

(continued from previous page)

itself—though perhaps not without some difficulty. A study in perverted mother-love, based on the book by James M. Cain, it presents Joan Crawford in the role which won her an Academy Award nearly two years ago (New Zealand still hasn't caught up with Warner Bros.' releases). She's a mother who sacrifices herself and her husband for the sake of a selfish minx of a daughter; she stops at nothing to give her daughter everything she wants, and the result of all this stupid pampering is that the daughter not merely despises her, but stops at nothing—either—not even murder. I wouldn't call Miss Crawford's a great performance, though it is certainly a competent one—as competent as Mildred Pierce herself, but cold and flat and rather superficial. We see the results of Mildred Pierce's dominating passion, and they are grim and exciting enough, but we more or less have to accept her own word for it that it is her dominating passion; there is actually little in Miss Crawford's acting to explain, or even suggest, its existence. With her daughter, an obnoxious type if ever there was one (played with skill by Ann Blyth), there is a difference: in this case the cause as well as the effect is sufficiently obvious.

The leading men of the story (Zachary Scott and Jack Carson) are also worthless types, by-products of social and economic attitudes which the Americans, in their movies, make almost no attempt to condemn but none to conceal. The only character in the story who arouses the faintest response of sympathetic interest from the audience is Mildred's wise-cracking friend and associate in the restaurant business which is created to provide luxuries for the daughter. This is Eve Arden, hard-surfaced but warm-hearted.

Mildred Pierce opens well (the body of the murdered man tipping forward into the camera), creates a good atmosphere of mystery and suspense, proceeds to develop its narrative by means of the flash-back, contains camera angles to please the connoisseur, and manages to hold the interest fairly consistently. It is a much better film than Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, but a much less successful one than his *Double Indemnity*.

Film of the Orchestra

THE National Film Unit, devoting the whole of one issue to the subject, has done a very good job of filming the National Symphony Orchestra at one of its afternoon concerts for school-children. Merely putting music on the screen in this way is no small technical feat—some of the problems involved were reported in a recent issue of *The Listener*—but the producer has been equally successful in capturing the spirit of the audience on this occasion. Anyone who wants to know what the face of young New Zealand looks like will find it here. While the orchestra under Andersen Tyrer plays the "Fingal's Cave" Overture and "Handel in the Strand," the camera explores the players and the audience, recording expressions. It is, of course, the sort of thing that has been done fairly frequently in short subjects from overseas, but I'm pretty sure it has not been done better.

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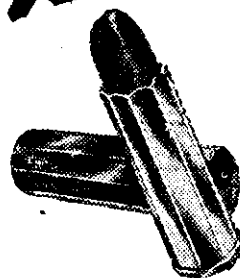
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