

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE BANDIT OF SHERWOOD FOREST

(Columbia)



YOU could, if you found the new adventures of Robin Hood, his son, and his Merry Men beginning to pall a little, spend quite a happy time playing a game, somewhat after the style of "Beaver," which would consist of spotting the anachronisms and historical inaccuracies in this Hollywood account, in Technicolour, of how Magna Carta was saved for posterity when the Regent of England planned to "withdraw" it and murder the boy King Henry III. I don't mean such obvious ones as the accents, or the cowboy style of horseback riding which is indulged in by the outlaws even in the depths of Sherwood Forest. You can find many quainter touches than that. For example, as Miss C. A. Lejeune, whose knowledge of such esoteric matters is naturally greater than mine, has pointed out, the heroine of the story (Anita Louise) sports mascara'd eye-lashes, the newest shade of lipstick, an excellent perm, and a dress with a zip-fastener. Four up to Miss Lejeune. But I think I can beat Miss Lejeune at this game, for bless me if Robin Hood and his Merry Men, the very lads who traditionally introduced the stout six-foot yew bow and cloth-yard shaft to Merrie England and practically put archery on the map, aren't armed here with miserable modern American, semi-Red Indian-style flat bows of hickory or ash! Gad air, it's enough to make one's blood boil.

However, since not more than one picturegoer in ten thousand will feel like getting steamed up in company with me over this point, I suppose I had better say something about the story. Well, all you actually need to do is to imagine a typical Western melodrama taking place in medieval England, with Nottingham Castle replacing the frontier town, and the Regent (Henry Daniell) substituting for the wicked sheriff. The goodies are, of course, Robin Hood himself—20 years older than when we saw him last, and now Earl of Huntingdon—his athletic son (Cornel Wilde), Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, and the rest of the boys from the Huntingdon ranch, slightly grizzled now but still able to pull a very mean bow-string and bring down a man-at-arms at 50 paces from the back of a galloping bronco. (Incidentally, the Bandits seem to be as plentifully supplied with arrows as their cowboy counterparts are with six-shooter ammunition and are equally wasteful with it; they don't even bother to pick up their arrows after shooting them.) The baddies are, naturally, the Regent, his retinue of robber barons, and their armoured minions. When the Regent holds a committee meeting and announces that he intends to scrap Magna Carta and begin grinding the faces of the poor again, only the valiant Earl of Huntingdon protests. After a stirring speech about democracy and all that, he withdraws with dignity and takes to the greenwood again, sending out smoke-signals or something to gather his tribesmen together. Young

R. Hood, who has come down from Scotland to answer the call, gallops up with a cry of "Hi Yo, Sherwood!" (or something), and they are also joined by the Queen of England and her Lady-in-Waiting, Miss Anita Louise, who have slipped out of the back door of Nottingham Castle attired as scullery-maids (so they say) in order to provide the picture with romantic interest.

So then the Huntingdon boys lay siege to the castle, where the young king is still immured and on the point of being bumped off the battlements by the Regent. Divers wily stratagems and deeds of quite incredible daring are performed; young R. Hood and the Regent fight it out man to man and the best man wins, bow-strings twang and villains bite the dust, Magna Carta and democratic government are restored to England, the liberated king rewards young R. Hood by making him an Earl like his father, and commands him to marry Miss A. Louise, whose mascara, perm, and lipstick show no evidence of what she has been through, and to spend his honeymoon at Sutherland Castle. Thus it was in the brave days of old.

HOLIDAY IN MEXICO

(M.G.M.)



[I might be interesting to compare the impression of Mexico which we were given in the native-made *Portrait of Maria* with the picture-postcard, tourist-eye view of that country which we get in this new musical. Interesting, but not exactly profitable, for *Portrait of Maria* was a real picture and this is just a mess. Joe Pasternak, who produced *Holiday in Mexico*, clearly has the intention of building the new starlet, Jane Powell, into a second Deanna Durbin. He goes about this task by presenting her as the precocious bobby-sox daughter of the American Ambassador to Mexico, and involving her in embarrassingly callow romantic complications with a famous musician much older than herself (Jose Iturbi), and the British Ambassador's young son (Roddy McDowall). Meanwhile her father the Ambassador conducts a sedate love-affair with a Hungarian refugee (Ilona Massey). Jane Powell sings, Ilona Massey sings, Iturbi plays the piano, and Xavier Cugat and his band dispense rumbas. Roddy McDowall's portrayal is almost an insult to the English, and I find it hard to believe that the U.S. State Department can be completely happy about Walter Pidgeon's representation of a high American diplomat. The film is in lush Technicolour, with wedding-cake settings, and it lasts—believe it or not—127 minutes.

In fact, adapting (but with apologies to nobody) what somebody else once wrote in other circumstances, I would say that if I were not by nature a mild sort of person I could be almost rude about *Holiday in Mexico*. As it is, I shall, with remarkable restraint, confine myself to remarking that I found it cheap, flashy, stupid, vulgarly ostentatious, profligate, raucous, infantile, meretricious, tasteless, shallow, embarrassing, outrageously long-winded and wearisome.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

WEEKLY Review No. 282, which will be released by the National Film Unit on January 23, highlights an ancient pastime in the item "Archery," in which experts are seen in action. "Road Marking Machine" introduces an ingenious time-saving device for marking pedestrian crossings and intersections; "Mobile Dental Clinic" shows a surgery on wheels designed to serve outlying districts. Finally there is an industrial item, "Making Washing Machines" which shows these labour-saving devices in production in New Zealand.

AUSTRALIAN FILMS

"Good quality films will focus the interest and attention of the world upon Australia," said the *ABC Weekly* lately. "They can be made the pathfinders to increased population, bigger trade—and all the amenities that go with these things. It is quite unrealistic to portray Australian types (for overseas consumption) as loutish hillbillies whose vocabulary is limited to such words as 'dinkum' and 'bonza,' and whose chief occupation in life is to take a rise out of the 'city slicker.' It is not merely unrealistic; it is damaging."

"Wired Wireless"

THE following letter, and the answer to it supplied by the Chief Engineer of the NZBS, will probably be of interest to a good many of our readers:

Sir,—In an article entitled "The BBC Marks Time" in a recent issue of *The Round Table*, there appears the following:

In a very few years from now, British broadcasting for all except country listeners is likely to be based not on wireless but on wire. Already in many parts of London . . . listeners have the new system installed. The advantages it offers over ordinary broadcasting are many. The range of programmes can easily be enlarged to three, four, five or more channels. There is no atmospheric disturbance. . . . Wired wireless and frequency modulation will soon make ordinary broadcasting seem remote.

Some explanation by the NZBS engineers would be much appreciated.

J.W.M. (Auckland).

This is the explanation supplied by the Technical Section of the NZBS:

The use of wires for electrical transmission of sound is not new—telephones were in use for many years before radio broadcasting began—but radio broadcasting, or "wireless" as it is also known, operating as it does without any connecting wires between the transmitting source and the receiver, has risen to such importance to-day for the reasons that it can serve its listeners at a much cheaper cost, and give a greater selection of programmes than a wired system.

In large cities with congested accommodation it is not always practicable to install an efficient out-door radio aerial, so that radio reception obtained under these circumstances may be of an inferior standard. In these few cases the use of "wired" programmes may be preferable, provided the listener is willing to pay the higher costs involved.

It is extremely unlikely, however, that the "wired" method of disseminating programmes will ever compete successfully with radio broadcasting.

With regard to Frequency Modulated Broadcasting, this requires the use of much higher transmission frequencies and special receivers. The coverage range at these frequencies is restricted by the necessity of having a clear "line of sight" path between transmitting and receiving aerials, and consequently the "shadow effects" experienced behind hills and large buildings can be quite serious.