

A MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE

(London Films)

IN many ways this is a delightful picture, but it would be going too far to call it a perfect little gem—some of the facets are highly polished, others have been left almost in the rough. The direction, at times most satisfyingly sensitive to the finest nuances of expression and movement, is inexplicably weak in one or two sequences and the story—involving treachery, poisoning and suicide—is melodramatic rather than tragic. (At any rate I did not feel purged by pity or terror at any point.) But the acting is a delight. If Kieron Moore's Vronsky disappointed some who had been impressed by his showing in *Mine Own Executioner*, his portrayal of Salvatore, the Neapolitan major-domo who marries his employer (Margaret Johnson) and then proceeds to poison her most tenderly with arsenical egg-flips, should go far to replenish one's admiration for him. Except for one or two brief scenes in which he wears a black suit and a billy-cock hat—and one instinctively looks for the clay-pipe in the hatband—young Mr. Moore not only contrives to look as if he had grown up in the vineyards and olive-groves of Campania, but somehow manages to suggest most subtly the strength and weakness of the Italian peasant character. As the English spinster whose icy reserve is melted by the ardent attentions of her butler, Margaret Johnson is also worth seeing, though her part is by no means so exacting as Moore's (it is surprising how the artistic disarrangement of a woman's coiffure can key a mood or suggest a morbid pathological condition). If the direction occasionally wavers, the acting rarely fails even by the twitch of an eyebrow. The most serious fault that could be found with the film, however, is the inadequacy of the story, which fails to probe deeply enough into the conflict between Italian peasant and English expatriate.

LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN

(Universal-International)

AS the more astute filmgoers may have guessed, the Letter is simply our old friend the Flashback masquerading under an alias. It is also a very long letter (or so it seemed to me) about the Love of a Moth for a Star. The Moth is Miss Joan Fontaine, who gets singed but keeps fluttering. The star is Louis Jourdan, who proves to be no more than a burned-out asteroid. Unlike most letters from women, known or unknown, this one has no kick in the postscript.

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NATIONAL FILM UNIT

OTAHUHU, in the Auckland district, has just celebrated its first hundred years of settlement and the gay outdoor festivities included a Centennial procession which is featured in the National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 376, scheduled for release on November 19. Other items in the review are "Flood Fighting," a series of dramatic shots from the Clutha River valley, showing Otago farmers' efforts to stem the flood; "Hawke's Bay A. and P. Show" at Tomoana; and "New School for Taita"—the opening of another modern school for the Hutt Valley housing area.

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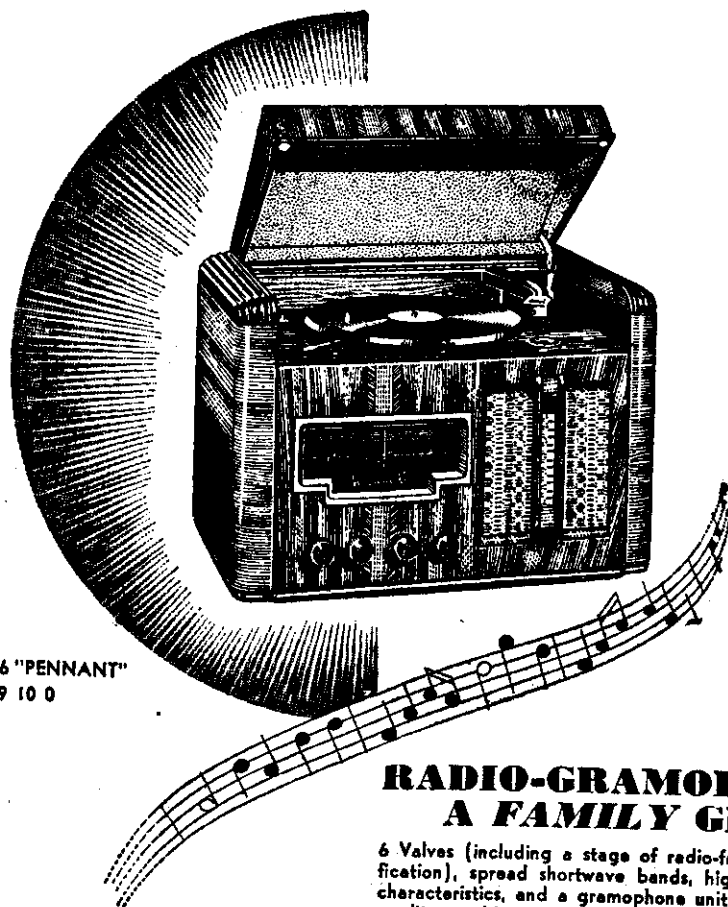
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