

(continued from previous page)

—all of whom spend most of their time playing tag in and around an eerie mansion next door which, having been deserted for years, has recently become the scene of a murder. The film has its moments, but suffers through not being able to make up its mind whether to go all out for thrills in the old-fashioned haunted-house manner, or whether to achieve them mainly by hints and suggestions. It thus, so to speak, falls between two schools of melodrama. Its chief assets are the performances of Gail Russell, as the beautiful governess who does not quite know her place, and of Richard Lyon, as a sadistic small boy with grim secrets on his mind.

JOHNNY ANGEL

(RKO-Radio)

 ALMOST the only thing which distinguishes *Johnny Angel* from a host of other pictures (if you can call it distinction) is the fact that the producers have resisted the temptation to involve the Axis in all the villainy that happens ashore and afloat. Instead of Nazi agents being responsible for murdering the crew of the ship that is smuggling five million dollars' worth of gold bullion from Marseilles to New Orleans, this major piece of skullduggery—together with all the illegal activities that arise from it to complicate the story—is the work of a pre-war vintage pack of Hollywood wolves in sheep's clothing.

I had hopes at the start of something a good deal out of the ordinary, for the film builds up an effectively sinister atmosphere around the discovery of the derelict ship which was carrying the gold. The precious cargo has disappeared, and so has the crew; the screen is one big question-mark. But nothing much emerges from the atmosphere thus created except a routine melodrama of a highly improbable kind which enables George Raft, as the nautical son of the murdered sea-captain, to exploit his particular brand of toughness by unmasking the crooks, avenging his father, and protecting a beautiful foreigner in distress (Signe Hasso).

Edward L. Marin is the director of *Johnny Angel*, and he knows all the tricks to play on an audience's nerves with deserted wharves and decks, doors creaking open in the silence, echoing pavements, shadows in dim doorways. But there comes a point when tricks like these fail; and that point is reached more than once in this film. If the door that swings open mysteriously never leads anywhere, if there keeps on being nothing at the end of those dark and menacing passages, one is entitled to feel that so much emphasis upon sinister effects is rather a waste of time.

There are, however, two noteworthy features of *Johnny Angel* apart from the previously mentioned absence of Nazis. One is the performance of Signe Hasso, who expresses so convincingly the bewilderment and terror of the French girl who travelled mysteriously aboard the ship from Marseilles. The other is the appearance of Hoagy Carmichael as a New Orleans taxi-driver. He is actually nothing more than part of the atmosphere, but in spite of his irrelevance to

the plot contributes substantially to the picture. Claire Trevor is also present in another of her portrayals of wicked womanhood: an unlikely character, but no more unlikely than almost anything else in the film.

In fact, one gets the impression that the director himself became a little entangled in the web of deception he was weaving. At any rate he seems to have forgotten to explain one or two crucial points in the story. But if you are willing to overlook the loose ends, are prepared to cast probability to the winds, and are in the mood to enjoy murder, free-for-all fights, and a sinister atmosphere you may find yourself suited by *Johnny Angel*.

RECENT BOOKS

SWITZERLAND AND THE ENGLISH, by Arnold Lunn. 25/4 posted. The influence of Switzerland on artists and writers has been considerable; but the most important contact between the Swiss and the English has been through mountaineering. Both aspects are dealt with in this scholarly and beautifully illustrated book.

THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE, by Karel Capek. 9/3 posted. This novel, in which Capek foresaw the release of atomic energy, is a brilliant speculation on its possible effects.

REBUILDING BRITAIN—A TWENTY YEAR PLAN, by Sir Ernest Simon. 9/9 posted. This important book, full of ideas and information, deals with every aspect of town planning.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER: CHRISTIAN REVOLUTIONARY, by George Seaver. 8/2 posted. An interpretation, supported by ample quotation, of Albert Schweitzer's philosophy.

WELLINGTON CO-OPERATIVE BOOK SOCIETY LIMITED.

MODERN BOOKS

48A MANNERS STREET,
WELLINGTON, C.1, N.Z.



SUPERB TONE through advanced designing, radiacoustic cabinet, heavy baffle board, Columbus 8" speaker.

LONG LIFE assured by solid steel welded chassis cadmium plated against moisture, dust and heat, oversize power components, American dual and triple type tubes, anti-vibration mounting.

EASE OF OPERATION through spin tuning, side-lit vertical dial with permanent, brilliant etched figures of ample size. Smooth, easily-operated controls.

Easy to buy on Term-Purchase.
12 months guarantee backed by nationwide factory-to-you service.

New 5-Valve Dual-Wave model of outstanding tonal fidelity (produced in Broadcast models also)

Compact, yes... but perfectly proportioned and richly finished, with beauty of tone to equal the simple dignity of its appearance. The Utility Model with its 8 inch speaker, features Columbus Electronic Tone. Here, too, is both broadcast and shortwave performance unusual in its class. One of the magnificent range of Columbus Models newly released and now on display at Columbus Radio Centre.

COLUMBUS RADIO