



Uncle Otto's Cabin

THERE IS an interesting inconsistency in the films of Otto Preminger. Into most of his works he has managed to introduce an element of controversy, be it merely a choice of words that shock the censors or an implication of homosexuality in the halls of Congress. But while seemingly leading with his chin, he always has his flanks well protected. When *The Moon Is Blue* introduced "pregnant" and "virgin" into the screen's vocabulary, it turned out that audiences were not aghast—only the censors. And when he made his film on drug addiction, *The Man With the Golden Arm*, the Production Code authorities promptly updated their provisions to admit this hitherto forbidden subject. Mr. Preminger has had numerous battles with censor groups, in most of which he has emerged victorious. All of this points to his uncanny astuteness as a producer. He knows how to be outrageous without being outlawed.

But the inconsistency lies in the fact that, while flouting conventions in his choice of subject matter, he is conventionality itself when it comes to his treatment of these themes. In other words, as a producer he is everything that Hollywood could desire. He has a strong instinct for what is contemporary, controversial—and safe. But as a director—he has an equally strong instinct for the cliché, for the surface gloss and the cine-

matic sleight of hand that create an effect but evade a commitment. American movies have often been accused of superficiality, but Preminger's seem particularly culpable because so often they are being superficial about things that really matter.

It is this sense that pervades his newest film, *Hurry Sundown*. Certainly, one welcomes to the screen any enlightened statement on the civil rights movement in the United States; but as this picture progresses, the doubts crowd in. Is this really it? Is this story, in which all the whites are black and all the blacks white, really a reflection of what is happening in the South (the screenplay sets it back some twenty years, to immediately after World War II), or is it rather a calculated polemic that seizes upon liberal attitudes and stereotypes merely to please the already convinced? (One can assume that vast sections of the South were written off even before production began.)

Its central character is an unscrupulous real estate operator—a sax-tootling, bourbon-swilling, egomaniacal womanizer bent on assembling some parcels of land for a vast housing development. Of the two parcels remaining, one is a small farm owned by his cousin, a combat veteran just home from the wars; the other is worked by a young Negro whose mother, conveniently, had been the Mammy of the realtor's wife. Since neither is inclined to sell, he resorts to all sorts of chicanery—including the services of a corrupt Southern judge, and, when that fails, the local Ku Klux Klan—to prevent the Negro and the white man from successfully uniting against him. He even sends his wife, a depraved, decayed aristocrat, to play upon the sympathies of her old Mammy—who responds with indignation, and promptly succumbs to a heart attack. "You done right," the woman tells her son in a lengthy death-bed speech. "I understand that now."

And so she should. Preminger has underlined everything, nuanced nothing in emphasizing that the Negro in the South is being unfairly exploited. But not only is this hardly the latest news, it loses impact by its very shrillness. None of the characters—the monstrous real estate man, his debauched wife, the bigoted judge, the idiot sheriff, the upstanding young Negro, his enlightened fiancée who has been up North—is given the dimensions of credibility; and hence, despite all the efforts of a large and able cast—notably Michael Caine, Jane Fon-

da, Burgess Meredith, and Diahann Carroll—they remain essentially puppets jerking to the strings of Thomas C. Ryan's and Horton Foote's melodramatic script. And even though, at considerable risk, Preminger did his filming in the Deep South, the smell of the studio pervades his picture. Conceived as a commercial enterprise, it plays without passion upon a theme that demands and deserves the utmost in conviction and commitment.

What these qualities can add to a picture is graphically demonstrated in a brief, brilliant, and profoundly disturbing new film from England, *The War Game*. Made by the youthful Peter Watkins for BBC Television, it was never shown there because—as was the case with Orson Welles's *War of the Worlds* on radio—the authorities felt that its utter realism might prove too shattering for the casual tuner-in. Somehow, its TV format actually strengthens its impact in the theater as it details, in documentary fashion, the effect of an atomic missile attack on England. Its conclusion is unequivocal and convincing: The holocaust of atomic warfare is so total that prevention is the only sane position today.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT

WIT TWISTER

By ARTHUR SWAN

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word. A sample, well known among lovers of acrostics:

Good landlord, fill the flowing

— — — — —

Until their — — — — — run over!

Tonight, we'll — — — — — upon

this — — — — —;

Tomorrow, — — — — — for Dover!

(Answers: *Pots, tops, stop, spot, post.*)

Now try Wit Twister #1:

One of the — — — — — escaped from the zoo.

It ran to the grocery. What a to-do.

It tossed — — — — — and potatoes with zeal that was fiery.

And was finally caught in the — — — — — of the Priory.

(Answer on page 81)





Radio's Neglected Network

"YOU FELLOWS are giving us nothing but trouble," a staff member of the Senate Commerce Committee said recently to officials of National Educational Radio (NER). Then he added with a smile, "But keep it up!" The remark illustrates the friendly, receptive attitude of lawmakers on Capitol Hill, who want to help educational radio but realize that support needs to be built up generally among legislators and their constituents.

Senator Warren G. Magnuson, the Commerce Committee's chairman, introduced the Public Television Act of 1967 in the upper chamber of Congress; his committee plans to hold hearings on the bill in April, and will shepherd it through the Senate to a vote. The bill renews the 1962 television facilities act and also provides, for the first time, financial support for noncommercial radio. This represents a major achievement for NER, and its energetic leaders are eager to see that the provisions affecting educational radio are not deleted. To this end they have been conducting a vigorous informational campaign among Congressmen, providing data that indicates the rich potential of the medium and transmitting their contagious zeal for a renaissance of educational radio.

National Educational Radio has been campaigning for more than two years, since its founding under the leadership of Jerrold Sandler, executive director, and E. G. Burrows, chairman of NER's parent body—the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. In an age of burgeoning communications technology, the new directors are certain that educational radio has an important role to play. Their efforts resulted in the first

live network interconnection of educational radio stations in this country—a broadcast throughout the United States of West German election returns. Then, with the help of the Johnson Foundation of Racine, Wisconsin, the NER directors last year convened the Wingspread Conference on Educational Radio as a National Resource. Representatives of government, industry, communications, education, philanthropy, and the arts talked candidly about the future of educational radio in a time of world-wide television satellites. The patient survived a relentless scrutiny: The conference participants mapped a campaign to tone up educational radio and to bring its performance and potential to national attention.

Basic to that campaign is a comprehensive survey of educational radio stations around the country. No such survey had ever been made but it was essential if financial backing were to be secured from government and foundation godfathers whose green wands are all atilt in the direction of educational television. NER conducted the study with the help of Herman W. Land Associates, a New York consulting firm. Facts, figures, and plans were gathered from 150 of the leading educational radio stations in the country. An outstanding result is that assumptions about the audience for educational radio will have to be revised upward.

Listeners throughout the nation hear educational radio programs not only directly from the noncommercial stations but also on commercial stations. Many educational radio stations provide programs regularly to commercial stations, at no charge other than handling fees, and these are available for sale by the

commercial stations to sponsors. KWSC the Washington State University station, supplies ninety-four commercial stations in Washington, Oregon, Utah, Idaho, and Missouri with one or more weekly programs. WUOM, the University of Michigan station, supplies 100 commercial stations in the state with one or more programs a week. The K-State Network of Kansas State University, at Manhattan, Kansas, reaches 95 per cent of Kansas homes through commercial stations. The network provided these stations with 14,000 tapes in 1966.

The survey revealed that in some cases in particular time periods educational radio stations attract more listeners than their commercial competitors. In November 1966, KWSC, the Washington State station, had a 30.5 per cent share of the available audience in the 8 a.m. time period, as against a 23.4 per cent share for the top commercial competitor. These are only a few of the many examples turned up by the NER-Land survey that suggest a new scope and penetration of some educational radio stations.

Along with the success stories in the survey, however, there are many cases in which special services by educational radio stations go begging for a mere pittance of funds. The Wisconsin Educational Radio Network, the oldest and largest in the nation, has ambitious plans for multiplexing training programs throughout the state, but cannot put them into action because the \$7,500 needed to purchase and install the multiplex equipment is not available. The Public Television Act of 1967, following the President's recommendations, asks Congress for \$10,500,000 for radio and television facilities, and for \$9,000,000 for the establishment of the Corporation for Public Television, which will be charged with the encouragement and financial support of educational radio as well as TV programming.

Radio is a newcomer to the contest for public funds. It is uncertain at this time whether or not witnesses who support educational radio's case will be invited to testify at the Congressional hearings. To ensure that they will be called, and to ensure that educational radio will not be pushed entirely out of the way by the more publicized needs of noncommercial television, NER plans to "keep it up"—to continue its educational campaign among Congressmen, Senators, the public, sympathetic members of the press, and foundations. Though big plans are being made, small needs are not being met. An alert foundation could do the country a great service by ensuring that NER's case will be fully presented at the coming hearings. It would be a wise investment in a national resource.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

