

Brando on the Waterfront

Waterfront" (Columbia) is one of the most exciting films ever made in the United States. Later on I will qualify that statement, but I want to report at the outset that there is a tremendous picture around, a film absolutely explosive in its impact on the emotions and on the motion picture as a form.

In the past several years there have been two things happening in the movies. On the one hand, Hollywood has been developing its capacity to bedazzle. The new aspect ratios and the ultimate-weapon budgets are the latest means by which the Technicolor Tintorettos have turned film into the mightiest canvas the world has ever seen. At the same time, a number of earnest toilers in the business have been aware that the Europeans made us look like popcorn peddlers when it came to showing life problems of working-class persons in their own homes and on their own streets. The other half of the Hollywood story has been a conscious effort to make contact with the living plainness of the European film image. That effort was a vain one-until now. No matter how many camera crews were sent on location to Brooklyn or New York's East Side, there was usually a synthetic flavor to the material, principally because such settings were used for manufactured stories in which violence was a major titillation.

Now Elia Kazan has moved his cameras onto the Hoboken docks and has broken through the subtle filter which has previously shielded American lenses from the harsh light of reality. And if "On the Waterfront" were not an event for this reason, it would be one because of the performance of Marlon Brando, one of the finest things any man has done on the screen.

"Waterfront" is the story of an exprizefighter who is the errand boy for a crooked labor leader. Johnny Friendly, union boss, has turned the docks into his personal fief, the long-shoremen into his serfs. He clips their pay envelopes, lends them money at Shylock rates, orders them out on flash strikes when he sees the chance to shake down a shipper with a dockful of perishable fruit, brutally snuffs out the life of anyone who plays stool pigeon for the crime commission investigating conditions on the water-

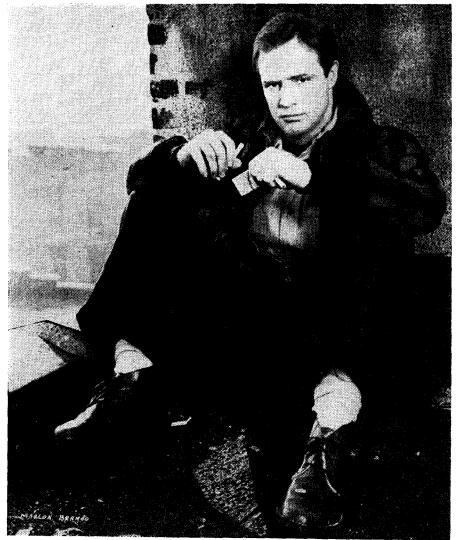
front. The background facts for Budd Schulberg's screenplay were supplied by Malcolm Johnson's prize-winning articles, and the film documents a story of peonage enforced by thugs with the acquiescence of the shippers.

In the midst of these assassins, Terry, the prizefighter, is little more than a mascot, tolerated because his educated brother is counsel for the union boss. Brando's performance in this role is a piece of genuine artistry. With half-sentences finished by body shrugs and fish gestures of the hands, with a drawn-brow groping for words, with a street arab's laugh or quick insult, with an ex-athlete's bounce to his walk, Brando projects a wonderfully absorbing portrait of a semi-

stupid, stubborn, inner-sweet young man.

Terry is not particularly troubled by his role as coffee-runner and messenger boy for the mob until one of his errands helps set up the sudden death of a neighborhood pigeon fancier who had given a statement to the crime commission. The murder becomes the occasion for the formation of a rump organization spearheaded by a militant priest and the sister of the murdered boy. The prizefighter meets the sister, takes her to a saloon, buys the parochial schoolgirl her first glass of beer, and falls in love with her in a scene that is inexpressibly sweet.

The fighter is subpoenaed by the crime commission. Johnny Friendly sends the lawyer brother to stop his mouth. The brothers have an unforgettable scene as they ride together in a taxi toward the execution headquarters. "It was you made me a bum, Charlie," says the prizefighter, and Brando's reading of this line is match-



-From "On the Waterfront.

Marlon Brando-"one of the finest things any man has done on the screen."





"A Solid Gold Click"-Walter Winchell

"It is a very funny show"

Gibbs, The New Yorker

Max Gordon presents

The SOLID GOLD CADILLAC

by HOWARD TEICHMANN and GEORGE S. KAUFMA

LORING SMITH

SEATS NOW FOR ALL PERFS. THRU SEPT. 25 Mon. thru Thurs. Eves.: \$4.60 to 1.73. Fri. and Sat. Eves.: \$5.75 to 1.73. Wed. Mat.: \$3.45 to 1.15. Sat. Mat.: \$4.03 to 1.15. Tax Incl.

dir-cond. MUSIC BOX 45th St. C1 6-4636, Eves. 8:40. Mats. Wed. & Sat. 2:40. MAIL ORDERS PROMPTLY FILLED

less. "I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender." The lawyer, ashamed. lets his brother escape, and is murdered by the mob in his stead.

The prizefighter testifies before the crime commission and then returns to the docks, where the labor racketeer's hold over the men is eventually broken in a blood bath finale.

Kazan has served himself well in casting the film. Lee J. Cobb is effective as the labor boss. Eve Marie Saint, a television actress making her first movie appearance, is appealing as the girl. and Karl Mauldin makes a forceful priest. Rod Stieger displays a brilliant understanding of the weak. easy-money, easy-power attorney who stands at the labor boss's side.

"On the Waterfront" will undoubtedly create a storm of excitement because of its use of the screen and because of Brando's vitalizing performance. I suspect that among the viewers there will be many who will find the ending somewhat pat and preachy and the plotting a bit slick. The word "slick." I am aware, is an abused word in the critic business, for slickness is part of our delight in many plays, motion pictures, and stories. But there are times when a certain easiness, a certain plot maneuvering, debases the currency of the work. This is probably the reason why "On the Waterfront" is more an electric piece of journalism than it is a drama of the first rank. But despite "Waterfront's" shortcomings, there is no doubt that a landmark in American movie-making has been established by this documentary of the docks.

-LEE ROGOW.

SR Recommends

On the Waterfront: Reviewed in this

Adventures of Robinson Crusoe: The Defoe classic as interpreted for the screen by Mexico's much-admired director Luis Bunuel, with Dan O'Herlihy as the lonely Crusoe. (SR July 17.)

Man With a Million: Mark Twain's story about a million-pound banknote. sparklingly played by Gregory Peck and an all-British supporting cast. (SR July 10.)

The Caine Mutiny: Herman Wouk's engrossing story is superbly acted by Van Humphrey Bogart, Jose Ferrer, Van Johnson, and Fred MacMurray—with an able assist from the U.S. Navy. (SR June

Mr. Hulot's Holiday: The sights, sounds, and inanities of a French seaside resort are caught to perfection in this satire written, directed, and starring Jacques Tati, who shows that the Chaplin-Keaton-Lloyd tradition is still gloriously alive. (SR June 19.)

The Unconquered: This full-length documentary biography of Helen Keller is a remarkable portrait of a remarkable woman-and it's a far cry from the fictionalized biographical extravaganzas that have been issuing from Hollywood lately. (SR June 12.)

WOULD YOU RISK



to have your book published? a post card for our free 41 et. PUBLISHING YOUR BO send a post card for our free 41 page booklet. PUBLIBING YOUR BOOK. You'll be amazed at how easily and committaily we can turn your ms into a succession if you're an unknown. We will design, grounde, advertise and SELL your book for you'

COMET PRESS BOOKS 11 W. 42 St. N.Y.C.





What Type American Are You?

It takes a lot of different types of people to make America what it is. And it takes different types of blood to make a blood bank . . . each as important as the other . . . each needed desperately.

Before the next 60 seconds have ticked away, four Americans will need blood to save their lives.

Give blood today . . . and save a life tomorrow!

the blood you give helps someone live!

BLOOD



NATIONAL BLOOD PROGRAM

BUY U. S. SAVINGS BONDS

Writer Is a Dirty Word

SUPPOSE the classic adlib of the past television season will have to be credited to Jackie Gleason. On his final show he found himself with a couple of minutes to fill, so he began a recitation of the names of the people "without whom this show would never have been possible," as the saying goes.

As names came to Jackie he genuflected gracefully in their direction. There were quite a few: producerscameramen-orchestra leader-choreographer-managers. Then, fearful that he might have forgotten someone who had helped him climb near the top of television success this past season, we could see him begin to search his memory. Another name came out -another-and then he finally wound up with the usual last-but-by-nomeans-least: "All the stagehands headed by the finest head stagehand in television, Mr. Eddie Brinkman," without whom this show could never have been possible. (APPLAUSE)

Mr. Brinkman, I suppose, could be the finest stagehand in all television, but I doubt that even Mr. Brinkman confides to his friends that he had anything to do with creating the now famous character of Ralph Cramdon, bus driver. Yet the names of that assortment of gentlemen who sat at their typewriters week after week toiling to bring Ralph Cramdon into being never occurred to Jackie in those final two minutes of triumph.

It's possible he didn't know their names. It's possible that when he received his mimeographed script each week he visualized dozens of tiny, unshaven elves in leather aprons and fools' caps, their hands and faces smeared with printer's ink and perspiration, crawling in and out of a huge typewriter dragging the pages after them and whistling while they worked.

Mr. Gleason in his Ralph Cramdon character gives the most honest performance any comedian gives any character in television. This honesty of performance, very often at the sacrifice of jokes in order to sustain the integrity of characterization, is what has captured the attention of television viewers. It's too bad Jackie couldn't have sustained that honesty another two minutes.

In this connection I offer, and ask to be placed into the record, another exhibit of the mental block which comedians have about writers. This time it's another Jack—Carson by name. I quote from Radio and Television Daily the plans outlined by Mr. Carson for a new radio show in which he will star

"Jack Carson," it says here, "veteran radio and motion-picture comedian, will star in a new program when CBS presents the Jack Carson Show.

"Backing the unpredictable Carson will be the talented young vocalists Doris Drew and Tony Romano and an orchestra directed by pianist-composer Walter Gross, who wrote the hit song 'Tenderly.'

"Miss Drew starred in her own radio program for several years in Chicago. She has appeared in theatres and night clubs in many parts of the country. Mr. Romano is well known to radio listeners and club-goers and has recorded several big-selling records.

"The Taylor Maids trio, whose recordings are also attracting national attention, will be regular performers. Special musical arrangements will be supplied by Roy Chamberlain. Bob Stewart will announce." . . . End of quote.

WILL not try to predict what the "unpredictable Carson" is going to do on this radio show, but I have a feeling that somewhere along the line he will read from a script. Even if it's

only to say, after Miss Drew has finished singing a ballad, "Thank you, Doris, that was wonderful. And now in a gayer mood we take you to Latin America as Tony Romano sings 'The Peanut Vender'." Yet, according to the announcement there has been no arrangement made for a writer. And, if there has been, there is no mention of the word "writer." All the ingredients that go to make up a program are there—the star, the vocalists, the trio, the orchestra leader, the arranger, and even the announcer. Here come those elves again.

In the theatre and motion pictures by contrast the writer is given his due. It's news, for instance, that George Kaufman has just written a play, and there is no mention of who will be the stage manager when the play is produced. In a trade-paper advertisement there was a full-page photograph of the gifted young actress Vanessa Brown announcing she is soon to star in a picture, "Moll Flanders." There were only two lines of type. One said that Miss Brown had just finished six hundred performances as a star on Broadway in "The Seven Year Itch"; the other said that the screen play for "Moll Flanders" was being written by Roland Kibbee.

Television will reach maturity when it realizes, as have the stage and the movies, that successful entertainment depends not alone on the stars who play it but the stars in combination with those who write the words the stars speak. As someone once wrote, "The play's the thing." What's his name again?

—GOODMAN ACE.



"He'll be all right, but I'm afraid he's got greasepaint in his blood."