

Whereas the Film Unit approached the housing situation from the wider, historical angle, the P.W.D. film-makers favour the more intimate and more domestic approach, concentrating largely on the details of construction and giving us an inside view of Government houses and their fittings.

To the Editor—

Letters About Films

Sir,—In a recent film section, G.M. appears to be somewhat worried concerning a possible analogy between the production of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* at a time of social chaos in Germany and the prevalence and apparent popularity of the psychological thriller to-day. To the writer it seems that the analogy is strained, almost out of existence in fact. A simpler hypothesis presents itself.

It is some ten or 15 years now since psychology first hit the headlines. The jargon of the trade has been absorbed into the language, e.g., complex, inhibition, fixation, etc.—words which can be heard from practically any modern mother. In Hollywood the pure thriller or romance-thriller ("Mr and Mrs. North" and the like) have finally lost their grip on the public; and the producers have recognised and exploited the new field. As far as the psychology itself is concerned, it is only a vehicle to carry the thriller. Never is it profound nor does it at any time link up with real life.

It is interesting to note in passing a similar trend in the evolution of the detective novel. The better writers to-day have found that the pure detection story is played out, so they decorate the bare bones of the murder plot with their literary of psychological pleasantries, cf., Michael Innes and Ellery Queen.

G.M.'s suggestion is really too far fetched—or has the bait been too readily accepted? M.R. (Bayswater).

Sir,—Not only as a counter to "One of the Bobby-soxers" (*Listener*, November 1), but also because I have so much appreciation of G.M.'s film criticisms I should like to put the opposite point of view.

Like your correspondent, I read the weekly film reviews, and find them fair and rational. G.M. gives praise and adverse criticism where they are merited, and while not assuming that all readers have the same tastes as he has, usually summarises a film so that people of differing tastes can make a reliable judgment.

His little figures at the beginning of each review seem to indicate his own reaction to the film, and I should say that he does "get a real good laugh or a thrill from a picture" when these are not provided at the expense of the intelligence of the audience.

A few months ago I had the opportunity of seeing some of the films reviewed by G.M. before they came to this country and this pre-knowledge gave me an excellent opportunity to assess his criticism, compare it with popular opinion elsewhere, and with my own idea of the films concerned. The result is a very high regard for his opinion and for the unbiased manner in which he deals with his subject.

May I point out the valuable work done by G.M. for country people in

particular. Nothing is more annoying than to go to a show during one's rare visits to town only to find that it is a complete flop. Naturally one does not always agree with all points of G.M.'s criticism, but the summary he gives is a very valuable guide in choosing a programme.

Did the hyphenated word "Bobby-soxer" come into vogue during the late war? I have never before heard it nor have I the faintest idea what it could mean. Up to 1939 I was not too far behind the times to be unaware of the meaning of current slang, but I should be grateful if your future adolescent correspondents would explain to readers the meaning of war-coined phrases for the benefit of those who were not there. N.R.H. (Heriot).

Sir,—As I am one of G.M.'s admirers I can't refrain from replying to "One of the Bobby-soxers'" letter.

Evidently she is a staunch follower of Van Johnson. I like him too, but I'm not so infatuated as to believe that he has no faults.

The statement that nine out of ten film-goers protest against G.M.'s "one-man criticisms" is misleading. In the first place, all the film-goers I've met seem to find G.M. quite bearable. They don't agree with everything he says of course; I don't myself, but on the whole they find his reviews quite a reliable guide. Even the principal of our school recommended his reviews. And secondly, as he is expressing his own opinion it would naturally be "one-man." If you don't like his reviews, don't read them.

I see that "cut-and-dried pessimism" is another of G.M.'s faults. Ah, well. Come, fellow fans of G.M. Let us retire to a dark hole to read his reviews and pessimise together!

"ANOTHER OF THE BOBBY-SOXERS" (Invercargill).

Sir,—Each week as I pick up *The Listener* and read G.M.'s movie page I long to tell him how good, excellent, his reviews are. I am dumb, he speaks. It is to read his page that I buy *The Listener*, so much do I enjoy it.

FILM FAN (Masterton).

Sir,—A week or so ago I read G.M.'s criticism of *Easy to Wed* starring Van Johnson. He said it had very few laughs in it. Well, all I can say he has no sense of humour. I saw *Easy to Wed* fairly recently and I thought it was exceedingly funny. The scene in which Van Johnson was trying to shoot ducks nearly made me die laughing and every time I think of it I have to smile.

"SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD" (Auckland).

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

A BATTALION of the R.N.Z.A.F. on parade in Tokio on Trafalgar Day, is shown in Weekly Review No. 274 released on November 29 by the National Film Unit. Other items include "First Shot Fired" in which is shown the opening ceremony of the Rimutaka Tunnel deviation; "Kaikohe Training Centre," showing the training in building which the Rehabilitation Dept. is giving to returned Maoris; and "A Dog's Chance," an item about the S.P.C.A. Hostel at Auckland, in which a small boy and his pet dog play the leading roles.

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