

# STAR TURN IN HOLLYWOOD

## *Life On The Screen Is Usually Far From Real*

Written For "The Listener" by CAM

CONSIDER Hollywood, strewn, like the heavenly firmament with stars, some in full blow, some coming, some going. It's a short life and a merry one. To-day a star, to-morrow anything you like.

Here are some shades of the past, buried under and forgotten: Olga Petrova, Nazimova, Pola Negri, Rudolf Valentino, Navarro, Mary Pickford (the ex-world's sweetheart), is now a matron who solemnly advocates high art, high morals (but no high jinks). She has even delivered herself of a book, "Why Not Try God?" and it will be well sprinkled with Pickfordian plums—or prunes.

But now, as I said, stars don't rocket very long. From meteor to sky rocket, from rocket to squib, from squib to a match that goes out before it's lit. How many hyperboles have we heard about these first magnituders, and they're gone before they've come. A blaze of spotlight and pouf! they're out.

### Garbo Is Shrewd

A few shrewdies seem to outlive their span. Garbo is one of these; a star a decade ago, and still with a big following, although Deanna is knocking her sideways a bit. Garbo is one of the few valid screen personalities, and she has kept her head.

No so Dietrich, who started out with such spectacular success but went all exotic. Mostly all she can do now is float on and off like a disembodied shade, taking good care in the process to exhibit her best camera angles and her sumptuous Lanvin gowns, and her eyes just about smothered with a tangle of eyelashes. Eyelashes, by the way, have become jungles for the unwary. I saw her once with that over the hills look, all bedight with ostrich feathers and was lucky enough to overhear a man say, "What price the feathers. Like a b— fowl!"

As I said, stardom goes to people's heads. I may be wrong but I suspect that Merle Oberon, especially since she's become Korda's wife, has gone over the moon, too. Probably no humour—looks and humour seldom flourish together.

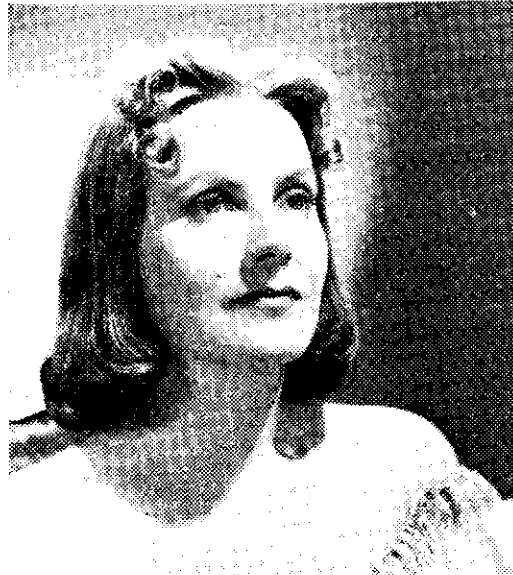
The trouble is, stars are chosen for their looks; an enchanting face and figure don't often indicate undue activity in the top story. These glamour girls are often morons, and if they're not, they haven't enough originality to avoid mass-produced standards. They've got to be Hollywood or die.

### Good Producers, But—

Of course many Hollywood producers are excellent, but even they write down for the mob, and mob art is poor art.

Who wants Claude Rains when you can get Tyrone Power; or Muni, or Spencer Tracy, when there is that thrill of a Clark Gable or Robert Magazine-Cover Taylor? Again, the public prefers Laurel and Hardy to Chaplin, the Ritz to the Marx brothers. And even the Marx brothers, real film originals, are being soled and heeled and manicured to suit a public nourished on film clichés.

This standardised style has all the life hammered out of it and will eventually be the death of Hollywood. Plots are cut and shaped like a Vogue pattern around the seductive curves of the leading lady. But surely the screen should in some sense reflect life, and life isn't like that at all—a nobody made into



GRETA GARBO in M-G-M's "Ninotchka." She has kept her head

a somebody and detached from all semblance of reality.

Go into the street and you'll find here and there a pretty girl, very occasionally a beautiful girl, and the pretty girl in life often gets a bad spin.

### An Eye For An Eye

But never at Hollywood—on the spool I mean. There she miraculously combines virtue and looks and her virtue and looks (mostly her looks) are

sumptuously rewarded. She may start out a humble girl, a beauteous village maiden, but she's sure to be discovered by the travelling magnate who has an eye for an eye; or the young scion of a noble house (financial) who spots this damask bud and doesn't think twice. So off they go. Soon she's wearing a diamond tiara or strawberry leaves or whatnot, and while she baths in champagne her orbs are bejewelled with thick moonstone tears thinking of the roses round mamma's back porch. But mamma is never asked to the palace.

Or perhaps it is the village lad who is lifted to chromium fittings; from log cabin to grand house; from grand house to one cocktail bar after another.

### The Villains, Too

Then take the villains. In the old days the villain had an ebon black moustache which he chewed, or a beard to run his fingers through. No blond villain if you don't mind. That type is gone. Still it's always easy to pick the nasty fellow in the drama and he's usually dark, too. He's got that unmistakable shifty look, he has a sneaky twist to his mouth, he's bandy or something and he's usually a foreigner.

Now, in ordinary life, which is real life, I have noticed that the spurious can sometimes look like herald angels, and that fellow with the lowering look and sinister under lip is often quite a decent chap who is kind to his mother.

There are American directors of genuine imagination and vision, but they keep only half an eye on the muse and the other one and a-half on the box office. Fortunately there are beautiful and refreshing breaks (such as the unforgettable "Street Scene" with Sylvia Sydney) and they usually go with a bang and the films in themselves have exhilaration and pace. But on the whole this Hollywood stuff is no more like life than I'm like Helen of Troy.

## SOUND IN WARFARE

By Ronald McIntosh

MODERN science has evolved some strange weapons for the conduct of warfare. Not the least remarkable are those which depend upon sound waves for their operation.

The sound detectors of the anti-aircraft squadrons are perhaps the best known example of the use of these waves. Four large microphones are mounted in pairs which move vertically and horizontally. When the noise of a hostile aeroplane is picked up the microphone arms are moved so that the noise is equally balanced in each earphone. The detector's sight is then pointing toward the approaching aircraft.

So delicate is this detector that the noise of an aeroplane can be detected more than 15 miles away—but that is only 3½ minutes of flying time for the modern bomber.

To counter these sound locators, the attention of aeroplane designers has been turned to the production of silent bombers—and once again sound has been called in to achieve this end. The Germans claim to have co-ordinated and harmonised the noises from twin exhausts so that the sound waves from one cylinder neutralise those from the other. Similarly, it might be possible to neutralise propeller noises by further tuning.

### Submarine Detectors

The British Asdig submarine detector is merely an under-water arrangement of microphones. Even with the crude apparatus used in the last war, submarines

could be detected at distances greater than ten miles, but now the earphones can be used on a moving ship, and not only do they detect the submarine, defining its course, speed and distance, but they also calculate the position of the target for a given time. They have been found nearly 100 per cent. efficient in practice.

Such devices, however, employ sound only as a defensive weapon. Soon, if researches going on in various parts of the world are successful, deadly vibrations may be used as a means of attack.

### When Sound Is Deadly

Every object on this globe has a definite pendulum-like swing. This knowledge has been employed, for example, in the construction of earthquake-proof homes, which are deliberately given a sway that will not synchronise with the vibrations of an earthquake, for a building is in danger only when it sways with the same period as the earth tremors.

Every organism created by nature and every object built by man has its own distinctive vibrations, and this rhythm cannot be accelerated without risk of complete destruction. Sound waves vibrating over 19,000 times a second will produce the ultra-sound waves, beyond the range of human ears but nevertheless destructive to animate and inanimate things alike.

That deadly sound is a factor with which we must ultimately reckon is proved by the fact that echo-sounding waves have killed fish; locust swarms have been driven off by piercing sirens, and iceberg masses shattered by tuning the sirens of several ships to the same note. To humans, it may prove fatal by destroying the red blood corpuscles.