

own first fix in Louie's room—both played in huge, searching close-ups—and the terrible, writhing agony of the “cold turkey” treatment are conveyed with clinical realism.

Only slightly less fortunate are the assignments of the two leading feminine roles. Kim Novak, who improves from picture to picture, is both decorative and appealing as Molly, the B-girl who stands by Frankie to the end. Eleanor Parker contributes a strongly dramatic performance as the strident, selfish wife, and even manages to generate a modicum of sympathy for her. It is no criticism of Miss Parker's talent as an actress to say that her beauty and her innate breeding seem constantly at odds with the shabby tenement flat in which she lives and the Polish inflections with which she speaks. Far more successful are the types who frequent Antek's Tug-and-Maul Tavern and Schwiefka's all-night poker sessions, and especially Arnold Stang, who plays his role of Frankie's loyal, half-witted admirer with beautiful restraint, resisting the obvious possibilities for easy but false laughs.

All of these have been set down in a series of cramped and ugly rooms that are a distillation of the barren poverty that corrodes their spirit and paralyzes their will. The reminders are everywhere—the cracked shades at the window, the greasy linoleum around the stove, the clean square of wallpaper behind a photograph ripped from the grimy walls. And Otto Preminger has directed his film with a technique that brings them constantly into the play of the action, a camera that is constantly on the move, swinging from face to face, tracking over the bare floor boards from an unmade bed to a scaly door, binding characters and backgrounds together in a tight, almost claustrophobic unity. This is something more than the peripatetic cameras of the television studios, moving solely for the sake of movement. In “Man with the Golden Arm” the camera is ever on the prowl for the verifying detail, the revealing glance, the unguarded gesture. It will rush across the room from an extreme long-shot to a close-up of a newspaper clipping, the twitch of an unsteady hand, or the distended pupil of an addict's eye at the moment the poison enters his system. As this realism of detail, built frame by frame, moment by moment, mounts steadily through two hours the cumulative effect is one of horrified fascination—the horror of human beings writhing in the grip of forces over which they have no control, the fascination of seeing them for all their agony, for all their desperation, turning instinctively toward the sun.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.

## Hollywood Takes on Narcotics

THE past few years have witnessed some startling reversals for the censors of motion pictures. Ever since the late Joseph Burstyn carried his fight to show “The Miracle” all the way to the Supreme Court—and won—the seven state and the fifty or so municipal censor boards have flinched from the handwriting on the wall. It was Justice Clark's decision in “The Miracle” case that “expression by means of motion pictures is included within the free-speech and free-press guaranty of the First and Fourteenth Amendments.” Since that time the official censors have been waging a losing battle, with reversals of their decisions all but assured to those producers with the courage and patience to press suit through the courts. Even Lloyd Binford, the Anthony Comstock of Memphis, has finally announced his retirement.

This outgoing tide of official censorship is uncovering a frightening

number of hitherto at least partially concealed reefs—strong pressure groups, local police action (generally in the form of threats to withdraw a theatre's license to operate), and, perhaps most insidious of all, the industry's own antiquated and restrictive Production Code. Because the Code has, at least in theory, been accepted by the greater part of the industry, including all the major studios, the industry spokesmen tend to refer to it in terms of self-regulation or, at most, self-censorship, and congratulate themselves on their ability to keep their own house clean. They forget two things: the origins of their Code and its method of operation. Both spell censorship.

The Production Code can be traced back to the early Twenties, back to a time when newspapers, books, and magazines were writing of *nouveau riche* Hollywood as a spectacularly gaudy cesspool of all the more interesting vices. Their most purple

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prose seemed justified when, within a few months of each other, Fatty Arbuckle became involved in a particularly unsavory rape case (although he was later acquitted), director William Desmond Taylor was shot to death and several top stars implicated (the murder was never solved), and Wallace Reid was exposed as a drug addict (he died trying to fight its effects). Public indignation boiled over in the form of boycotts, the organization of local censor boards throughout the country, and an appeal for Federal censorship by numerous pressure groups. It was to offset these threats, and the latter threat especially, that the Motion Picture Association (then the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America—the "Hays Office") was formed.

As time went by the pressure abated. But the different censors remained; and one of the functions of the Hays Office was to codify their various rulings, quirks, and prejudices so that producers could get their pictures shown around the country with a minimum of cuts. Of course, the Hays Office could offer no guarantees. The censors, generally politically appointed, justified their jobs by censoring; and the cuts ordered from state to state, or even from city to city within a state, were often at incredible odds with each other, as Morris Ernst as far back as 1930 pointed out with witty indignation in his book "Censored."

Nineteen hundred and thirty was also the year in which the Association's Production Code put in its first formal appearance, at once a guide to producers to avoid censor pitfalls and a sort of intra-industry ground rules for the treatment of sex and sensation. Despite its stony "thou shalt nots" it reads as an elusive, even evasive document. Typical is the phrasing of the Code's stricture on vulgarity: "The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects should be guided always by the dictates of good taste and a proper regard for the sensibilities of the audience." Which left the film-makers just about where they were until, in 1933, the Catholic Legion of Decency gave meaning to it. The Legion, formed to combat "immoral" films, pledged itself to condemn for its millions of followers those pictures that violated the tenets of the Code. This action gave the Code strong economic teeth—but, of course, the teeth were Catholic. And the interpretation of language like "low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil" acquired a special hue. Thus, the industry's Code for self-censorship is in reality a

codification of previously existing censor regulations, given added force by a strong, well-organized minority group.

Substantially the Code has remained pretty much as written since 1930. A liberalizing influence introduced into it in 1954 permits an occasional "hell" and "damn," provided that their use be "governed by the discretion and the prudent advice of the Code Administration." Miscegenation was switched from a forbidden fruit to one that "must be treated within the careful limits of good taste." Even so, just a few weeks ago Martin Quigley, editor of the trade publication *Motion Picture Herald* and one of the original authors of the Code, stated that the Code is "based on moral principles and therefore is not now, or at any other time, subject to change, alteration, or honest evasion."

**W**ITHOUT pretending to know how Quigley distinguishes between honest and dishonest evasion even the casual moviegoer must have encountered scores of productions that have broken the rules—suggestive dances and costumes, crimes carefully planned and executed, scenes involving "excessive brutality." Why, then, do the producers continue their lip service to the Code? The imminent release of "The Man with the Golden Arm" not only brings this question to the fore again, but supplies an illuminating insight into its *raison d'être*. As readers of the Nelson Algren novel will remember, the story deals with drugs, a subject forbidden on the screen by the Production Code in a section that Quigley describes as based on "policy and expediency" rather than "moral principles." This code-section has the firm support of the Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, Harry Anslinger, who has long refused to sanction treatment of the drug traffic on the screen at all—"knowing what I have seen in Hollywood," he added in a recent trade-paper interview. Sight unseen, Anslinger refused to make an exception on "Golden Arm." And the Code Administration, which has always followed his lead in the past for reasons of "policy and expediency," continues to uphold this blind, blanket ban rather than take issue with him. It is a cowardly position. But at the present writing "The Man with the Golden Arm" has not received a Production Code Seal; nor is it likely to receive one unless the Code itself is soon revised.

What this means practically is that some 4,000-5,000 theatres, bound to the Motion Picture Association by a "gentlemen's agreement" not to show films without the Seal, may refuse

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to book it—roughly about 25 per cent  
of the nation's theatres. Whether it  
will also mean a substantial loss of  
film revenue remains to be seen. Mor-  
ris Ernst, representing the distribu-  
tors of "I Am a Camera," another  
recent picture that has been denied  
the Seal, maintains that the loss to  
his client can be considerable. On  
the other hand, Otto Preminger, the  
producer of both "Man with the  
Golden Arm" and "The Moon Is  
Blue," which also had a run-in with  
the Code Authority, tends to mini-  
mize the financial aspect. "The Moon  
Is Blue," he said recently, "almost  
made up in extended runs and in-  
creased audience interest what it lost  
in play dates."

United Artists, the firm which  
financed and has agreed to distribute  
"Man with the Golden Arm," is one  
of the "big producers." As the rules  
stand it can choose between paying  
a fine of \$25,000 for handling a pic-  
ture without a Seal or withdraw from  
the Association altogether. But, as  
Mr. Preminger pointed out, "the rules  
were drawn up and agreed to by the  
companies, not by the people who  
make the pictures." When viewed in  
this light this concept of self-regula-  
tion would seem to violate a principle  
of our democratic society, government  
by consent of the governed.

**W**HAT makes the case of "The Man  
with the Golden Arm" of special in-  
terest is the fact that it is an ex-  
tremely moral film—no sex, no sug-  
gestive costuming, no off-color in-  
nuendo. It treats of drugs without  
any suggestion of glamour or attrac-  
tiveness. The drug traffic is shown  
as a sordid business where the "push-  
er" constantly drives his price higher  
once his victim has been hooked. It  
is shown as a degrading business as  
the addict becomes more and more  
desperate for a shot. And it is shown  
as a frightful business, not only in  
the shock of the act itself, but even  
more in the terrifying ordeal of  
throwing the habit "cold turkey"—  
if indeed the habit can be thrown.  
The ending is far from comforting  
in this respect. In short, it is almost  
inconceivable that anyone seeing this  
film could walk out of the theatre  
and want to try drugs "for kicks"  
(as he might, for example, after read-  
ing in a newspaper that Robert  
Mitchum had been locked up after  
a marijuana party). But the Code  
says specifically that "the drug traf-  
fic should not be presented in any  
form. The existence of the trade  
should not be brought to the atten-  
tion of the audience!" And "The Man  
with the Golden Arm" has been de-  
nied a Seal accordingly.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.

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## Deller, Sibelius, di Stefano, Martinu

**T**O ENCOUNTER two unfamiliar and able artists in the course of two concerts on the same day at the same hour is more than par for the New York concert course: it is a hole in one made while lightning is striking twice in the same place. The fortunate reward was there at a recent Sunday tea-time, when the English Alfred Deller, who is well known to American record fanciers, made his debut here in Carl Fischer Hall under the auspices of the New York Concert Society (which is not venturing Town Hall for the while), as the observance of the Sibelius ninetyeth-birthday festivities in Carnegie Hall across the street introduced us to soprano Sylvia Aarnio.

For those who are unacquainted with Deller, the mere designation of him as a countertenor, however masterful, will add little to their knowledge. For, unless one has heard him or his records the description will leave lacking any conception of what he does with a slim thread of a voice which has, nevertheless, the flexibility of tempered steel and the evanescence of a smoke ring. Generally speaking, his tones parallel the tenor register, though he ranges easily up to D, and does not move much below middle C.

In addition to a complete command of this register in a quantity of sound somewhat similar to falsetto but much more virile in quality, Deller has a rich sense of the musical worth of the works by Campion, Dowland, Purcell, Morley, Johnson, and Buxtehude which he offered on this program, plus a projection of texts rarely equaled since the great John McCormack himself. To be sure, Carl Fischer Hall's accommodatingly close walls (it was filled to its capacity of about 250) contributed to the superb results, but the surroundings merely enabled one to observe, at close range, what Deller was doing so well. Trills, appoggiaturas, roulades, and runs were all disciplined in a manner to remind us that where there is an artistic will there is a technical way. Desmond Dupre was his accomplished associate on the lute and viola da gamba—Robert Conant, harpsichord; Frances Magnes, violin; and Paul Doktor, viola, also contributing to the musical pleasures of the occasion.

For a grateful change, the Sibelius ceremonial honored its subject not merely with the expectable and appropriate "Finlandia" rousingly con-

ducted by the composer's son-in-law, Jussi Jalas, but also with the impressive suite for strings and drums entitled "The Lover," the Fourth and Seventh Symphonies, and "Luonnotar" (opus 70), a tone poem for soprano and orchestra. Derived from the Finnish epic *Kalavala*, it depicts the creation of the world in truly Sibelian manner, with a full range of dramatic and orchestral effects.

Miss Aarnio, an attractive blonde miss, sang her portion with such authority and rightness of sound, likewise forthright command of the Finnish text, that one was fully prepared to accept her as a native artist imported for the occasion. Investigation disclosed, however, that she is Wisconsin-born and Juilliard-trained, though of Finnish descent. She has, also, had the opportunity to perform this work in Finland under the direction of Jalas, thus absorbing the authentic atmosphere. Considering her freshness of voice, sound technique, and dramatic flair, Miss Aarnio must be marked for future attention in some aspect of performance related to orchestra, stage, and voice—that is to say, opera. The Symphony of the Air collaborated in its usual able fashion, and there were spoken words to memorialize the work of the late Olin Downes on behalf of the Finnish master.

**B**OHUSLAV MARTINU is a man with so much music in him that he



Deller—"rich sense of musical worth."

can hardly put pen to paper without some of it pouring out. In his latest work to be heard here, a concerto for violin and piano with orchestra, it is this abundance of thought which provides for the interest it contains for a movement and a half, since the performance by Benno and Sylvia Rabinof with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy in Carnegie Hall hardly convinced one that he had solved the problem to which he had addressed himself.

That problem is, in the first instance, one of sonority, of arriving at a level of orchestral sound which is not too strong for the violin or too weak for the piano. In his program note Edwin H. Schloss confides that the composer solved it "after several days of concentration." If so, the composer has a different concept of balance than I. For the most part, the orchestra is a background for the various pronouncements of the solo instruments.

## Nostalgia

By John Farrar

**I**N THE scorched summer I delight to dream  
Of you and me when it is spring once more,  
When the perk robin chuckles at the door  
And melted snow swells wantonly the stream.  
Shall we go then to tramp the yellowed banks,  
To find arbutus hidden in the moss?  
Shall we chant out our newly unleashed thanks,  
Released from summer's blazing albatross?  
And shall we dance, no older than our heart  
Toward the white dawn and down to starry night,  
Seeking our loves, together and apart,  
Caught by May's most immoderate delight?  
Pledge me, my friend, to stamp out in good measure  
The cool intoxication of spring's pleasure.