

Rita, the Great Lover

THE LOVES OF CARMEN

(Columbia)

THERE can't be many people who have not heard of Rita Hayworth. Whether it is India, America, Europe or China, her name, face and fortune must be about as familiar to the world's picturegoers as those of their own wives and girl-friends. *The Lady from Shanghai*, the film she made recently with her first husband, Orson Welles, is reported to have become a smash hit in the Orient; western audiences already know about her rise to fame from the vivacious dancing partner of Fred Astaire to the alluring enchantress of sultry Technicolor Triumphs like *Blood and Sand* and *Gilda*. Her marriage to Aly Khan was the most widely publicised since Princess Elizabeth's. Why? The mammoth publicity machine of Hollywood has turned her into the Great Lover of the '40's, the post-war equivalent of Clara Bow and Mary Pickford—the universal earth-mother, as one person has said, of our modern celluloid mythology.

So it is the logical culmination of her career that she should play the role

BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Loves of Carmen."
OVERCAST, WITH BRIGHT INTERVALS: "Lady Windermere's Fan."

of Carmen, one of the classic examples of the great lover in fiction, the classic of the woman destroyed by the passion she arouses. As Rita says in this newest version of Mérimée's story, "We all have to die, and I can't think of a nicer way than to be killed by love."

As might be expected, *The Loves of Carmen* is not among the year's best films, and one American critic summed it up neatly in the words, "It isn't art, and it isn't Bizet, but it's Rita Hayworth in Technicolor." It would, however, be unfair to suggest that it isn't *Carmen* either, for the director-producer, Charles Vidor, has made a valiant attempt to combine glamour, passion, drama, and so forth into a piece of reasonably enjoyable entertainment. Strictly speaking the film is no more than a Vehicle (as they say) designed to show off Miss Hayworth's charms. Everything is done very broadly, the brush-work has been laid on with a

heavy hand, but the result, when you stand back, isn't so bad after all. In a riot of colour, Carmen dances and sings, flashes her teeth bewitchingly, spits at her enemies, and makes love to several men at once, causing the deaths of three of them (and finally her own) before our very eyes. She flirts, fights, loves and dies because no one with a magnetism like hers can expect to live long, and anyway it's foretold in the cards.

The weakest part is the performance of Glenn Ford as Don José. He scowls ferociously at all other males in range and responds sulkily to Carmen's blandishments, but since his talents as an actor are fairly limited, his apparent moral denigration under her evil influence isn't very convincing. Still, there is plenty of good old-fashioned melodrama, a rousing battle with soldiers in the mountains, and two duels, one with swords (José kills his colonel) and one with knives (José kills the bandit chief).

In some ways the film is reminiscent of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* except that blanket rolls are used instead of sleeping bags and the chief protagonists are not such good performers as Gary Cooper and Ingrid Bergman. But the highly-coloured picture of the Spanish peasantry, the atmosphere of matadors and bull-fighting, the rugged, California-style of Spanish scenery, and even an occasional scrap of dialogue, might have been taken straight from the Hem-



"Glamour, passion, drama, and so forth"

ingway film—there is a perceptible tarnish of the second-hand. Although some may be disappointed that Bizet's music is not used at all, for the millions who will go along just to see Rita in action again, it doesn't really matter.

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