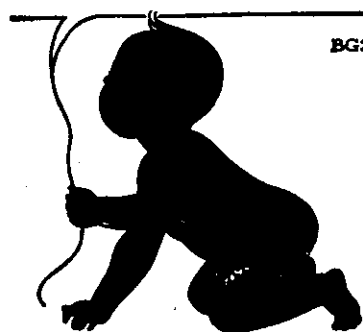


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# HOLLYWOOD IS MAKING A MISTAKE

*"Shallow, Heartless Stuff Woven Round A Threadbare Theme"*

In a recent article about "Hollywood and the Status Quo," G. M. criticised the pre-occupation of many Hollywood producers with stories that are unrelated to the world in which we are living. And here is an article by A. E. Wilson of the London "Star" which shows that at least one other film critic has been saying much the same thing.

"**M**ANY filmgoers — and I am one of them — are getting rather bored with some of the pictures which Hollywood has been sending us lately" (writes A. E. Wilson).

"I refer to the picture which, under various titles, confronts us with the problem of the husband and wife who cannot make up their minds whether they wish to part or to cleave to one another. I have seen it again and again recently. Only once in a while does the individual brilliance and charm of the artist atone for the monotony of the theme. At its best the variation is mostly tedious. At its worst it is apt to be unsavoury.

"We know what to expect. Though the treatment may differ, the formula never varies. The leading characters

quarrel and make it up; they quarrel anew, and they make it up again.

"Why should we be supposed to interest ourselves in these figures? How can any sane person be concerned about what such empty-headed morons decide to do? Who cares two cents about the marital fate and ultimate destiny of such foolish people?

"Purporting to belong to that vague body known as 'American Society,' the characters inhabit streamlined palaces compared with which the Taj Mahal is but a lonely cot. They toil not, neither do they spin, though sometimes vague and improbable professions are attributed to the menfolk.

"They are surrounded by a crowd of gigolos, giggling blondes, bores and nit-wits. Their limited interests are bound up with cocktails and cabarets, and they fly off to Reno on the slightest pretext.

"Is this sort of thing supposed to be true to life? Do the originals of these characters really exist? I hope not. But there is a danger that British filmgoers,

the bulk of whom form their idea of the American scene from what they see on the screen, may take it that it is a more or less accurate reflection of the kind of life led by a section of the American people. It is extremely bad propaganda for the American people, and it is bad business, I think, for Hollywood.

"We are reproached for our own errors in propaganda, but I do not think we commit this kind of mistake. It will probably be argued that these films are not presented as a reflection of life, and are intended by their producers as entertainment, not for instruction.

"They must be poor judges of the psychology of our public. They have chosen the wrong time to put them out. At any period such films could be criticised for their lack of taste and for their emptiness, but in stern times they jar our feelings.

"We welcome fun and gaiety, romance, sentiment and music on the screen, but not the shallow, heartless stuff woven round a threadbare theme."

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## Film Reviews

### FOOTSTEPS IN THE DARK

(Warner Bros.)



THIS is not even a Hollywood version of the Georgette Heyer thriller of the same name, but apparently originated as a play by two quite different authors — different from Miss Heyer, I mean, if you follow me. Errol Flynn, who stars in it, wears (as the advertisements all tell you) modern clothes for the first time in years. And he changes more than his raiment. Here he has no swashbuckling part, nor are there any fisticuffs or exciting (if improbable) swordplay. Indeed, if I remember rightly, the only blow struck in this Ovidian metamorphosis knocks the star out and leaves him no chance to retaliate.

But don't let that worry you. I nearly always enjoy a Warner Bros. thriller. I have probably expressed before my conviction that one of this studio's greatest assets is the gang of toughs which it has on its payroll. Recall *A Slight Case of Murder* and I think you will agree with me. There is far from a full muster in this film, but Allen Jenkins and Roscoe Karns are well to the fore and as tough as old boots, if I may be original. And in others respects the show is a thriller with a difference, or several differences. The police inspector in this type of show, for example, is usually (if we except the ferret-faced Jimmy Gleason) a dumb and baffled individual, a dim bulb, in short. Alan Hale, however, manages to infuse a surprising amount of humanity and even humour into the part.

*Footsteps in the Dark* naturally has its faults. The women have little to do and Brenda Marshall as the trusting wife is so colourless that one feels she is unwise to be too trusting. And there are the usual loose ends in plot and

characterisation. But the show has its highlights. Flynn's impersonation of a cowboy, for example, which might have been an impersonation of Gary Cooper impersonating a cowboy, who can tell? And there is a most amusing and unexpected false climax.

Take it for all in all, *Footsteps in the Dark* is an entertaining show. It has novel twists and a discerning ingenuousness on Mr. Flynn's part, which lift it out of the C grade class to which so many films of this kind properly belong. And if you do hear footsteps in the dark I'm sure they won't be those of disappointed patrons clumping up the aisle.

### CADETS ON PARADE

(Columbia)



IN which Freddie Bartholomew is forced to play a repulsive young hero who runs away from Military Academy because he always drops the football when his coach gives it to him to hold. He is befriended by a toothy young newsboy, who starts making a man of him, but unfortunately doesn't quite finish the process, for when the Poor Little Newsboy is indicted for kidnapping him, Freddie shows the stuff of which he is made by sitting silent and jerking his Adam's Apple rapidly up and down, which disconcerts the Poor Little Newsboy so much that he pleads guilty. Whereupon, both young heroes go back to Military Academy, and instead of being publicly flogged, they graduate *magna cum laude* and with well-built characters.

### ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

N.E.H. (Wellington): The two productions you mention will be coming to Wellington—one, you will notice, is reviewed above—but when this will be I can't say. This particular film exchange seems to make a habit of selling its product late, hence the "noticeable absence" you mention. This does not, however, apply to Auckland, where there have been some up-to-date releases.