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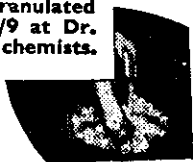
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**Dr. Scholl's GRANULATED
FOOT SOAP**

The Films, by G.M.

TEN OUT OF A HUNDRED

EXACTLY one hundred films have been seen by me during the past 12 months and have been reviewed in *The Listener* between January 11, 1946, and January 3, 1947. It is a nice round figure, but I do not claim that it comes anywhere near setting a record as an endurance test. Thousands of people, I am sure, see on an average more than two films a week (though I cannot imagine why). However, if you work my total out in terms of footage the result is much more impressive for, taking into account the inordinate length of so many features these days, it means that I have sat through just on one million feet of film in the past year—one million feet of pathos and pathology, heart-throbs and hokum, passion and propaganda, sex and sadism, romance and realism, music and murder, kisses and knockouts. And how much real art? How much that was truly memorable? Echo, to coin a phrase, answers how much.

Qualitatively those million feet of film were not exactly remarkable; but they were at any rate no worse, and even a little better, than in previous years, judging by the number of occasions on which the Little Man rose to his feet to applaud. A survey of gradings given to films reviewed shows that there were 17 stand-up claps in 1946 as against 16 in 1945, 14 in 1944, and 12 in 1943. A question which I really cannot be expected to answer for myself is this: is my standard of taste getting lower, or is the standard of films becoming higher?

Of sit-down claps last year there were 35 (compared with 38 in 1945). On 33 occasions (three more than in the previous year) the Little Man was sufficiently interested to sit up in his seat and take notice; but 13 films caused him to slump badly, whereas there were only 10 which produced this reaction in 1945. And twice in 1946 he just couldn't take it, whereas nothing, apparently, was bad enough in the previous year to justify the Dishonourable Award of the Walk-Out.

A YEAR of picturegoing which produces 17 excellent shows out of 100 cannot be regarded as a total loss, and in this respect my experience was probably not much different from that of the average cinema patron, though we might differ as to which were the excellent films. Similarly, to have seen 35 films which, though not absolutely first-class, were nevertheless good entertainment is not by any means bad going. And a total of only 13 duds and two absolute stinkers out of 100 could have been much worse. It certainly would have been if, instead of choosing my subjects with some care, I had gone to the movies indiscriminately. There were plenty of poor pictures about.

To balance the account a little before I begin itemising the really notable films of 1946, let me recall a few of the Awful Moments that have had to be endured. Prominent among these I would place poor Deanna Durbin's misguided rendering of "Silent Night, Holy Night," crooned over the telephone in

Lady on a Train; the obnoxiously noisy and vulgar behaviour of Donald Duck in several parts of *The Three Caballeros*; and William Powell saying his prayers in *The Hoodlum Saint*. And time will not soon erase from memory the extreme fatuity of almost every portion of *Leave Her to Heaven*, the dripping sentimentality of *Love Story*, and Hollywood's treatment of the Bronte Sisters in *Devotion*.

THESE were the films, listed alphabetically, which were given the stand-up clap award during 1946 (the figures indicate the date, day and month of the issues in which they were reviewed):

Anna and the King of Siam (11.10), *Blithe Spirit* (21.6), *Cluny Brown* (13.9), *The Corn is Green* (20.9), *Dead of Night* (16.8), *The House on 92nd Street* (25.1), *The Last Chance* (20.9), *The Lost Week-end* (23.8), *National Velvet* (11.1), *The Road to Utopia* (21.6), *Scarlet Street* (26.7), *The Story of G.I. Joe* (27.12), *Thunder Rock* (16.8), *The True Glory* (15.2), *Watch on the Rhine* (8.2), *The Way to the Stars* (29.11), *Wonder Man* (15.3).

In order to reduce these to the Ten Best of the Year (an annual task which seems now to be expected of the critic), it is necessary to prune away seven titles. The seven I would select for this treatment are *Anna and the King of Siam*, *Cluny Brown*, *The Corn is Green*, *National Velvet*, *Scarlet Street*, *The Road to Utopia*, and *The House on 92nd Street*. It is a hard and rather arbitrary choice; but the sacrifice of the first five mentioned can, I think, be justified on the ground that all of them erred on the side of sentimentality or contained false notes; several of them were picturesque and unusual, yet weakened themselves by concessions to the box-office. *The Road to Utopia* was a good comedy and *The House on 92nd Street* a good semi-documentary, but there were better ones in both categories.

THIS, then, leaves the following as my choice for the Ten Best Films of 1946 (not in order of preference):

Blithe Spirit.
Dead of Night.
The Last Chance.
The Lost Week-end.
The Story of G.I. Joe.
Thunder Rock.
The True Glory.
Watch on the Rhine.
The Way to the Stars.
Wonder Man.

Blithe Spirit, the British film of Noel Coward's play, was the comedy of the year, with its amorous spooks and its high-pressure medium, Madame Arcati. *Wonder Man*, with Danny Kaye, an excellent and versatile clown, was likewise about ghosts, and was America's best contribution to the lighter side of film-going during 1946. By also including in the list *Dead of Night*, I perhaps acknowledge my own taste for the supernatural as well as a distinct trend of cinema material during the past year, but this British production was an outstanding example of a rarely-successful type of film, composite ghost-story.

The other films on the list were considerably more serious. *Thunder Rock* was an expertly directed and well-acted film with genuine intellectual content; it had something worthwhile to say and said it with conviction (this film, too, had a supernatural, or more correctly a mystical, basis). *The Lost Week-end* contained Ray Milland's memorable performance as the hopeless drunkard; the film had some weaknesses, but was on the whole a remarkably powerful and intelligent production. *The Watch on the Rhine* with fine performances by Paul Lukas and Bette Davis, was another film of ideas; it had high tension as well as high purpose. And that, with emphasis, can be said also about *The Last Chance*, that humane and sensitive Swiss-made film dealing with the escape of refugees from war-time Italy; a rather false ending did not appreciably decrease its noble stature. This film was really in the semi-documentary class; and so also were the two others on my list—*The Way to the Stars*, the British production about Anglo-American relations on an English airfield, and *The Story of G.I. Joe*, which came to us from Hollywood as the year closed and showed the war, without glamour, from the infantryman's point of view. The final film on the list, *The True Glory*, was a genuine documentary—a purely factual account of the assault on Fortress Europe made even more impressive by fine editing and fine writing.

SOME readers may be struck by the fact that *Henry V* does not appear in the above list. The reason is that, although the film was not generally released until 1946, I reviewed it after a private screening towards the end of 1945, and, in fact, nominated it as the best film I had seen that year. Otherwise it would certainly be among my best films of the past 12 months, and probably at the head of them. That distinction, I think, must now go to *The Last Chance*. The choice is a difficult one; several other films put in strong claims; but on points *The Last Chance* wins the title of the Best Film of 1946.

All kinds of inferences, apart from my apparent bias towards the supernatural, may be—and possibly will be—drawn from this analysis. Though I have included two comedies among my Ten Best, it will be noticed that no place has been found for purely romantic melodrama, which may perhaps suggest an unduly serious frame of mind. However, the main conclusion would seem to be that the cinema is at its best in the field of imaginative realism. It was imagination applied to the presentation of real life which produced *The Lost Week-end*, *The True Glory*, *The Way to the Stars*, *The Story of G.I. Joe*, and above all, *The Last Chance*.

IN the following list of gradings the figures after the titles give the date (day and month) of the issues of *The Listener* during 1946 in which the films were reviewed:

(continued on next page)