

Film Notes by G.M.

"THE OUTSTANDING FILM OF ALL TIME"

HIS week I received a letter from a filmgoer who calls himself "my most ardent admirer," in which, after mentioning that he had just been to a suburban theatre to see Three Smart Girls for the SIXTH time, he asks me if I have ever realised what a milestone in movie history this film was. Though I have always had a high opinion of Three Smart Girls I must confess I hadn't fully appreciated its importance until I read my correspondent's reasons. Here, he says, are a few of the things which this film did:

- It gave him a 15-year-old "pash" for Deanna Durbin and Nan Grey (a purely personal reaction which is nevertheless probably fairly general).
- 2. It saved Universal Pictures from bankruptcy.
- It marked the first appearances (the first of any consequence) of three major stars—Deanna Durbin, Ray Milland, and Charles Winninger.



DEANNA DURBIN Two of five reasons

- It started successful careers for Mischa Auer, Nan Grey, Barbara Reed, John King, and Lucille Watson.
- It inspired the trend toward juvenile stars which produced Judy Garland, helped Mickey Rooney, assisted the come-back of Jackie Cooper, and introduced Susanna Foster, Linda Ware, and many others.

"Surely no other picture has such a notable record," says my correspondent, "and I state here and now that all those achievements combined with a modern, unusual story, skilful direction, and good music make it the most outstanding picture of all time. Anyway, I enjoyed it more the sixth time than ever before."

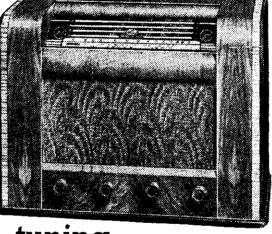
THE outstanding picture of all time?

No, I hardly think so. To agree with that, one would have to discard the achievements of The Great Train Robbery, away back in the very early days of the screen, in showing for the first time that the movies could tell a connected story. And of The Birth of a Nation, which revealed the possibilities of the big, spectacular film. And of The Jazz Singer, the first talkie, in which Al Jolson, by opening his mouth and speaking one sentence, launched a whole new epoch in entertainment.

Nor would I lightly dismiss the claims to recognition of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, as a result of which we learnt that a cartoon could be a very great deal more than just a six-minute time-passer on the supporting programme. Actually Disney's shorts have nearly always been more than that; a few of them have, indeed, been better even than one or two of his longer efforts; but it wasn't till Snow White that we glimpsed the full possibilities of the cartoon medium. However, with due appreciation to "my most ardent admirer" for his interesting note on Three Smart Girls, I should no more like to commit myself definitely on what I consider the

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