

Films of 1941

These We Have Applauded

UNDER "The Listener's" film-grading system, these were the films for which our little man stood up to clap (our highest award), during 1941. There were nine of them:

"They Knew What They Wanted" (Charles Laughton).

"Gone With the Wind."

"The Lady Eve" (Directed by Preston Sturges).

"Christmas in July" (Ditto).

"Major Barbara."

"So Great a Man" (Raymond Massey).

"The Flame of New Orleans" (Marlene Dietrich).

"The Reluctant Dragon."

"Hold Back the Dawn" (Charles Boyer).

There were 44 to which the little man gave a sitting down hand-clap, including "Angels Over Broadway," "Pride and Prejudice," "Return of Frank James," "Escape," "North-West Mounted Police," "The Great Dictator," "Thief of Bagdad," "So Ends Our Night," "Philadelphia Story," "This Thing Called Love," "Freedom Radio," "Road to Zanzibar," "Sante Fé Trail," "The Devil and Miss Jones," "A Woman's Face," "Long Voyage Home."

Best film of the year by an easy margin, in my opinion, was "Major Barbara," followed by "Gone With the Wind."

—G.M.

(Continued from previous page)

half decade), sings three numbers only, but as compensation, we are treated to a rich exhibition of character acting by that master exhibitionist, Charles Laughton, who does not attempt to sing, but amiably lumbers off with the acting honours from his young co-star. Not since *Ruggles of Red Gap* has Laughton cavorted so blithely through a comedy role.

What it was that started with Eve remains something of a mystery, but what starts the picture is the spectacle of Laughton as a fabulously wealthy old financier on his presumed death bed, insisting that his playboy son (Robert Cummings), shall lighten his last moments and set his mind at rest about the future of the family by producing his new fiancée. But the fiancée is not immediately available, so the distraught young man grabs the first girl in sight—fortunately it is Deanna—and yanks her along to the bedside as a very temporary substitute. Whether it is the sight of comely Deanna that puts new life into the old man is not revealed, but next morning he is not dead: he is bellowing for a breakfast steak, a cigar—and another look at his son's "fiancée." Apart from the fact that she is being paid 50 dollars a visit, the deception suits Deanna very well, for she has operatic ambitions, and the old man knows all the best musical people (including Stokowski,

"though they don't agree about Brahms"). It doesn't suit the young man half so well, for he has a real fiancée who is becoming increasingly perturbed about the continued presence of the nightingale in her nest. The rest of the story concerns the wily manoeuvrings of Papa Laughton, who has discovered the deception, to make his son do what every member of the audience knows he will do eventually—marry Deanna. They involve, among other things, a visit to a night club, at which the old man so far forgets his weak heart as to caper like a baby elephant through the lively steps of the conga.

Such horseplay may account in part for a genuine reduction in Laughton's waistline since we saw it last, a condition to which, in his character of the grumpy old invalid, he is continually calling attention. There is no reduction, however, in his ability to dominate any scene with the Laughton mannerisms.

THIS WOMAN IS MINE

(Universal)



IN the year 1810, the schooner Tonquin sailed round Cape Horn on a fur-trading venture to the Pacific North West—and in order to be able to make a talkie about it later, they took a beautiful girl along with them. That's really all you need to know about *This Woman is Mine*, except that Frank (*Mutiny on the Bounty*) Lloyd made it, and now possibly wishes he hadn't.

THEY MET IN BOMBAY

(M-G-M)



IN which Clark Gable wins the V.C. and M-G-M take the bun for the most absurd story of 1941. Not that there's anything wrong with Clark Gable's winning the V.C.—except that he's a hunted jewel thief (cashiered from a Canadian regiment), who lives in sin

with Rosalind Russell, and steals one of His Majesty's uniforms for the grossly improper purpose of robbing a Chinese merchant. But then, as the film is careful to point out, "it's the deed that counts and not the man." The deed which wins Mr. Jewel-Thief Gable the British Army's most coveted award ("by arrangement with the War Office") comes about when M-G-M, anticipating events by a few months, stage a skirmish between British and Japanese troops outside Hong Kong, and Gable in his stolen uniform inadvertently finds himself in the thick of it. Having silenced several machine-guns single-handed, he marches off to prison to expiate his crimes with the V.C. pinned to his manly breast and a fatuous smile on his rugged face. If a regiment of British soldiers were to invade Hollywood and level it to the ground, I should, in my present mood, be inclined to regard it as a justifiable reprisal under extreme provocation.

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1/212

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