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Film Reviews, by Jno.

## MAN ON THE RUN

THE UNAFRAID

(Universal-International)

**I**F *The Unafraid* ends with something suspiciously like a whimper, at least it begins with a bang. Within the first five minutes Burt Lancaster has killed a man in a taproom brawl and is racing through the back alleys of London's East End with the Law at his heels. For the onlooker it is a good chase. True, these somewhat stylised alleys, greasy tenement areas and junkyards are, one feels, just studio slums and not the allegorical labyrinth of *Odd Man Out*, but the feeling has hardly time to become articulate before it is lost in the excitement of the moment. I suppose there is something atavistic in all of us which reacts instantly to the sight of a human being on the run, and when there is strong objective camera-work playing on the optic nerve there is less chance of sympathy for the hunted breaking through. In this first sequence the photography is good enough to turn what might have been a routine cops-and-robbers piece into more than passable drama; and the speed of the chase, the gasping heart-in-the-mouth panic of the fugitive was enough to bring the *Id* right out of its shell.

And, in the main, that is the criticism which I would make of the film as a whole. The climaxes, by accident or design, are all moments of violence and, with one exception, are more likely to arouse emotional excitement at the instinctive level than promote those intellectual satisfactions which are the mark of a really good picture.

It is interesting to compare *The Unafraid* with *Mine Own Executioner*, or rather to contrast the two approaches to the same problem, for the principal figure in each story is a former prisoner-of-war suffering from dangerous neuroses. In *Mine Own Executioner* Anthony Kimmins followed what might be regarded as the orthodox course and employed the subjective approach. A good deal of the English film was used to underline the mental state of the central character, either by completely subjective photography or by concentrating attention on small details of behaviour—such as the aimless kicking of stones, and the sudden fits of limping—which were recognisably the outward signs of inner disturbance.

Norman Foster, who directed *The Unafraid*, has relied entirely on objective photography and action, and since Burt Lancaster is by no means as good an actor as Kieron Moore there is really nothing to prepare us for the sudden violent outbreaks which are in theory the fruit of two years in a Nazi concentration-camp.

Joan Fontaine, as the nurse who sheltered the fugitive, fell in love with him, and at the last became herself involved in homicide, did well to make her feelings plausible. In the end it is she who persuades Lancaster that they must give themselves up to the police. This is not likely to prove as risky for him as you might think, for the script-writer arranged that Lancaster

### BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Unafraid."

OVERCAST: "Sleeping Car to Trieste."

should be instrumental in saving the life of a sick child, and when you take that and his neuroses into consideration he's hardly likely to get more than probation. It is a slick and unsatisfactory way out of a difficult situation, and the film could perhaps be summarised as equally slick and unsatisfactory. But there is one earlier scene at least that I will remember. It shows Lancaster, in prison, being prepared for a judicial flogging, and I would commend it to the attention of those who so frequently advocate the reintroduction of corporal punishment without appreciating just what the cat o' nine tails means.

### SLEEPING CAR TO TRIESTE

(Rank-Two Cities)

**I**N the good old days before the war one of the cheapest and easiest ways of making a thriller was to bundle two or three stars and an assortment of character actors into the wagon-lit section of a trans-Continental train and send them trundling across the frontiers of Europe. It was the old *Grand Hotel* "slice of life" technique (with the difference that the train provided an element of movement that might otherwise have been lacking), and it produced several good films of which *Rome Express* and *The Lady Vanishes* are perhaps the best remembered. During the war, of course, this traffic was at a standstill and frustrated producers were forced to make do with aeroplanes which had to crash in the Swiss Alps or the Indo-Chinese jungle before the cast could get room to develop. Now, however, there are indications that we are getting back on to the permanent way again. A few months ago *Berlin Express* chuffed cautiously through Bizonia and on the Orient route we have now got as far as the Iron Curtain. But like the railway services, the pictures are not yet up to pre-war standards. *Sleeping Car to Trieste* contains several neat thumbnail character-sketches, but has not much else to commend it.



BURT LANCASTER  
A life for a life