

turous Communist films met with a better response. So did Germany's polished *Young Törless*, a handsomely directed investigation of troubled youth in a military school, marred only by a last-minute summation turning its message into an apologia for Naziism. Even Mario Monicelli's Vittorio Gassman costume comedy, *The Brancalone Army*, a good-natured *Hercules*-type yarn of the sort usually found at neighborhood theaters, had its partisans at escapist-prone Cannes.

In fact, the one resolutely modern film in the competition, Joseph Losey's *Mod-*

esty Blaise, was an unqualified disaster. There had been high hopes of another *Thunderball*. Unfortunately, Twentieth Century-Fox picked a director who hates James Bond, and Losey made a film which goes several strides beyond Op Art—so everything is far too far-out to be funny. Still, with the Welles, it was the most intriguing film here. Like the Welles, it is all of a piece, the vision of a stubborn individualist with a conception entirely his own. One wonders how his pictures will look in twenty years.

—EUGENE ARCHER.

3. Gloom at San Sebastian

SAN SEBASTIAN, SPAIN. THE FOURTEENTH Festival International del Cine de San Sebastian was held this year between June 9 and 18. Both as a resort and as a film festival, San Sebastian would like to be Cannes, but it can't be.

Not that this Basque beach on the Atlantic entirely lacks the qualifications of its established rival to the north. The weather is fully as vile, and the prevailing atmosphere even more commercially predatory. San Sebastian, in fact, might serve as an object lesson for those who feel that most film festivals are too arty and high-brow. Any festival that opens with Doris Day in *The Glass Bottom Boat* has got to be out for fun at any price, but fun is hard to come by here.

It was refreshing some years ago to find a festival that would honor the genuine artistry of an "entertainment" film such as Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*. Since then, however, San Sebastian has become a dumping ground for whatever junk Hollywood wants to unload on the Spanish market at the time. This year, for example, the big companies shamefully abused Spanish hospitality with *Nevada Smith* and *Cast a Giant Shadow*, pictures that no one would dare submit to Cannes, Berlin, or Venice.

On the positive side, San Sebastian opens up some tantalizing glimpses of the outside world for censor-ridden Spain. There are no restrictions against films from behind the Iron Curtain, and this year Soviet Russia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Rumania were officially represented, while other Russian films were being screened nearby under the auspices of the festival. Nor is San Sebastian too snobbish to pick up some of the more highly regarded Cannes entries such as Claude Lelouch's *Un Homme et une Femme* and Volker Schlöndorff's *Der Junge Törless*. And it may be noted in passing that Samuel Fuller's *Shock Corridor* was well received in the information section of the

festival. The other reprises ran the gamut from *The Shop on Main Street* and *Dr. Zhivago* to Ermanno Olmi's peculiar tribute to Pope John with Rod Steiger as narrator.

Otherwise, there were no impressive standouts at San Sebastian, but there were felicitous moments here and there. A Czech film called *Intimní Osvětlení* strained a bit for its Chekhovian mood, but was nonetheless charming in its low-keyed evocation of the hopes and frustrations of provincial musicians dreaming of glory in Prague. Humor and pathos burst out unexpectedly from a loose frame in which nothing "dramatic" ever happens. At the other extreme was *At Zije Republica*, an over-directed, over-contrived saga of wartime childhood combining Walter Mitty with Czechoslovakia, *Mon Amour*. Karel Kachyna's direction is expert enough, but the picture runs about an hour too long, and the child makes Emanuele Riva look like an amnesiac. Czechoslovakia remains a country to watch.

For those who had hopes after *The Suitor* that Pierre Etaix might become the new Keaton, *Tant qu'on a la santé* came as a grievous disappointment and a poor man's version of Tati's *Mon Oncle*. Pierre Etaix has talent but lacks a sense of proportion. His satire of the modern world is so exaggerated that the satire turns in on its own excesses, and his ending is nothing more than a corny anti-rock-'n'-roll cop-out.

Jean Herman's *Le dimanche de la vie* failed to bring off an interesting Raymond Queneau literary conception of the doomed world of the Thirties. Too much of the film is slack while the director searches for style, and the playing is uneven. But Danielle Darrieux and Françoise Arnoul evoke fond memories of past performances. Herman at least upholds the French obsession with form for its own sake, and he does finally go down with a bang rather than a whimper.

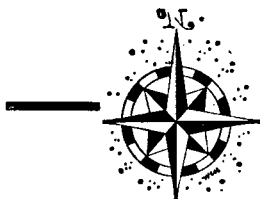
The British were represented by *I Was Happy Here*, in a Desmond Davis-Edna O'Brien reunion after their joint success with *Girl with the Green Eyes*. The mood here is more somber and less satiric, full of flashbacks and shock tonal contrasts of the sort we have been afflicted with from *Hiroshima*, *Mon Amour* to *Dear John*, but the intended poignancy never quite jells because of the director's monotonously intense moodiness from beginning to end. Sarah Miles, who graced the festival with her charming presence, is too attractive a girl to moon over such disagreeable types as Julian Glover and Sean Caffrey, and we never have the slightest doubt that she could do better at the nearest pub. Only Cyril Cusack as a philosophical innkeeper seems to keep a sense of balance throughout the proceedings.

The other British entry was Olivier's canned *Othello*, for which Frank Finlay's Iago was honored by the San Sebastian jury. *I Was Happy Here* won best picture, and the only surprise was that Sarah Miles lost out as best actress to an unheralded Argentine actress, Evangelina Salazar, in Enrique Carreras's pleasantly perceptive domestic drama, *Del Brazo y por la Calle*. Perhaps here we had a case of lingual affinity being decisive. Though a great deal has been written about the cinema as an international medium that transcends all the barriers of languages, it seems that when the chips are down we respond most deeply to the nuanced echoes of our own language.

THE jury award to director Mauro Bolognini for his direction of a free adaptation of Theophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* would have been the scandal of the festival if San Sebastian were given to scandals. With Catherine Spaak dressed up as a boy, Tomas Milian simpering like a fop, and Robert Hossein glowering like a hairy ape, the intrigue unfolds with all the verve of ancient Hollywood transvestism where the characters would coyly kiss each other to reveal cute boy-girl chemistry before the final fadeout. If Bolognini were trying for an elegant treatment of period masquerades, he was subverted by the coarseness of Catherine Spaak as the changeling.

San Sebastian, however, remained touchingly oblivious to the subtler esthetic distinctions. The film festival seems to serve primarily as an opportunity for the local bigwigs to dress to the teeth and to cross swords for the guests of honor each night. The autograph hunters are so desperate for celebrities that they besiege even visiting journalists. Certainly the gracious people of San Sebastian deserve a better film festival than they usually get.

—ANDREW SARRIS.



Through Darkest Britain by Car

Britain's winding roads slow the pace, cure monotony and help you relax. . . . You can rent a car in Britain for \$36 a week. . . . Britain's roads were designed for wanderers. . . . Anywhere you stop, you will usually find a cozy inn nearby. Four dollars is average for bed and breakfast. . . . There's every reason to rent a small car. They're ideal for wiggly English lanes. . . .

Have no misgivings about driving in a "strange" country. British bobbies speak your language. . . . Your car rental service will even provide a pilot to guide you out of London traffic. . . .
—From a magazine advertisement.

I'M SURE you've seen the above advertisement or similarly irresistible specimens put out by the British Travel Association to seduce us into gallyvanting around England in little English cars. They're always illustrated by romantic photographs of romantic American couples hanging over the "bonnets" (hoods) of their jolly little cars on a wiggly country lane with a castle looming up in the background. Well, I am one of those who took up the challenge of the British Travel Association. I motored for 885 miles up and down England, and I am here to warn you that though it is a marvelous adventure, it isn't quite as relaxing and romantic as the British Travel Association would have you believe.

What my beautiful blonde wife and I had in mind was to rent a little car and make a tour of England, after a week in London. We would commence with the country churchyard at Stoke Poges, where Gray wrote his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. It's about twenty-five miles from London. My wife was uneasy about my driving in a country where you had to drive on the left side of the road; she doesn't think I'm such a skillful driver in the United States, where you drive on the right side of the road.

"Dash it all," I cried, stalking about in our London hotel, "I know left from right, and I've been driving twenty years without an accident, and I'm going to this drive-your-self, I mean self-drive agency, and reserve, I mean, book us a small English car, because they're ideal for wiggly English lanes, and also a pilot to guide us out of London traffic."

Which I did.

Rollo, as I shall call our pilot, arrived at our hotel about 11:30 a.m. on Monday. He was a ponderous fellow of advanced age who was wearing thick spectacles and was attired in a splendid

chauffeur's uniform. He took off his chauffeur's cap and said, "Good morning, guv'nor. Shall I deposit your luggage in the boot?"

The "boot" turned out to be the trunk. The whole car was about the size of the trunk compartment of a typical American car, but I figured that was all part of the adventure, eh what?

Rollo opened the back door and my wife got into the back. I sat beside our "pilot" in the front. The steering wheel was on the right side, of course. He showed me which switches operated the lights, the heater, and the windshield wipers, and he demonstrated the gearshift. "I hope I can do it right," I said. He assured me that most of the "clients" from my country "got the 'ang of it quick." As is customary in British cars, the gearshift lever was on the left side of the steering column and the turn indicator on the right of the column. Rollo started the engine and swung into Curzon Street.

"Now, guv'nor," he continued, "in my experience there is only two things for the American driver to remember. Number 1: the roundabout. You slow up at the roundabout and give way to the other traffic." (The roundabout is nothing but one of our good old traffic circles. In England, you're constantly circling them.) "Second point, guv'nor," Rollo went on, "is watch the zebbrahs."

"The what?"

"Zebbrahs, sir. Passengers on foot have the right of way on zebbrahs. Slow down or come to a halt. Ah, there's a zebbrah now," he cried, slowing down, and I saw that a "zebrah" (or zebra) is just a pedestrian crossing marked with slanting white stripes.

My "pilot" now asked where he should head us, as he would have to leave us soon. Americans, he added, usually want to go to Canterbury or Stratford-on-Avon. I said our first stop was Stoke Poges. Rollo appeared utterly mystified.

"Stoge Pokis, did you say, guv'nor? Now where would that be? Never 'eard of it. You sure you 'aven't got it in your mind to go to Bognor Regis. Splendid seaside resort, Bognor Regis."

I dragged out a map put out by the British Travel Association in which Stoke Poges was clearly listed as a literary landmark. The map showed it to be about twenty miles out of London. Shaking his head and sighing mournfully, he pulled over to the "kerb," took out a pair of thick spectacles and put them on top of his other thick spectacles.

He studied my map, clucking dubiously. Suddenly one of those famous polite "bobbies" came over.

"Move on," he snarled politely. We were in a no-parking zone somewhere in Kensington. Rollo murmured apologetically about eccentric American tourists and "Poke Stogis," and decided to move on.

I began wondering about the whole tour. Here was a trained automobile pilot who didn't know a no-parking zone from a crumpet and didn't know how to get to Stoke Poges, so how was I going to get around in England?

Rollo told me not to worry. All over Britain I'd see yellow telephone booths along the road. These were AA booths. All I had to do was telephone and ask for traveling information. Furthermore, every road was patrolled by AA operatives on bicycles. They would salute me. They were ready to fix flats or solve any motoring problem. At Staines, a *banlieue* of London not far beyond London airport, Rollo stopped the car, got out, and said he advised me to keep on the A4 Road (the West Road, also known as the Bath Road), and follow the signs marked West. "Cheerio," he said, and went away very fast.

Here I was on an eight-lane highway—four lanes going west and four going east—and it was choked with traffic. Just choked. I was shivering all over. Then I started the engine, bravely shifted into first, and let out the clutch. Nothing happened. I gave it plenty of "petrol" and it still didn't move. I began cursing, and my wife said, "What you did was shift into left turn, darling, and I don't think it's too late to just leave the car right here and take a taxi to Victoria Station and get a train to Stoke Poges."

But I soon got things going, and we drifted into the thick stream of traffic, sluggishly moving at about ten miles an hour. We got to our first roundabout and I almost froze. I had to remember to bear left, always bear left, keep on the left side of the road and when you make a right turn make it into the left side of the road you're turning into, and I had to watch for the A4 West Road and then how was I to get out of the infernal roundabout and into the A4 West Road, and I went roundabout the roundabout two times and finally I got off it.

One of the great problems in British driving is "overtaking" (passing). Since most of the highways, even big ones, have only two lanes you must have a car that can accelerate fast so you can "overtake" the lorries or slow cars or even the surprising number of horse-drawn vehicles you will encounter. Usually you can't see much on the opposite side when overtaking a lorry because the lorries are very high. At blind spots there are always No OVERTAKING roadside