



CHAPLIN AS MONSIEUR VERDOUX
"Some spice was added to the Parisian screening"

Danielle Darrieux supplying the feminine charm and Jean Marais contributing cloak-and-dagger antics reminiscent of Tarzan and Douglas Fairbanks the Elder. One French critic has fittingly dismissed this pretentious failure as "Ruy Blah-blah-blah."

As against these two French deficits on my balance-sheet, however, must be offset *La Bataille de L'Eau Lourde*, a good, exciting documentary feature made, in conjunction with the Norwegians, about the wartime sabotage of the heavy-water factory in Norway vital to the Nazis' atomic experiments, and employing a mixture of professional players and actual participants in the events; *Le Diable au Corps*, a very mature and authentically French drama about a very young man's tragic love-affair with a young, but married, woman; and the deservedly-popular *Quai des Orfèvres*, starring Louis Jouvet, who will be remembered by some lucky New Zealanders as the unctuous priest in *La Kermesse Héroïque*. This *Quai des Orfèvres* is what the French call "un film policier" and gives, incidentally, as damning an impression of third-degree methods in France as anything comparable from Hollywood (say, *Boomerang*) does about the tough tactics of American policemen. *

BUT Paris, with its multitudinous movie-houses (there are, by my count, 251 in the 20 *arrondissements* of the city area) isn't only the place where you may take your pick of French films ancient and modern; it is also the place where you have a very wide choice of the "foreign" variety—and by that I mean American, British, Italian, Russian, or even Indian and Portuguese. The Indian example on my list was rather a curiosity, picked up on my first evening here when I was taken to a cine-club screening at the Palais de

Chaillot: it was the full-length feature *Dharti ke Lal* ("Children of the Earth"), dealing with the terrible Bengal famine of 1944. The film has moments of considerable interest, horror, and some beauty (particularly the native dances of the People's Theatre Troupe), as well as a strong undercurrent of social criticism; but it is prolonged to the point of boredom and the producers have not been able to resist a phoney Hollywood happy ending for the love-story. Much more to my taste was Carl Dreyer's *Day of Wrath*. Many New Zealand filmgoers will probably have heard of this Danish film about witchcraft and Puritanism in the 17th Century—it was given a two-page review, I remember, in the BBC *Listener*—and it is to be hoped that they will agitate till they get a chance to see it, for this is one of the cinema's works of real art.

Similarly, I hope they will some day get the chance to see the Italian *Vivere in Pace* ("To Live in Peace"), a simple and very human drama about the end of the war in North Italy. The film has some technical flaws (the photography is often poor), but the total effect is so realistic and moving that again one finds support for the theory that the best films have always emerged from these countries which, suffering material poverty and the devastation of war (as in Britain in 1940-45, and in France, Russia, and Germany after 1918) have been thrown back on their spiritual and creative resources. Italian films are very popular in Paris just now, and from what I have seen they deserve to be. Some other very interesting Italian productions I have encountered are the "art films" of Luciano Emmer, who uses a fascinating technique—selection of details, ingenious editing and cross-cutting, and clever musical background—to give life and

(continued on next page)

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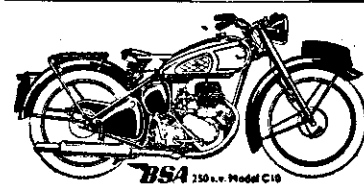


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