

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

Film Reviews
By G.M.



MAN ABOUT TOWN

(Paramount)

Most agreeable surprise-packet fished out of the cinema's bran-tub in the past few months is Paramount's *Man About Town*. A lavish, witty and occasionally tuneful musical-comedy, it provides 80 minutes of as cheerful entertainment as any picturegoer these days has a right to expect.

Man About Town reveals itself as a promising gloom-dispeller in the first few minutes, with the appearance of the irresistible Eddie ("Rochester") Anderson, and thereafter he, and Jack Benny, and one or two others see to it that the promise is kept. Paramount can take no credit for the "discovery" of Rochester, since we have it on the best authority that he is already a "sensation" of the American radio networks, but they can at least take credit for putting him on the screen in a way that should dispel the prevalent opinion among non-American audiences that negro comedians in general should be subjected to a compulsory blackout. For Rochester is a coloured gentleman whose brand of humour is as infectious as it is easily understood. He acts as valet to Jack Benny in the story, and while any master could hardly be served worse, it is safe to say that the audience could hardly be served better in the matter of laughs. Good as many of the other parts of the picture are, they resolve themselves in fact into mere periods of waiting for the reappearance of this ingenious buffoon. Even the

garrulous, always competent Jack Benny and the equally competent Edward Arnold and Binnie Barnes move in the shadow of Rochester. Even the presence, in flesh and blood, of the pretty-pretty Petty Girls from the pages of *Esquire* fail to excite us much. Most astounding of all, the appearance of Dorothy Lamour without her customary sarong passes almost unnoticed.

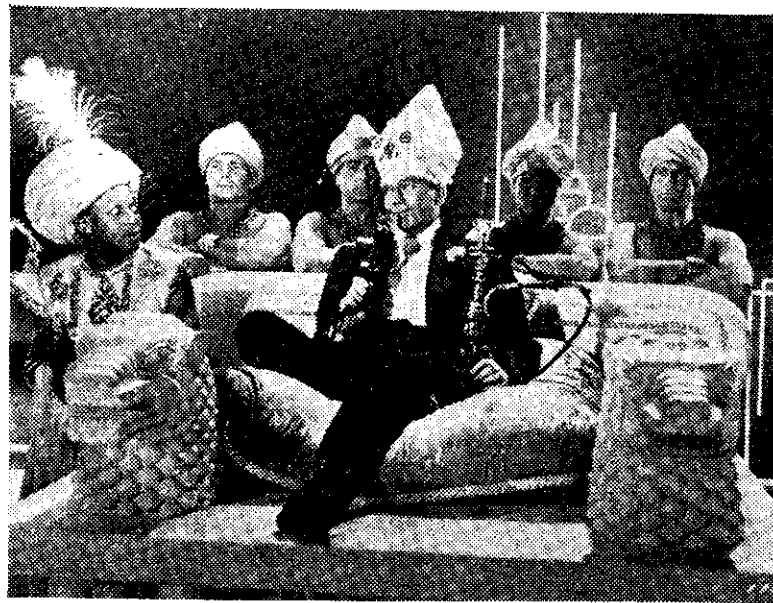
Best wisecrack: The description of E. E. Clive as "the only man who always looks as if he is sucking a lemon, and isn't."

KONZERT IN TIROL

(New Film Distributors)

If you happen to speak German you are likely to appreciate the Austrian production *Konzert in Tirol* more than the average New Zealander, for whose benefit the film has been retitled "Young Vienna Sings Again." The dialogue is all in German, and though a précis of the plot is given in English, one has to rely mainly upon the acting to understand what it is all about. Fortunately the acting is sufficiently good to enable one to follow at least the outlines of the story; but for myself I found the flood of unintelligible guttural German coming from the screen for 80 minutes to have a slightly soporific effect. Like eating too much lettuce.

But there are plenty of other things in *Konzert in Tirol* to keep one awake. This simple, triangular romance of a village school teacher, a village maiden, and a sophisticated girl from the city contains some delightfully refreshing



THE PERSON to take note of in this scene from "Man About Town" is not so much Jack Benny, reclining, in the centre, but Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, hovering on the outskirts. See review on this page.

types. The action takes place up in the snow-capped Tyrolean Mountains, near Kitzbuehl; and even more important than the adult players are the boys, good little actors all of them, who frisk in and out of the story as the pupils of the hero. These boys are doubly important in that they are actually the members of the Vienna Boys' Choir (well known to New Zealand), and they add musical charm to the photographic excellence of the picture with several numbers, both secular and sacred, including a very impressive nativity play. They even present "The Blue Danube" in costume, dancing merrily together as they sing.

The film, by the way, must have been made before the Anschluss, when Austria was still Austria, because there's not a sign of a swastika anywhere.

LUCKY NIGHT

(M.G.-M.)

Who called it "lucky"? Some picturegoers, I suspect, may have a different word for it when they hear Robert Taylor telling Myrna Loy that her mind is like a little green leaf stirred by the breeze. And that's a simple statement compared with most of the interminable talk. Presumably the author himself knew what he was writing, but we're not all mind-readers.

DEAD MAN'S SHOES

(A.B.P.)

War cuts off two interesting careers. Either the criminal Pelletier is dead, or the financier de Vauthier. They are alike, and the man who lies in hospital, his memory gone through a head injury, is claimed by the financier's relatives. His fiancée accepts him. They are married. The film discovers them happily bringing up their boy. But a blackmailer gets to work. A newspaper says the financier is really the criminal. A lawsuit follows. Vauthier remains Vauthier, but there are doubts, and the principal witness for the libel prosecution opens the way for his turn at blackmail by an admission that he perjured himself in his evidence about the death of Pelletier. Pelletier's

lover appears, and his mother. There are denouements and denunciations, and a sound dramatic film comes to a suitable end with Leslie Banks still the financier, whether de Vauthier or Pelletier. Wilfred Lawson and Joan Marion go down with their sinking ship for the necessary climax, each with his and her particular flag flying. Director Bentley has kept the story to the rails, and leaves his work clean of unnecessary trimmings.

MOSCOW LAUGHS

(Amkino)

What Rudyard Kipling said about East being East and West being West is undoubtedly true. Senses of values are different, ideas of what is funny and what is not funny, for example, do not always coincide between nation and nation. But whatever its faults, the Russian-produced film, "Moscow Laughs," does succeed in being amusing. There is, of course, the inevitable class-consciousness even in the humour, but it is not oppressively evident.

More might have been made of "Moscow Laughs." The direction is in many places excellent; and if technically the film is not good, the idea behind its production is something that the technically-better films of other countries might use.

The women are too much like the person Theda Bara was; there are one or two bits of vamping that are what Graham MacNamee calls "turric." But this film succeeds in another way. It is highly stylised and, in so being, gives an original, if naive, presentation of the usual situations.

The best acting is by a wistful, pretty girl called Aniuta. She is the serving maid who eventually finds happiness with the hero, a good-looking herdsman. Incidentally this fellow gets away with a wild round of slapstick comedy that would lose any Hollywood Lothario his fan-mail for being so undignified and forgetting to turn the correct profile to the camera!



ANGELIC STUDY of the "Dead End" Kids. They appear with Jimmy Cagney, Pat O'Brien and Humphrey Bogart in "Angels With Dirty Faces," for Warner Bros.