

THE GREAT GALLIC WELCOME

By JAMES F. FIXX

PARIS.

NOT LONG AGO the international edition of the *New York Times* was moved to observe, in an outpouring that was about as close to wide-eyed wonder as it ever gets, that American films had taken over Paris. Under the headline "U.S. Films Dominate Paris Movie Houses," the *Times* man documented what even the most casual visitor couldn't help seeing for himself—that wherever one looked, from the moviehouses along the Champs Elysées to those in outlying neighborhoods, it was little short of an American movie invasion. *Mary Poppins*, *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*, *Ship of Fools*, and even a pair of avant-garde films—all of them were playing right here in Paris, along with perhaps the most American film of them all, a noisy romp retitled *Au Secours!* that starred four shaggy young men from Liverpool and their million-dollar warbles for help. "If French moviegoers were to boycott American motion pictures," remarked the man from the *Times*, "they would be spending most of their time at home."

There seemed little danger of that. Wherever the American films were playing, whether in the original English or dubbed in French, business was booming. The lines at box offices were satisfyingly long, and at the Champs Elysées moviehouse where the Beatles were in full cry, the young go-go set was all but stopping traffic. Parisians, it was clear, saw nothing surprising in the fact that at the very time they were under such heavy bombardment from American

film-makers, only one new French film had come to town—and a gangster comedy at that. (It would have been uncharitable to point out to them that their gangster film, *La Metamorphose des Cloportes*, had been helped along by American money and, to compound the indignity, released by an American company.)

The lack of surprise was no doubt at least partly attributable to the fact that since mid-July Parisians have been systematically conditioned to the idea that American film-makers are extraordinarily involved with their city. At the pleasure of Americans they have seen their newly brightened buildings blackened with soot, have had to wait in their Citroens and Peugeots while police held up traffic, have seen tanks and armored vehicles rumble along streets, have heard the chatter of gunfire, and have even found themselves welcoming men in Nazi uniforms back to town. All this has come about because of a single fact of which all Paris, from the man on the street to those in the high councils of government, is inescapably aware: the city is the setting, and in a very real sense the star, of an astoundingly ambitious film called *Is Paris Burning?*

Director René Clément, who is running the show, has called it "an exhilarating madness," and no one who has been close to it is likely to disagree. I had a chance the other day to watch the madness in action when Clément and company were filming a scene in Commonvilliers, a hamlet not far from Paris. The main street was clogged with trucks and tanks, all of them artfully begrimed with mud, the town square was jammed with men wearing World War II uniforms, and at the edges of the crowd stood virtually the entire population of Commonvilliers—children, men, housewives, shopkeepers, household pets. It was a Saturday morning, and I overheard one Frenchman say, "There's probably not a single bed made in this town today." Nor were many of the village's usual activities apt to take place that day. When a dog started to bark, a woman was quickly dispatched to lead the animal out of earshot. And when one luckless inhabitant, far up a street, took hammer in hand to do a little carpentry, one of the film's technicians was sent at once to silence him.

There was little resentment at such inconveniences, however, for in French

eyes it was all for a cause, and the cause was the re-creation, mammoth in its scope and painstaking in its exactitude, of the liberation of Paris in 1944. The story, based on the best-selling book by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, is one to stir the soul of any Frenchman, and there are few Frenchmen today whose souls have not been stirred, for better or worse, by the film version. First of all, there are the stars who have come to Paris—Jean-Paul Belmondo, Simone Signoret, Yves Montand, Gert (Goldfinger) Frobe, Orson Welles, Leslie Caron, Kirk Douglas, Glenn Ford, Charles Boyer, and Anthony Perkins among them. Then, too, there has been the shooting, which has taken place in nearly every historic corner of Paris—at Notre Dame, at Les Invalides (where cameras for the first time were allowed to go down to Napoleon's tomb), at La Place de la Concorde, in the Bois de Boulogne, on the Champs Elysées. All this, combining the sights and sounds of two decades ago with the glamour of the contemporary film, has moved Frenchmen to excitement and to reminiscence, so much so that on the very first day of shooting—at a Resistance garage not far from the Arc de Triomphe—100 Paris policemen were needed to hold the crowds back.

BUT what the average Parisian sees, no matter how keenly he observes the progress of *Is Paris Burning?*, is only a fraction of what has really been going on. For a good part of the film's drama has taken place well out of camera range. That drama, engineered largely by a portly producer named Paul Graetz, is a startling measure of the power and influence of the film medium around the world, and particularly in this capital of European production. The minor miracle wrought here by Graetz is an eloquent testament to the sort of welcome film-makers have come to expect from Paris.

No sooner had film rights to *Is Paris Burning?* been acquired than it became apparent that this could be no ordinary film. For one thing, it had to be shot in Paris—but not in the Paris of 1965. This meant that streets had to be cleared of modern automobiles and of people in modern dress, that the buildings, recently cleaned of their grime under Cultural Minister André Maulraux's sprucing-up program, had to be dark-



William Wyler in Paris—"There's always more going on in Hollywood."



A city becomes a star—When *Is Paris Burning?* is released late next year, the top star of them all will be the city itself, despite such glittering members of the cast as Leslie Caron (top left), Jean-Paul Belmondo (top right), Gert Frobé (above, with director René Clément gesturing), and Simone Signoret (below). At right is a re-creation of the Liberation; at bottom right the German flag comes down as Parisians watch.



ened (harmless watercolors and special lenses did the job), that authorizations and clearances had to be wormed out of various government departments, that the French army had to be persuaded to provide personnel and equipment, and that crowds of policemen had to be placed on special duty to handle the onlookers who gathered whenever a camera crew appeared. Just procuring and reworking the equipment took a full five months, during which time the French War Ministry searched the country for no fewer than 200 war machines, among them forty-two tanks, twenty-four jeeps, and nearly 100 trucks, not to mention an arsenal of cannons and machine guns.

The way Graetz managed to get it all done is a matter of no small wonder even to veteran film people who were on the scene. From the very start he had two monumental obstacles. First, 20th Century-Fox had already announced plans for a film on the liberation of Paris, and it is a notorious truism in movies that where time is concerned, winner takes all. Second, Darryl F. Zanuck's use of military forces in *The Longest Day* had created such an uproar that it seemed questionable whether a similar coup could be pulled off again. But Graetz, according to those close to him, is not only well connected in France but was also able to move faster as an independent producer than 20th Century-Fox could as a giant corporation. He reportedly went directly to a high French military authority who was himself a hero of the liberation, where-

upon the military man interceded directly with de Gaulle. The rest is history.

One sequence, filmed in La Place de la Concorde, demonstrated how completely Graetz and his assistants were allowed to remake Paris. In preparation for the filming, traffic was cleared, lamp-posts were painted dark blue (as they had been in 1944), plaques commemorating the dead heroes of Liberation Day were covered. From 5 A.M. until 1 P.M. the entire area, which ordinarily teems with people and automobiles, served only as a setting for the film. Explosion after explosion went off, sending clouds of smoke into the air, tanks rumbled in from both sides of the square, and Parisians and summer tourists looked on in stunned amazement. No city anywhere ever did more to make a filmmaker feel at home.

But if *Is Paris Burning?* is a film that had to be made in Paris and nowhere else, there are other films before the cameras here that might conceivably have been made almost anywhere. Set designers and technicians are able to bring about some fiendishly clever transformations these days, and after watching the good ones at work it is not impossible to imagine Rome being turned overnight into a precise replica of Hoboken, New Jersey. Why, then, are these other films being made in Paris? Directors, producers and actors offer many reasons, but in the end they all tend to trail off into almost metaphysical mysteries. They talk of the atmosphere and the ambiance of Paris, of the pleasures of living and working here,

and of a sense of artistic freedom hard to find in Hollywood. Perhaps all that can be said with assurance is that, for as many reasons as there are filmmakers in Paris, this city is—at least for the moment—one of the places where the action is.

I TRIED to get to the heart of the question the other day in a conversation with William Wyler at the Studios de Boulogne, where the veteran director is now at work on his sixty-fifth film, *How to Steal a Million Dollars and Live Happily Ever After* (among his others: *Mrs. Miniver*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Ben Hur*, *The Collector*). We sat in Wyler's crowded trailer—or caravan, as they call it here—on the mammoth indoor set where moments earlier he had been polishing a scene with Peter O'Toole and Audrey Hepburn. Wyler, a wiry man who looks younger than his sixty-three years, was born in France, left for the United States when he was eighteen, and had not worked in films here until only a few months ago. I asked him how he was finding his homecoming.

He nimbly turned the question around and began talking about Hollywood. "It's a miserable life in Hollywood," he said, "a lousy life. You're up at five or six o'clock in the morning in order to be ready to start shooting at nine. The working hours aren't arranged to suit the artists and the director; they're for the convenience of the technicians. If you go to a party at night, you'll never find anyone there who's shooting a picture; they're all home in bed."

Paris, he went on, is much more hospitable in that respect. "We start at noon," he told me. "Then we work right through to 7:30. It's much less exhausting that way. Anyhow, who can play a love scene at nine o'clock in the morning?"

Wyler said he also found European film technicians fascinating to work with. "They're terribly interested in seeing that you make a good picture," he said. "Sometimes if I'm wondering about some scene I'll watch the reactions of the technicians—it's a kind of preview."

He left no doubt, however, that he plans to return to Hollywood, miserable life or not. "It's a little more efficient and faster to make films there," he said. "And there's always more going on in Hollywood than in any European city."

The big question, of course, is whether most of what is going on in Hollywood is as much worth looking at as what is going on in places like London, Paris, and Madrid. For there are plenty of movie-makers here who, citing the creative ferment in England and on the Continent these days, wonder whether Hollywood may not be sinking



Director Peter Glenville (center) with Alec Guinness and Gina Lollobrigida—"I like to take risks . . . to make an odd idea appeal to a great many people."

ever deeper into its latter-day role as a factory for TV films.

One man who, for the moment at any rate, is hardly worried about the question is Peter Glenville, who found himself in Paris for the very good reason that his new film, *Hotel Paradiso*, could be made nowhere else. Set in the Paris of 1910, it stars the unlikely combination of Alec Guinness and Gina Lollobrigida in a comedy whose tone is suggested by the fact that the incidents in it include eavesdropping, a number of secret rendezvous, and one scene in which Sir Alec hides in a chimney while Miss Lollobrigida tries to conceal her identity by pulling her husband's top hat down to her chin. The film, one of four that Glenville is under contract to do for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, was nearly finished when I talked with him not long ago over tea and fruitcake at the St. Maurice Studios outside Paris.

Glenville was in a relaxed, expansive mood, clearly enjoying his respite after weeks of grueling work. He had been plagued by rainy weather ("There were times when I would have been delighted to be in a nice dry MGM studio") but now all was well and only a few minor scenes remained to be filmed. He talked enthusiastically of Paris and moviemaking there. "Films have a national character, and they should have," he said. "It would be terrible not to be influenced by the country you're working in."

Glenville, an alumnus of the Old Vic whose film credits include *The Prisoner*, *Me and the Colonel*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Term of Trial*, and *Becket*, said he found himself increasingly interested in the challenge of attracting large audiences to his movies rather than appealing to only an appreciative minority. "I like to take risks," he told me, "to try to make an odd idea appeal to a great many people."

But any director, he said, was making a big mistake if he didn't remain faithful to his own character. "If it's not in character," he said, "it's just as difficult to be popularly vulgar as it is to be clever. A man has to perform according to the tenor of his own mental vocabulary."

Did Glenville have any theories about why so many films were being made in Europe these days? He paused, munching his cake. "No," he said finally. "These things run in waves. Right now everyone is going off to Madrid to make films. Next year it may be Hollywood."

But whatever happens, it was clear that Paris would never again be quite the same. There was even talk—if you could believe what the press agents were saying—of trying to get the French government to declare a national holiday late next year when Paramount releases *Is Paris Burning?* No matter where you are, you can't think much bigger than that.

Places, Pleasures, and Pot Shots

Off-the-Cuff Comments on Moviemaking Around the World

WILLIAM WYLER (*The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Ben Hur*, *The Collector*): "It's a miserable life in Hollywood, a lousy life. You're up at five or six o'clock in the morning in order to be ready to start shooting at nine. The working hours aren't arranged to suit the artist and the director; they're for the convenience of the technicians. If you go to a party at night, you'll never find anyone there who's shooting a picture; they're all home in bed. It's a little more efficient and faster to make films there. And there's always more going on in Hollywood than in any European city. . . . But who can play a love scene at nine o'clock in the morning?"

JOSEPH LOSEY (*King and Country*, *Eva*, *The Damned*, *Chance Meeting*, *The Servant*): "Producers exist here [in London], as they do in Hollywood—and I, for one, could do without about 90 per cent of them—but they don't dominate as they do in Hollywood. . . . I think you can see the results—a *Tom Jones*, a *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Knack*. I doubt that any of them could have been made in Hollywood."

BRYAN FORBES (*The Angry Silence*, *The L-Shaped Room*, *Seance on a Wet Afternoon*, *King Rat*): "There's no place in the world with the technical expertise of Hollywood. All any director has to work with is a dream, and you can come closest to your dream with the right technical help. . . . I don't see why Hollywood has to be synonymous with bad films. You can make lousy films in London."

HARRY SALTZMAN (*Dr. No*, *From Russia with Love*, *Goldfinger*, *The Ipcress File*): "London is the place to be. Sidney J. Furie [director of *The Ipcress File*] has gone to Hollywood to do his new picture. Watch and see—he'll be back."

PETER USTINOV (*Quo Vadis*, *Romanoff and Juliet*): "In spite of its comparative affluence, Hollywood has achieved some remarkable results—results that are not merely technical."

RICHARD LESTER (*The Knack*, *A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!*): "I could make this picture [*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*] only in Spain or in Italy, where one can still go into the mountains and find primitive men. . . . I need that—men who know how to drive a chariot through the narrow streets of first-century Rome. . . . The Spaniards have had enough experience filming this period of history to avoid obvious anachronisms, such as setting an ancient Roman table with knives and forks."

TED RICHMOND (*Solomon and Sheba*): "The Spaniards are every bit as good as Hollywood people. And exactly the same kind of equipment we're used to in the States—cameras, cables, lights—is available here. That means further savings, since you no longer have to import it."

WALTER SHENSON (*A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!*): "My feeling is that working away from Hollywood gives a producer a better point of view. There's this prevailing tendency in Hollywood to conform, and also a determination not so much to strike out in new directions as to recapture the success of the past. I remember I took the print of *A Hard Day's Night* to Hollywood for a private screening for several writers, producers, and directors. I was amazed afterward. One and all of them came up to me and told me I couldn't possibly have made the picture in Hollywood. Remember—that was *their* opinion and not necessarily mine. But there's no denying the stimulus of London, subtle though it may be."

PETER GLENVILLE (*Summer and Smoke*, *Term of Trial*, *Becket*): "Films have a national character, and they should have. It would be terrible not to be influenced by the country you're working in."

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

By WALTER SANFORD ROSS

MADRID.

SPAIN HAS many kinds of weather—dry sunshine, rains that fall on plains and hills, snows that blanket mountain slopes. It has backgrounds, a variety of them—rugged, mellow, softly green, scraggly sandy, scrub brush and rocky. It has people, thousands of people delighted to serve as extras in movies. And it has studios, with technicians who grow more skilful with each passing year of its increasing foreign film production. No wonder, then, that film directors are attracted to Spain. This year three of the best—David Lean, Jules Dassin, and Richard Lester—have invaded the country for films large of budget and unorthodox in subject matter. For most of the year David Lean worked with protean energy making *Dr. Zhivago* in a Madrid studio (see cover), on a huge reconstruction of a Russian city built just outside the capital, and on location in the north. He couldn't go to Russia, so he went to Spain. Jules Dassin is filming *10:30 PM Summer* there now, and Richard Lester has temporarily deserted the Beatles for Zero Mostel, who, as on Broadway, is the star of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. But even when they finish, there will be no dearth of movie action in Spain. As matters stand now, it looks as if no fewer than thirty, and possibly forty, British or American productions will be Spanish-based during the next year.

Why Spain? In Dassin's case, primarily because his story (inspired by a Marguerite Duras novel) is laid in a Spanish village and in Madrid. *Note to novelists: set your action in Spain if you want to catch a movie producer's eye.* Production is, of course, cheaper in Spain, if Hollywood financial standards are used, and perhaps even British standards, which are somewhat lower than Hollywood's. But, paradoxically, this doesn't make the cost less in all cases. For the savings, with a man like Dassin, are bound to be used up to buy more time (with consequent quality control) and to employ more people (who tend to make a production look bigger, if not better).

But Dassin doesn't talk about costs. It would be demeaning to talk about expenses when a film boasts such international bigwigs as Melina Mercouri, Peter Finch, and Romy Schneider. He talks about what he is doing—the totally

absorbing, demanding, tricky job of making a film. And when you are Dassin, you are up against the best, namely yourself. For Dassin has made *He Who Must Die*, *Never on Sunday*, and *Topkapi*, each one a milestone of its kind. For *10:30 PM Summer* he is deliberately avoiding the exploitation of what he terms the "pictorial clichés of the capital and countryside," and is focusing instead on the intricate subtleties of his triangular plot. He is using color, but he claims he will de-intensify it later in a Rome laboratory.

The cast and crew of *Summer* had been called for 6 A.M. the other day at a location near the Cafe la Esperanza in old Madrid. "I was tempted to film the café sign as a comment, but I resisted the temptation," Dassin said. He was shooting the final scene of the film, which needed the cold gray light of dawn. He went into the café to give Miss Mercouri directions in French, the language they share.

As in many scenes of the picture, there would be no dialogue; this film, charged with sex and balanced by delicate emotional interactions, is being made with a minimum of conversation. The camera was set up near a corner of two streets by Gabor Pogany, the Italian director of photography (the technicians speak different languages but manage, just the same, to communicate very well).

Peter Finch (playing the husband of Miss Mercouri) and Romy Schneider (his young and slightly uncertain mistress) were sent up the narrow Calle Angosta de la Manceros. Miss Schneider shivered in a black cocktail dress, protected until the minute the camera would start to roll with a Balenciaga stole. Finch was chilled in a black silk suit. Juan Estelrich, the assistant director, cleared the streets of early risers with the use of a bullhorn.

Dassin took a quick look around and ordered the take. Finch and Romy Schneider began to walk, then run, halting to peer in windows. They were supposed to be looking for Melina Mercouri. After they passed the café, Miss Mercouri appeared inside in a white dress drinking a glass of brandy. The camera dollied in for a close-up through the café window and, at the same time, picked up the reflections of the vanishing, hurrying forms of Miss Schneider and Peter Finch in the mirror over the bar in the background. Miss Mercouri raised her

glass in a kind of toast to her errant husband and the young woman into whose arms she had assisted him, grieving while she did so. It was not farewell, but a salute to the atomization of the three whose need for one another was stronger than their desire to go separate ways.

Why is Dassin breaking away from his movies of violence and comedy to film what he calls a psychological love story? "I bought the book as a birthday present for Miss Mercouri a couple of years ago," he said at the Estudio Cinematograficos Roma in Madrid, where interiors were being shot. "She wanted to play Maria, the woman whose marriage is falling apart because she demands the impossible of life—that her love affair with her husband remain at the fever pitch it had reached ten years before. It's a very demanding role, and so are the others. I'm asking a great deal of the actors in this picture, since I want the camera to tell the story—and it's an interior conflict. I suppose I'm asking a lot of myself, too, but the only way to grow in this business is to find new challenges."

Meanwhile, back at the Samuel Bronston ranch in Las Matas, Richard Lester was preparing his cast of famous comics



Richard Lester—"I could make this picture only in Spain or Italy."