

ON THE WIDE SCREEN WITH
STEREOPHONIC SOUND

M-G-M'S PICTURIZATION OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

JULIUS CAESAR

STARRING
MARLON BRANDO
AS MARK ANTONY

JAMES MASON
AS BRUTUS

JOHN GIELGUD
AS CASSIUS

LOUIS CALHERN
AS JULIUS CAESAR

EDMOND O'BRIEN
AS CASCA

AND
GREER GARSON
AS CALPURNIA

DEBORAH KERR
AS PORTIA

DIRECTED BY JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ
PRODUCED BY JOHN HOUSEMAN
AN M-G-M PICTURE

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ROBERT E. SHERWOOD
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ture of accents (not at all obtrusive) is, I think, helpful. There is no jar when Brando exchanges phrases with Brutus, and again none when Edmond O'Brien enters as Casca. O'Brien, by the way, turns out to be a much better actor than one would have heretofore thought him to be. Louis Calhern's Caesar seems appropriate: the vanity, the susceptibility to flattery, the readiness to grasp total power are all neatly portrayed. The minor feminine roles might seem a concession to the box-office, for we find Calpurnia done by Greer Garson and Portia read by Deborah Kerr. It turns out, though, that they volunteered for their small roles, and they are quite good enough in them.

One decision Houseman and Mankiewicz had to make between them was whether to use color or black-and-white photography. The latter was chosen, obviously, because of the starker effect it gives. Another decision probably was to what extent the possibilities of spectacle were to be exploited. Here a sort of compromise seems to have resulted. Sets were built that were large, spacious, and

more stylized than realistic. "Quo Vadis"-like views of ancient Rome have been avoided, but the mob scenes are of good size, numerically speaking. The dreary clanking on and off stage of participants in the Battle of Philippi has been completely avoided by the invention of a sort of ritualized battle sequence showing Antony's army ambushing the forces of Brutus and Cassius. My largest complaint is about the music that accompanies the action—it seems too much a matter of simple drum beats and the blare of trumpets, though on occasion the sounds do give a heightening effect.

I have heard all sorts of announcements about the way the movie will be shown; at present it seems scheduled for wide screen and stereophonic sound treatment, which was not the way I saw or heard it. In New York it will have a two-a-day, reserved-seat policy. That means the picture will be around for quite a while, but I wouldn't waste any time in getting tickets. Hollywood has given us our money's worth this time.

—HOLLIS ALPERT.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

<i>Title and Author</i>	<i>Crime, Place, and Sleuth</i>	<i>Summing Up</i>	<i>Verdict</i>
THEY ESCAPED THE HANGMAN <i>Francis X. Busch</i> (Bobbs Merrill: \$3.75)	Factual: Four U.S. capital cases, 1900-1944, of which Hall-Mills is most famous.	Accents legal rather than emotional aspects; painstaking but lacks narrative punch.	Medium
KISS AND KILL <i>Adam Knight</i> (Crown: \$2.50)	Skip-Tracer Connacher pokes into NY dept. store heists; skull frequently tapped.	Corpses, easy women abound; cast largely stereotyped; pace various.	Noisily implausible
DEATH BEFORE BEDTIME <i>Edgar Box</i> (Dutton: \$2.50)	U.S. Senator blown up in DC home; House Guest Pete Sargeant earns bread and butter.	Too much frivolity, too many lay figures; he's beaten this.	Unhot
FUNERALS ARE FATAL <i>Agatha Christie</i> (Dodd Mead: \$2.50)	Hercule Poirot takes over apparent twin slaughter after British bigwig demises.	Smooth job, as in her previous fifty-seven; pace good, dialogue sharp, lively.	Wee mite tricky
THE IRON COB- WEB <i>Ursula Curtiss</i> (Dodd Mead: \$2.50)	Wife and mother jittery as odd things happen, suspects plots all over place.	Heavy stress on atmosphere; not up to author's previous trio.	Fancy work
THE LADY IN THE MORGUE <i>Jonathan Latimer</i> (Crime Club: \$2)	Engaging trio of pvt. dicks team up to solve weird Chicago case—reissue of 1936 yarn.	Crime Club 25th anniversary off to fine start with this number.	Literate toughie
THE HARLOT KILLER <i>Allan Barnard, ed.</i> (Dodd Mead: \$3)	Jack the Ripper saga (London, 1888, unsolved); fact-fiction olio. 13 authors.	Uneven on the whole, but several entries are by capable hands.	Specialty
THE DETECTION OF MURDER <i>William F. Kessler, M.D., and Paul B. Weston</i> (Greenberg: \$3.50)	Handbook by physician and NY deputy inspector; catalogues methods, motives, what to look for, etc.	Once-over-lightly treatment, but conscientious and informative; many case histories.	Has its points

—SERGEANT CUFF.



Wednesday Night on the Box

FOR a number of unimportant reasons I have been able to attend to my television-watching more consistently on Wednesday nights than at any other time, and as a reward I have seen Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., deliver a short history of dueling, making play with derringers and foils, and assuring us that "the challenge of modern life" calls for Rheingold beer. Apart from that, it has been my impression that Wednesday was so off an off-night that even one-dimensional movies would seem rich in comparison, all the programs looking like poor-man's versions of something else. Checking almost illegible notes written in darkness against program listings over several weeks hasn't done much to change this judgment. A few good-to-nearly-fine programs occur, but as summer replacement time approaches I begin to wonder what will happen.

At seven there has been Captain Video and half an hour later you could choose between "What's the Story" and "A Date with Judy"; the lesser Godfrey show plays opposite "I Married Joan" (the lesser "Lucy" show?); there are several half-hour filmed dramas and, while this element in programming is always a variable, the Wednesday night offerings have usually been on the vapid side; "Man Against Crime" is the night's most successful effort to prove that routine can always be counted on to be routine and, by now, if you have taken in "Strike It Rich," you are ready for the 10 o'clock bang, "This Is Your Life," a really singular program in which Ralph Edwards brings on family albums and private memories to re-create, for his guest, his or her life, the guest almost fainting with surprise when relatives, former employers, or grammar-school teachers appear in person to help tell the story of an obscure, but good, telephone operator or a famous member of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is after this point that Mr. Fairbanks appears and, the time being 11 p.m., the evening is pretty well shot.

I do not know the ratings for these programs, but they are the best known of the lot; they certainly set the tone for the evening. Not in the same general atmosphere, there are Charles Laughton's readings and the "Johns Hopkins Science Review"; Laughton charmed me by saying that "the Mott people" (I think that is

how he referred to his sponsor) had suggested omitting the middle commercial and the Johns Hopkins program both charmed and impressed me by a sort of resolute non-professionalism; after several years on the air it has the freshness and the awkwardness of the amateur.

Trying to get the real amateur, or the semi-professional, into an act hasn't always been easy. Major Bowes and Arthur Godfrey being the two most successful practitioners of the art. A program called "Stage a Number" has been going for some time, the staging being done by teachers of music, dancing, and so on, the performances, I gather, being by their pupils. It seemed disjointed, the performers missing the ingratiating quality of the true amateur, and the production running down to a point where, where an MC asked a guest some questions about her own career, the answers were obviously being read, not spoken.

I have said that the plays (on film in every case if I am not reading my notes wrong) have not been of a high order. On one program we had a convict who had submitted a book to a publisher; a letter had been received and the warden obligingly asked the convict to read it aloud. The publisher's editor wrote, "I am taking the liberty of showing your MSS. to the head of our firm" and presently we saw the head of the firm accepting the book and immediately sending for the head of the art department to design a jacket for it. (The art-man said he wanted to read it, which appeared to strike the publisher as an unnecessary detail, but he didn't actually forbid it.) With the introduction of a bored "high-society" girl, the play then went off into the usual melodramatics. Did the convict actually steal the bracelet? Will the girl confess she was wrong in her accusation? And so on.

I KNOW there are specialists on other nights who will assert that theirs are no better than Wednesday—but Thursday has Groucho Marx and the "Lux Video Theatre" and "Author Meets the Critic" and "Foreign Intrigue"; Friday has Ozzie and Harriet and "Down You Go"; Monday and Tuesday have either big dramatic hours or the Berle-Bishop Sheen conflict; the special sense of the stale or the stillborn seems reserved for Wed-

nesday and, while that would suggest to an outsider that Wednesday is just the night for throwing in a big first-rate program of any kind, sweeping in a vast audience, the professionals seem to go in the opposite direction. Since no topnotch program is on, the only thing to do is to go along with the tide and if you have a great program, spot it opposite another fine show, on some other night, splitting and irritating the audience.

Critics of the popular arts are generally taken to be moralists who cannot abide anything but perfection and are therefore inhuman. They have often laid themselves open to the charge by pointing out how much third-rate stuff is manufactured—often adding that Gresham's law will operate, and bad will drive out the good. I have done this myself to an extent, and watching Wednesday nights on the box has been a warning to me, because I know perfectly well that these inferior programs do not draw the vast audiences of the better ones, nor do I seriously fear that the quality of the best programs will be down-graded to the lowest level of entertainment.

THE concentration of so much poor fare on a single night may be accidental, it may have commercial reasoning behind it; the important thing is that in some four hours of broadcasting, the average viewer doesn't get a single fine example of the kind of thing he likes and wants. He accepts what he gets, gratefully enough to justify dozens of sponsors, but this mood of consent has become a habit and no apologist for our present standards can say that Wednesday night is really "giving the people what they want" because the people so obviously want the same sort of thing, but of higher quality, on other nights. That people want melodrama and amusing panel shows is true; that they prefer the third-rate in these categories is not true.

In these same four hours (which is really twenty hours, because five stations at least are transmitting) the intelligent well-read man, familiar with and enthusiastic for popular entertainment, gets almost nothing. That is bad. But the feeding of low-quality stuff to the faithful followers of television is worse. As it is, Wednesday night is a rather awful example of what television could become—and we should be grateful to sponsors and stations alike for isolating the other nights of the week from the contagion of Wednesday, for proving to their own profit and our satisfaction that the common denominator does not have to be low more than once a week.

—GILBERT SELDES.