

# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

## THE LODGER

(20th Century-Fox)



MRS. BELLOC-LOWNDES'S novel based on the Jack-the-Ripper murders is always good for a shudder—at least it has been on the three occasions since 1926 when it has been filmed. But this time the shudders which a new Hollywood director, John Brahm, contrives to extract from the gruesome business are neither so pronounced nor so prolonged as they were the time Alfred Hitchcock handled the assignment in a British silent film. Nor are they quite so effective as in the 1932 version, which had Ivor Novello in the leading role. I seem to remember that the Novello version made a great deal more of the murderer's mysterious brother than the present one does, with the result that there was a much greater sting to the tale.

However, although the new *Lodger* discards the mystery element and makes no pretence of disguising the maniac's identity from the audience, it still goes in heavily for suspense and eeriness in its scenes of Whitechapel and Bloomsbury

after dark in the year 1889, when Jack-the-Ripper was throwing the feminine population of London into panic by cutting up rough among them on street corners and in alleyways night after night. In fact, the fog and the shadows are laid on a bit too thick: few films have been more dimly lighted throughout.

Not that this dooms the cast to obscurity. Laird Cregar is suitably sinister as the maniac with a mission; Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Sara Allgood have a convincing air of late-Victorian respectability as the couple who give him board and lodging; George Sanders is the Scotland Yard man who finally settles his hash; and Merle Oberon temporarily forgets her dignity as Lady Korda and dances the Hollywood can-can.

But it is the direction rather than the acting that is the most interesting thing about *The Lodger*, and although John Brahm has not yet arrived anywhere in particular, he seems to be on his way. His inspiration and guide is apparently Orson Welles. Notice, for instance, how Cregar is continually photographed from near ground level to heighten the effect

of looming menace, and the use of multiple mirrors in the scene where he corners the heroine. In many other places, too, this murderous melodrama distinctly bears the mark of *Kans*.

## COVER GIRL

(Columbia)



THE title of this film refers to those shapely and elegant females who adorn the covers of American magazines and thus keep up their own circulations by keeping up those of their readers. It is not to be taken in the imperative sense; that is, as an injunction to cover anything up. Quite the reverse in fact: *Cover Girl* opens with a sequence which must have made Mr. Hays reach for his spectacles, when eight chorus girls separately and collectively expose more technicoloured flesh than has been seen since the Legion of Decency was founded.

Fortunately, perhaps, *Cover Girl* turns out to be something a good deal more than just an orgy of flesh-tints. Many of its song-and-dance routines have a zest and a zipp and an imaginative spaciousness equalled only in some of the early Astaire-Rogers films and not seen on the screen since. The dialogue moves almost as fast and twinkles as brightly as the feet of Rusty Parker, "the girl with

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