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SR Goes to the Movies

DON'T BE CHILDISH



FOR much of its length, "Monkey Business" (20th Century-Fox) is a pretty amusing affair. It presents Cary Grant as a research chemist working up some kind of youth drug in his laboratory. His own experiments are unsuccessful, but a chimpanzee momentarily loose in the lab hits on the right formula, then dumps his brew in the water cooler. Thereafter, whenever one of the unsuspecting principals draws himself a drink, he or she is promptly transported back to adolescence. Writers Ben Hecht, Charles Lederer, and I. A. L. Diamond obviously had a good time fooling around with this notion, especially when Grant, taking the first swallow, is transformed from a staid scientist into a skittery high-school sophomore with a taste for speedy convertibles, sporty jackets—and Marilyn Monroe. They were still having fun when Ginger Rogers, playing Cary Grant's wife, takes the second drink and imagines that she is having a schoolgirl affair with her husband. After that, though, the plotting conceivably became a bit more difficult, what with propelling the right people to the cooler at the right time and keeping everyone else in the reasonably crowded laboratory away from it. At least, until the "sock" finale. The strain begins to show not only in the situations, but in some of the gags that pad out the last third of the film as well.

Even so, without becoming at all stuffy about it, "Monkey Business" agreeably reverses the general movie view of life, suggesting that there might be some virtue and dignity in maturity and that the golden dream of eternal youth could have its nightmare aspects. Cary Grant, a polished farceur, makes this point with con-

siderable skill and charm. Ginger Rogers, on the other hand, is often more than a little embarrassing in her hoyden passages, pursuing cuteness and coyness with cold-blooded and humorless efficiency. Charles Coburn proves helpful as the big drug tycoon. While Marilyn Monroe, who seems to spend a few minutes in just about every picture these days, lends her decorative presence to more than the usual number of scenes. She doesn't have a great deal to do, but she looks good doing it. Howard Hawks keeps the action moving along briskly, the lines are generally bright, and Leigh Harline has tickled it all up with a perky little musical score.

* * *

For "The Devil Makes Three," M-G-M has carried Gene Kelly and Pier Angeli to Germany and Austria, setting them down in the midst of magnificent scenery and an unusually good story. The film opens in Munich a year or two after the last war. Kelly, an Air Force captain, has come back to pay his respects to the family that helped him escape from a Nazi prison camp. He finds only Pier Angeli, the daugh-

SR Recommends

O. Henry's Full House: A quintet of O. Henry stories generally well translated to the film medium. (SR Sept. 13).

Beauty and the Devil: The Faust legend imbued by Rene Clair with his unique kind of frolic. (SR Sept. 13.)

You for Me: The Golden Rule takes a beating in a minor but entertaining comedy. (SR Aug. 30.)

The Quiet Man: John Ford goes back to the Old Sod to discover the loves and sports of Irishmen. (SR Aug. 23.)

The Big Sky: An engrossing and highly scenic screen adaptation of A. B. Guthrie Jr.'s novel. (SR Aug. 16.)

Son of Paleface: Bob Hope in a "wild man" film reminiscent of Keaton and Lloyd. (SR Aug. 9.)

Ivanhoe: A somewhat denatured but still splendid mounting of Scott's Norman-Saxon classis. (SR Aug. 2.)

Carrie: An absorbing match with Laurence Olivier's talent combatting his lack of verisimilitude in Dreiser's part. (SR July 12.)

High Noon: A very superior Western crowded with atmosphere and foreboding. (SR July 5.)

Under the Paris Sky: Some "snatch-of-life" episodes welded by Duvivier into a pictorially vivid apotheosis of Paris. (SR May 24.)

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.)

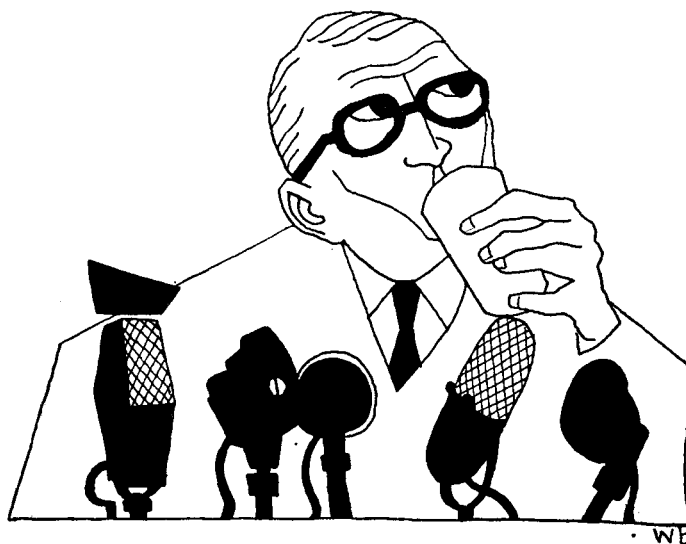
ter: her parents were killed in an Allied air raid. The girl now works in a shady nightclub, engaging in black-market activities on the side. Thoroughly disenchanted, she has no compunction about using Kelly as a blind, even after he falls in love with her. Reluctantly, he agrees to help the military authorities uncover the entire black-market gang, a gang gathering its resources for another stab at Nazi power.

While all of this is well within the frame of the conventional chase melodrama, the approach to the story is of more than ordinary interest. Germans are people, the film says. During the war it may have been necessary to bomb and destroy indiscriminately; but now, the war over, one must discover them as individuals. Some Germans, it says, are still Nazis at heart and must be hunted down. But others are pro-Nazi only through force of circumstances and can be won away with proper help and understanding. Unusual stuff to find in a spy thriller, and especially since it is there as a point of view and not as a message. The film itself is given over to action, not to philosophy. Kelly is excellent as the American flier, Pier Angeli sympathetic if not too happily cast in her more difficult role. But it is the Austrian Claus Clausen who takes the top acting honors. His is a demonic face, weirdly disturbing when we see him first singing mockingly at his nightclub piano, then frighteningly evil as we discover him to be in fact the fanatical leader of the new Nazi movement. The final scenes, photographed in the ruins of Hitler's eyrie near Berchtesgaden, more than justify Metro's travel expenses—as do the scenes of Munich, Salzburg, and the Austrian Alps they have thrown in for good measure. Andrew Marton's direction, a bit leisurely at the outset, builds to a gripping, suspensefully photographed finale.

* * *

By contrast, "One Minute to Zero" (RKO), a film on the current fighting in Korea, is a cheap and routine affair produced to cash in on current headlines but contributing nothing to an understanding of them. Robert Mitchum, an infantry colonel, is in Korea when war breaks out. So is Ann Blyth, doing something for the United Nations. The better part of two hours is given over to their off-again, on-again love affair, with occasional interruptions while Mitchum goes out to be heroic. Signal Corps pictures of the actual fighting in Korea, baldly inserted into the preponderance of studio footage, only enhance the generally synthetic effect of the whole.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.



TV and Radio

THE COMMERCIAL AS A WORK OF ART

THE following items appeared recently in the trade press:

The majority of commercials on TV are better produced and more interesting than the majority of video shows, in the opinion of TV stations and advertisers around the country contacted by Irv Gwartz, just back from a cross-country trip in behalf of Teleclix.

—*Hollywood Reporter.*

Attention-getting devices are usually a waste of time (and money) . . . With commercials running in cost to thousands of dollars a minute, admen must learn that attracting attention is in itself not essential.

—*Sponsor.*

The second of these is one of ten conclusions reached by Daniel Starch and staff, and the apparatus of research used by them is given in profuse, impressive, and to laymen like myself barely comprehensible detail. No details whatever are given about Mr. Gwartz's method of making TV stations render opinions and I, for one, am content to be left in the dark because his conclusion falls in with a notion I have been toying with for some time. He says, in effect, that commercials are better entertainment than entertainment, and in this he may be right or wrong; but he has recognized the essential quality of the commercial—it is a program within a program and it is, consequently, subject to criticism as a work of art. I propose to examine this idea for a moment before returning to the revolutionary doctrine of Daniel Starch and staff.

According to our daintier esthetes, the commercial cannot be a pure work of art because it is also a piece of propaganda; it lives in no tower of Ivory Soap, it comes down into the marketplace and fights. Suppose we call it a highly developed, but mixed, form of peoples' art.

Between the commercial and the program in which it appears a strong reciprocal action has taken place: the commercial has taken over the form of the entertainment and now the entertainment is taking over the techniques of the commercial. Already the biggest laughs on the Arthur Godfrey Talent Scout program come when he engagingly refers to the "stuff" he is selling, and the vast vaudeville shows crammed into ninety seconds by Lucky Strike are far more slickly produced (and perhaps more expensive) than the often excellent Montgomery production of plays which surround them. More and more, the actors in TV drama, variety, and documentary are using sales techniques borrowed from the commercial. An actor saying, "Have you read this book?," instinctively picks it up and pushes it toward the camera (and you) for a closeup. Next year he will hold it coyly over his heart.

The commercial uses at least three major forms of television entertainment, with more or less success. The one-minute drama which follows the contours, with variations, of "Romeo and Juliet" has not been happily transferred from radio to television because the esthetic problems of the new medium have not been solved. The classic form in radio is: girl meets