

FILM REVIEWS

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act for Herod; but for the most part it's fresh and original.

Being in the mood for farce the night I saw it, I enjoyed myself, though a couple of elderly gentlemen in front of me (classicists to the backbone) apparently Were Not Amused.

MY FAVOURITE WIFE

(RKO)



IN "Too Many Husbands"

Jean Arthur was given two husbands: in "My Favourite Wife" Cary Grant is given two wives, which show how quick Hollywood is to capitalise on a good idea. It is perhaps unkind to draw attention to such parallelism of plot, and it would certainly be uncharitable to compare the merits of the two pictures. In any event, "My Favourite Wife" stars Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, who were in "The Awful Truth," and it was made by Leo McCarey, who directed "The Awful Truth," all of which should be guarantee of smart comedy.

Irene Dunne, who has been acting as photographer on an ethnological expedition (a strange hobby for a married woman with two children), is shipwrecked and cast away on a desert island, to turn up after seven years on the very day that her husband, Cary Grant, is getting hitched to Gail Patrick. Complications arise; first from Grant's reluctance to tell his new bride what has happened, and then from his sudden discovery that his first wife has not been alone for those seven years on that desert island. In fact she had been there with a he-mannish fellow whom she called Adam and who called her Eve. Well, what would you think?

However, it all works out. The second bride, fed up with waiting for her nuptials, returns to mother, Adam proves to be a vegetarian and to have been strong and self-controlled and just a Good Friend during the island stay; and the first wife is legally restored to life and husband.

Remember the ending in "The Awful Truth," with the figures on the cuckoo clock suggesting that all at last is well? "My Favourite Wife" has a similar twist in the tail.

Best are the court sequences, with a judge (Granville Bates) taking divorces, marriages and annulments of marriage in his stride, without batting an eyelid.

It's bright, sophisticated fare, with situations that lose nothing from being a trifle blue round the edges on occasions.

I MARRIED ADVENTURE

(Columbia)



THERE have been jungle pictures and jungle pictures, and ever since I was told, on unimpeachable authority, that one celebrated wild animal photographer seldom ventured further into the jungle than the back garden of his hotel, I have been more than a little difficult to please in the matter.

But apparently the Martin Johnsons were the genuine article, and I'm glad to be able to testify that Mrs. Martin Johnson's film "I Married Adventure" also appears to be the genuine article. It is, you might say, all the jungle pictures ever made rolled up into one. Certainly it will be difficult ever to make another one.

Martin and Osa Johnson (he died some years back in an aeroplane crash) had an adventurous and fascinating life. After an expedition to Borneo which ended in fever and failure, they seem never to have looked back. Their successive adventures into the heart of Africa, and finally back into Borneo, were well financed and equipped, and the results they obtained correspondingly impressive. One expedition into Africa was made in two big amphibian 'planes, and much of their aerial photography will probably never be duplicated.

"I Married Adventure" is based on a book by Mrs. Johnson, and follows the natural technique of narrative super-imposed on spectacular shots taken on various expeditions.



BEAUTY AND THE BOLSHIE: Loretta Young and Melvyn Douglas in Columbia's "He Stayed for Breakfast"

That the early photography is a little hazy and jumpy does not matter much. All the monkeys that ever chattered for a film camera, all the lions that ever roared, all the hippopotamuses that ever charged at a lens—they're all here, and surprisingly, I, for one, didn't tire.

If you don't like jungle pictures, you may be bored; if you do like them, this is your picture.

THE WESTERNER

(Goldwyn-United Artists)



SINCE the impact of "The Grapes of Wrath," it is difficult to resist a tendency to see every film as some sort of social document. One or two periodicals, like the English "New Statesman and Nation" have quite frankly reviewed "The Westerner" in those terms. As a matter of fact, to William Wyler, the film's director, must go at least one small bouquet for showing glimmerings of a social conscience; but if these hints at morality are likely to dissuade entertainment-hunters from going to see Gary Cooper and Walter Brennan it is as well that they should immediately be forgotten.

For this is first-class entertainment. It's neither wild nor woolly. There are a few hangings and some shooting, a fire in corn crops, and an excellent bare-knuckle fight, but these basic constituents fall into the background behind the spice of good acting and good direction.

The scene is Texas, where the cattlemen are facing the competition of the smallholders. The cattlemen want the open range, the smallholders defend their fences.

There is no law in the district, except the law of Judge Roy Bean (Brennan) who administers it with strict partiality. But he has a weakness. It is Lily Langtry, whose posters and pictures adorn all the walls of his bar-room, where men who don't drink to her as the toast of the morning, noon, and night, are surreptitiously surveyed by

the local undertaker so that the box can be ready in time.

Cooper comes into the bar-cum-courthouse accused of horse stealing. He pretends to have met Lily, and tells the judge, while the jury is considering its verdict over a game of poker, that he possesses a lock of her hair.

The judge is more than interested. Sentence on the accused is suspended for two weeks pending the arrival of the lock of hair from the nearest town.

All these opening scenes are priceless good fun. It must have been with some regret that the director got on with the story. This is orthodox enough. Cooper effects a reconciliation between the rival factions, after a great deal of exciting trouble, and then marries the girl (Doris Davenport). But all through the tale runs a spirit of real fun that has been made possible by two good actors working well with a good director in front of good cameramen. The photography will delight the most inexperienced eye.

"The Westerner" is everything that a western should be. And it is more than that. The men who made it used their brains and forgot the card-index. The result is not to be missed.

ANNE OF WINDY POPLARS

(R.K.O.)



IN which Anne Shirley (ex-Green Gables) continues with her saccharine task of bringing sweetness and light into the lives of all and sundry.

Among the major triumphs of the unendurably priggish Miss Anne (now assistant-mistress at a country school) are several misers, misanthropes, and embittered spinsters, a half-wit, an orphan child, half the staff of her school, and most of the scholars, and a prodigal son who drinks too much. Nothing seems to have been omitted from this orgy of Victorian moralising. It is all just too, too sweet: but we are afraid the fairies at the bottom of our garden moved out round about the time Hitler and Co. first moved in.



The Martin Johnsons in action. A scene from "I Married Adventure" which is the narrative of a succession of expeditions into Africa and Borneo. Mrs. Johnson contrives to be winsome and well kept in spite of wild animals and jungle heat