

FILM REVIEWS

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humanity (he doesn't forget to laugh at any of us—politicians, lawyers, journalists, snobs, religionists, businessmen, outcasts). Particularly when Andrew Undershaft holds the floor do we get Shaw in full flood, undiluted and tirelessly brilliant. And I think (or I hope), that we picturegoers have grown up sufficiently to appreciate it.

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It is certainly a privilege, even in these days of all-star casts, to have such a battery of first-rate actors and actresses turned full upon us. Here is Wendy Hiller as the millionaire munition-maker's daughter turned Salvation Army Major, pleading most winningly for the salvation of souls, but fighting a losing rear-guard action against her father's cheque-book (the Salvation Army scenes should annoy nobody except those whom Shaw meant to be annoyed). Here is Rex Harrison, perhaps not quite scholarly enough but still very good as Adolphus Cusins, the Professor of Greek, who joins the Salvation Army "just to worship Major Barbara," and later joins the munitions-business for an equally compelling reason. Here are Marie Lohr as Lady Britomart, Sybil Thorndike as the Salvation Army General (with all the evangelical fire which Miss Hiller rather lacks), Walter Hudd as the ineffectual Stephen Undershaft, Emllyn Williams as the fake convert, Snobby Price, and Donald Calthorpe as Peter Shirley.

And here are Robert Morley and Robert Newton who, as Andrew Undershaft and Bill Walker respectively, compete for acting honours. With a beard of the Zaharoff cut (surely intentional?) and many of Shaw's best and wittiest lines to speak, Morley dominates the action with an extraordinarily picturesque and fascinating portrayal of the munitions-king who "preaches immorality while he practises morality," but I think the award of acting laurels finally goes to Newton as Bill Walker, the Cockney bully with a conscience. And it is rather interesting that this should be so, for Bill Walker's role is smaller than many of the others in actual writing. Yet Newton the actor and Pascal the producer have combined to make it so important that you find yourself wondering if Bill and not Adolphus Cusins is going to be chosen as Undershaft's heir. Bill's appearance in the final scene as a happy Undershaft employee contributes to that feeling of intellectual dissatisfaction I mentioned earlier; yet although this scene isn't good Shaw (not 1905 Shaw anyway), and probably isn't good art, it is certainly good cinema. Good cinema also, but not such good art, is the opening scene, in which Cusins' love-at-first-sight for Major Barbara is a trifle unconvincing. (In the play it is done better because it is done off-stage).

These, however, are comparatively minor points: *Major Barbara* as a whole, is good Shaw, good art, good cinema—and excellent fun.

POT O' GOLD

(United Artists)

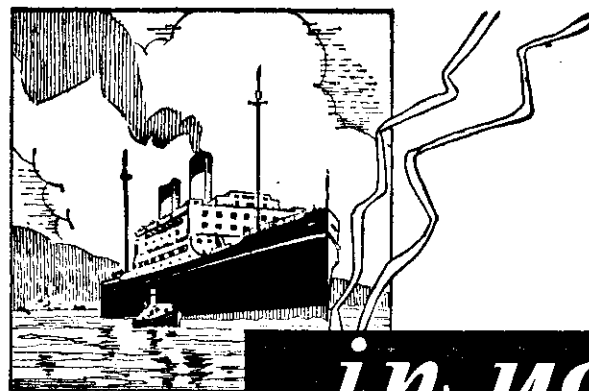


WHEN I saw that Horace Heidt and his Musical Knights were billed as co-stars with James Stewart and Paulette Goddard in this, James Roosevelt's first production, I had a feeling that it was going to be Second

Chorus over again—a charge of the Heidt Brigade, so to speak, with Stewart and Goddard as far behind as Divisional H.Q.

This assumption proved to be over-pessimistic, but for the benefit of per-fervid Stewart fans I should point out that *Pot o' Gold* is more a musical film than a film with incidental music. That being so, it is inevitable that the band (if Mr. Heidt will permit the abbreviation) gets a good share of the film and the sound-track. However, our inimitable Mr. Stewart surmounts this hurdle very nicely indeed by revealing a hitherto unsuspected virtuosity with the harmonica and (if your musical standards are not too exacting) a pleasant singing voice.

As far as James Stewart, the actor, is concerned, the film represents a return from Philadelphia to the realms of whimsy. With that some may disapprove, and I admit that whimsy is in danger of being seriously overdone, but I will also admit to a bias in favour of Stewart and in any case there is never any danger in *Pot o' Gold* of the story getting more emphasis than the music. Yet while there is no more story than is needed to link the musical sequences, I enjoyed the production. There is, I suspect, a stale custard-pie in the woodpile somewhere and Mr. Heidt is no actor; but I liked his music, which should have a wider appeal than that of Mr. Artie Shaw. I would like to be complimentary, too, about Paulette Goddard, who dances, chirps a stave or two, and looks decorative, but somehow does not seem to fit into this kind of production: I prefer her myself in something a little more serious.



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