expect the movie to be like the book."

Nearly four years later, I saw the "rough cut" of the movie. Englund had been right. But now I knew some of the reasons—I had learned a great deal.

I sat in on the first story conference between Englund and Stewart Stern, a tall, quiet script writer who has the reputation of never working on something in which he does not believe. They went through the book, cutting down characters with an odd mixture of piety, enthusiasm, and efficiency. It went on for hours.

When I came out of the conference, I was reeling slightly. I had learned a lesson: in a novel, you can write, "Jamie felt a white-hot flash of passion," but in a movie, you have to show it and in three dimensions. A novel even a good one, can have characters who are as thin as the paper on which their names appear. The novelist can say something is so and order the reader to believe it. On the screen, you have to persuade your customer.

Somewhat later I learned that Marlon Brando was going

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