

# SR Goes to the Movies

## CRIME IN DEPTH

**C**RIME is usually two-dimensional in the movies, having length and breadth, but no depth. It is also usually two-factored, with action and some kind of motive on the part of the criminal, action and method on the part of the police. These two elements, cops and robbers, are the characters in crime drama. The third element which you might call Reason, or Intelligence, is almost always missing; consequently, the embodiment of intelligence which we call Society is also missing—the social organization which is openly responsible for the punishment of crime and implicitly responsible for preventing it. In the flat world of the movies (and in radio and television) crime spreads so far because it is spread so thin.

It is, therefore, exciting to see a beautifully executed melodrama, "The Sniper" (Columbia-Stanley Kramer), which gets all the surface values out of the case of the "unmotivated" or compulsive killer, digs behind the action to suggest the inadequacy of ordinary police methods, and going still further renders the real dramatic essence of the event in the conversion of a police officer from his traditional faith in method to acceptance of the role of Reason or Society—it is, in fact, the drama of the policeman becoming a citizen. "The Sniper" was written by Harry Brown (co-author of "A Place in the Sun") on a story by Edna and Edward Anhalt, who also get credit for the production. The Anhalts won an Oscar two years ago for the original story of "Panic in the Street;" the first story, I believe they had done for a major production. Before that they had supplied scenarios for whatever footage a quickie producer might have bought and had served time in the galleys of the pulp magazines. They have a flair for melodrama, a keen eye for what a movie should look and feel like, and, as "The Sniper" brilliantly proves, a capacity for putting these two essential qualities in the service of a penetrating intelligence. With the nervous, but not jumpy direction of Edward Dmytryk, their picture moves smoothly from one level of interest to another or exists simultaneously as a melodrama of murder, a drama of character that is not quite fully realized, and a serious play of ideas in action.

The Sniper (played by Arthur Franz) kills without knowing why he kills, often without knowing his

victims. In an effort to stop himself, he deliberately burns his hand, hoping to attract the attention of a psychiatrist at a hospital, but he fails because the routine for committing him is so uncertain that an accidental interruption of his examination sets him free. From then on he kills: a girl who attracts him and then plans a weekend with a boy-friend, a girl who thinks he's queer, a girl who is petting with a boy in the park, a woman whom he has seen giving a vapid interview on television, and so on. A conventional, but acceptable, explanation of the murders is given and a bang-up capture of the murderer complete this part of the movie.

**T**HE police part shows the line-up of suspects and the horrible jocosity of the examining officers. When the apparatus of investigation goes into action, it fails. The lieutenant, well played by Adolph Menjou, is not a bigot committed to routine, but experienced in it, compelled to defend it against the frightened and angry citizens who demand an arrest. His turning to the city psychologist (Richard Kiley) and his slow conversion to the idea of preventive action are a

tribute not so much to the force of circumstance (the failure of the routines) as to the force of intellect, and that is rare in the movies.

Telling very much the same story, "Without Warning" (UA) proposes to glorify police methods, but although it has a lot of surface to excite the nerve-ends, it isn't even technically satisfactory. The problem here is to capture a slasher of women. The police perform miracles of detailed search until they have found out where the gardener's shears were bought, what kind of a man the killer is (they throw in a psychiatrist for good measure), and then (the twist) they send out a dozen decoy girls, all of the right types, to capture him. They almost have their hands on him when he fools them—he lets the girl go unharmed. But these zealots for method do not even bother to pick up the glass from which he has just drunk and compare his fingerprints with those of the killer! Movies that live by method, must perish by it, too.

"The Sniper" is an eloquent plea not for coddling criminals, but for recognizing them long before murder occurs. It is only in that sense an attack on police methods. I haven't space to recount the dozens of genuine cinematic effects, from the heart-breaking steps of the San Francisco streets, so often used and here used so effectively, to the frightening eyes of a cat watching the killer bury evidence, nor to note the discretion with



Arthur Franz as The Sniper—"the eyes of a cat."

which the armory of psychoanalytic materials have been used. It is a sensational picture in every sense, because it uses sensations all the way through—but it penetrates to the depths and is vastly satisfactory.

—GILBERT SELDES.

## SR Recommends

**The Sniper:** Reviewed this week.

**Outcast of the Islands:** Conrad's early novel transformed by Carol Reed into a film with a full quota of authentic atmosphere. (SR Apr. 26.)

**Miss Julie:** Based on Strindberg, this importation from Sweden is gloomy in tone, sensitive in execution. (SR Apr. 26.)

**Walk East on Beacon:** An admirably detailed filming of counter-espionage in the USA, made with the cooperation of the FBI. (SR Apr. 19.)

**Singin' in the Rain:** Gene Kelly in a nostalgic spoofing of the early talkies. (SR Apr. 12.)

**Encore:** Another trio of Maugham short stories turned into an engaging film. (SR Apr. 5.)

**The Man in the White Suit:** Alec Guinness invents a fabric that will never wear out—with hilarious consequences. (SR Apr. 5.)

**The Marrying Kind:** Matrimony runs a bumpy but witty course as delineated by actress Judy Holliday, director George



Cukor, and writers Kanin & Gordon. (SR Mar. 22.)

**5 Fingers:** L. C. Moyzisch's "Operation Cicero" turned into a spy film that avoids all the usual clichés of the genre and includes an abundance of the Mankiewicz sophistication. (SR Mar. 8.)

**Cry, the Beloved Country:** A sensitive screen translation by Alan Paton of his moving novel. (SR Feb. 2.)

**The Young and the Damned:** Luis Bunuel's enlightened and enlightening study of Mexico's juvenile delinquents, reviewed here under its original title, "Los Olvidados." (SR Sept. 15.)

## LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. "Huckleberry Finn," Mark Twain.
2. Amber St. Clare, in *Forever Amber*, by Kathleen Winsor.
3. Jacques Thibault and Daniel Fontanin, in "The Thibaults," by Roger Martin du Gard.
4. Henry Fleming, in "The Red Badge of Courage," by Stephen Crane.
5. "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," by Thomas Hardy.
6. "Pinnocchio," by Carlo Collodi.
7. "Jean-Christophe," by Romain Rolland.
8. Eliza Harris, in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," by Harriet Beecher Stowe.
9. Charles Strickland, in "The Moon and Sixpence," by Somerset Maugham.
10. "David Copperfield," by Charles Dickens.

# TV and Radio

## THROUGH THE BATTLE OF SMOKE

IT seems to me that the cigarette people by plying us on television with so many facts and figures have been going about the whole thing elbow-backward. Which statement will seem to the more perceptive like a confession that I don't know my facts from my figures.

Maybe I don't. But if so it's because I'm confused and defeated by the commercials I see and hear on my television set. For instance:

Camels are good for the T-zone, which is proved by the fact that more doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarette.

Chesterfields are (A) always milder, (B) better tasting, and (C) cooler smoking, and they come in a clean, white pack.

Philip Morris produces no cigarette hangover, so you'll be glad tomorrow you smoked Philip Morris today.

Fatima is the king-sized cigarette that filters the smoke 85 millimeters for your protection because Fatimas are 21 per cent longer than any other cigarette.

Cavaliers are the king-sized cigarettes which if you lay five of them end to end they will reach the length of six regulation-sized cigarettes.

And as for Lucky Strikes, they don't even ask you to smoke them any more. All they want you to do is take a Lucky between your fingers, hold it upright, and tear the paper down the seam. You will now find yourself holding a cylinder of tobacco, firmly packed. While watching one of their shows the other evening I felt the least I could do to show my appreciation for the entertainment was to try it. And just like the man said there I sat fondling a little cylindrical stack of tobacco. To my horror I discovered after the show that I had done it with a Philip Morris. For which, my abject apologies to the American Tobacco Company.

It was a natural mistake. My wife has been smoking Philip Morris cigarettes nigh on to twenty years and I picked up one of her packs. Not only have I never heard her announce at breakfast that she was glad she smoked Philip Morris yesterday, but recently she suffered a slight back strain and the doctor prescribed hot baths every night for a week before going to bed. During these baths she called for cigarettes and I danced attendance on her by lighting a cigarette and bringing it to the bathroom. Ev-

ery cigarette I handed her was a different brand, and my findings are that not once did she notice the difference. This is a scientifically proven laboratory test.

However, I deviate. I think Lucky Strikes have now hit upon a whole new future in cigarette advertising. They've given us something to do with cigarettes besides smoking them. To sit there calmly tearing a cigarette down the seam requires a steady hand and a cool head, and it affords a greater release from nervous tension than smoking a whole pack of cigarettes, I don't care how mild.

This new approach to cigarette advertising could well be used by the Parliament cigarette people. I read somewhere recently that if you gently push the tobacco out of a Parliament cigarette (a long nail will do the trick) and leave yourself only the cigarette paper, then moisten the tip with your tongue and gently throw it, tip first, to the ceiling, it will stick there. And forever! I tried it. I now have four such cigarettes hanging vertically from the ceiling in my study. It sometimes takes five or six throws to make one stick, but once it's there you have no idea of the feeling of accomplishment it affords.

What a piece of business for a television commercial! And what a sales talk: "Parliament is the only cigarette that sticks to your ceiling!"

With this new trend in mind (something to do with cigarettes besides smoking them) several sponsors have united on a new campaign.

"More than half your packs go for tax," says the announcer. And he proves that more than half the money you pay for cigarettes is paid to the Government in tax. Since taxes are needed desperately to defray the cost of defense against the overthrow of the free world, it is practically un-American now not to smoke. So buy them by the carton.

"But," you say, "why should I buy cigarettes when I smoke a pipe?"

"But I smoke cigars."

"But I chew."

"But I don't smoke."

These flimsy reasons won't excuse you now. You can buy them and tear the seams, or throw them at the ceiling. This is the battle for a free and peaceful world tomorrow. You'll be glad tomorrow you smoked anything today. There are no butts about it.

—GOODMAN ACE.