


SPEAKING CANDIDLY

SUMMER STORM


(United Artists)

 THIS film, adapted from (a good long way from) Anton Chekov's story, *The Shooting Party*, introduces us to another of those sultry temptresses whom Hollywood actresses delight to portray when they are feeling in a particularly dramatic mood. We have seen Bette Davis do it often, and Garbo, and Joan Crawford, and a long way before that there were Theda Bara and Nazimova; and now it is Linda Darnell's turn to let off steam and drive men mad with her languorous glances and alluring curves. As a Russian peasant girl (pre-Revolution style) she claims three victims before she herself falls victim to one of them. Each one is merely a stepping-stone to the next: first the doting peasant overseer (Hugo Haas) whom she marries but betrays on her wedding night; then the charming but dissolute Judge (George Sanders) whose infatuation for her is stronger than his love for his fiancée (Anna Lee); and finally the lord of the estate himself, a decadent Count (Edward Everett Horton) who is so much under her spell that he actually proposes marriage. But somebody sticks a knife into her at a shooting party, and it is not until after the revolution that Justice and the Hays Office are finally satisfied.

Audiences, who are showing welcome signs of a taste for more serious drama these days, are apparently satisfied, too. They have some pretty good reasons to be. *Summer Storm* would probably have been a better picture if it had been produced by Russians; they would have made more natural and convincing use of that atmosphere of sweltering humid summer heat which, through its influence on human passions, should provide the motif of the whole drama. As it is, in their attempt to behave as Russians are popularly supposed to behave, the players are so intense and pent-up that they sometimes seem artificial. But allowing for this, the story is handled with far more finesse—is better acted and worked out better to its conclusion—than the average Hollywood production.

DANGEROUS JOURNEY

(United Artists)


 A PART from a slight feeling of irritation at the beginning and end caused by the proprietary note in the American commentator's voice when referring to "Our boys" and "Our war effort," I found this travelogue feature very interesting. So should anybody who has a taste for the bizarre, the abnormal, and the sensational. In fact, the attempt to tie the picture up with the war by suggesting that the weird scenes in it will be commonplace sights to Allied soldiers in their travels round the globe is pretty far-fetched. I don't suppose many of them have visited the seven-foot Watusi tribesmen and seen them "cutting a rug" in their tribal dances; or have taken part in a wild elephant hunt; have been in a boat race with the Intha of Burma,

who paddle with their feet; or have been privileged to see a Burmese priestess kiss a huge King Cobra three times on the snout.

This kissing sequence has got all Hollywood fade-outs licked for thrills if not for sex-appeal. And if you want to know where jitterbug music originated I am now in a position to tell you. Obviously with the Watusi of Central Africa.

THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

(National Provincial—New Action Pictures)

 IT is not only the mills of God that grind slowly. So does *The Mill on the Floss*. At least it does in this funeral-paced English version of George Eliot's story, and in the process it crushes out any life that was left in the novel. Although they do, in fact, make one incomprehensible variation in the ending, I think that on the whole the director and players were too jolly impressed by the fact that they were handling a classic. A little healthy disrespect, even a Hollywood touch here and there, would for once have been a great improvement. The cast, of course, is Very Notable—Geraldine Fitzgerald as Maggie Tulliver, James Mason (a younger edition of Laurence Olivier) as the black-visaged Tom, Victoria Hopper, Frank Lawton, Fay Compton, etc. Their accents are impeccably English; and, as I say, almost no liberties have been taken with the original story. To some people these few oats among the chaff produced by the Mill may make the job seem worth while; and if that is so I would not want to put them off the picture. But my own impression is that the chief thing *The Mill on the Floss* does is to make George Eliot, in this day and age, seem even more monumentally dull than she really is.

THE Australian radio and stage star Muriel Steinbeck has been signed up for the leading feminine role in Columbia's Australian film production *Smithy*, based on the life of Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith.

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