




SABU
He's a big boy now

JUNGLE BOOK

(Korda-United Artists)

 IT is a measure of the film industry's frequent claim to produce entertainment in tune with the times that its pictures about India have, almost without exception, been confined to 19th century Kiplingesque Epics of the Frontier and animal fantasies in the *Elephant Boy-Jungle Book* style. The only such film with any pretence to modernity that I can remember was *The Rains Came*, and that dealt so largely with princes and pukka sahibs (and slightly less pukka memsahibs) that the real people of the country hardly got a look in. Clark Gable and Rosalind Russell certainly met in Bombay, but they didn't stay long (thank heavens!).

The reason for this reticence is, I suppose, semi-political. I mean, even supposing you could discover it, you couldn't present the objective truth about the Real India (the India of Ghandi, Congress, the Muslim League, the I.C.S., and particularly the peasants), without risking offence to all parties. So Hollywood plays safe and sticks to Kipling.

For instance, take Kipling's *Jungle Book*—but don't take it too seriously, and you'd better not take the original Kipling out of your shelves for comparison. The film bears about as much resemblance to the real India as the Taj Mahal does. Still, that is a fact for comment rather than criticism, since the book didn't bear much resemblance either, if it comes to that, and didn't need to, being a fairy-tale; but when Kipling's well-beloved fable is pushed through the movie-cameras most of the illusion and charm is squeezed out. If you are content with some beautiful, very-Technicolored animal photography, the lithe grace of Sabu, the Hindu star (he's a big boy now), and extravagant settings and fantasy in the Arabian Nights manner, you may enjoy yourself—and anyway the children probably will. But if you have fond memories of the myth about Mowgli the wolf-boy surviving from your youth, you will just as likely suffer a bad attack of spleen and wish that the three Brothers Korda might suffer the same fate as the three wicked Indians who are driven to self-destruction by lust for the fabulous treasures in Mowgli's lost city.

Technically, of course, the film is an astonishing achievement, with wolves, tigers, jackals, elephants, and reptiles consorting (and sometimes conversing)

Film Reviews by G.M.

YOUTH STEPS OUT


But Their Films Stay In The Rut

together in a peculiar Hollywood jungle, and often on terms of friendship that should be an object-lesson to the "man-pack". But it's to be hoped that Sir Alexander Korda didn't get his knighthood for making Kipling's *Jungle Book*, because if he did Shere Khan the tiger, and Bagheera the black panther at least deserve the O.B.E.

Alongside me in the theatre was a whole row of Hindus. If I hadn't had a bus to catch I'd have stopped behind to ask them what they thought of it all. It might have been interesting.

WINGS AND THE WOMAN

(R.K.O. Radio)

 WHATEVER he was or is (and this film quite plainly suggests that he was several things), Captain Jim Mollison, now a Transatlantic ferry pilot, cannot be thin-skinned. My first reaction on seeing *Wings and the Woman* (originally entitled *They Flew Alone*) was amazement that the producers had been able to get away with such a libel on Mollison, but later I came across a statement by him that he had given his consent but not his co-operation to this picture about him and Amy Johnson. He mildly commented: "I feel that the drinking in cocktail bars, the breaking of appointments and so forth, acquire a larger proportion in a story like this than, taken by themselves, they might have in real life. I am leading a steady life and I don't want the idea to get about that I am a dissipated, unreliable fellow."

My own comment is that it won't be the film's fault if that idea doesn't get about. And in spite of Mr. Mollison's broadminded attitude, I still think it was unfair of the producers, if not inaccurate, to present him as a drunkard and a philanderer while going out of their way to idealise (and almost whitewash) the late Amy Johnson. Surely there were faults on both sides? Anyway, both personalities are well served by the stars who portray them on the screen. Amy Johnson was no beauty, but Anna Neagle is, and whether the portrayal of character which she presents is strictly accurate or not, it is done with warmth and sincerity. As Mollison, Robert Newton is also painstaking and very competent and he does somehow manage to convey that the flyer was not lacking in the virtues of courage and honesty, in spite of the insistence on his more spectacular vices. This fact, coupled with the glaring lop-sidedness of the treatment, may indeed have the perverse effect of arousing considerable sympathy for Mollison. It probably had that effect on me.

Being more fair-minded (perhaps) than air-minded, I found much greater interest in the personal relationships of the famous flyers, and in the acting of the stars, than in the monotonous succession of montage shots of whirling propellers, maps, newspaper headlines, applauding crowds, dust-storms, rain-storms, take-offs, and crash-ups which occupy such a large part of the footage. After




SHIRLEY TEMPLE
Not yet an oomph-girl

all, one record-breaking flight looks pretty much like another from a theatre seat. In fact, in spite of the final pompous note of dedication to the Waafs and other patriotic tie-ups, I am rather doubtful whether there really was enough in the lives of Mollison and Miss Johnson to justify such a long and pretentious film—but then, as I say, I am not particularly air-minded.

KATHLEEN

(M.G.M.)

 OUR little man was ready and willing to stand up and clap when Shirley Temple, charming as ever, stepped into sight in *Kathleen* after her two-years' absence from the screen. But he found it impossible to stay on his feet for the whole of the film or even to keep clapping: the most he could do was to sit up and take notice.

It looks to me as if Shirley growing-up is not going to be the box-office draw that Shirley the *Curlytop*, the *Wee Willie Winkie*, or the *Bright Eyes* was; not that she hasn't still got her shining curlytop, her bright eyes, her dimple, and her very winsome smile. She has all these attractions and others, too—a happy laugh, a quite pleasing though small singing voice, a naturalness that is astonishing—but she is not an oomph-girl, or at any rate not yet. I hope myself she never will be, but that is hardly likely to be the official (the box-official) opinion.

In *Kathleen*, Laraine Day (the Desirable), Gail Patrick (the Undesirable), and Herbert Marshall (the Malleable) are the main points of a triangle, Shirley being fenced-in, misunderstood, unloved, and lonely—though rich. The theme of the little girl whose mother is long-dead and whose father is Busy with Business and always Dines Out follows the usual groove. Dr. Lorraine Day (psychology specialist) is brought in to deal with the case because the child is said to be unmanageable by the unloving and unloved governess. Result: busy father suddenly begins to Dine at Home; poor little rich girl gradually becomes happy; and psychology doctor at length becomes a step-mother, when it becomes clear at last that the Other Woman was merely ambitious for money.

There are some good scenes in which Shirley dreams herself into the position of a daughter loved and understood by her father—"My darling, how blind I have been"—or of a prima donna earning huge sums of money to buy off the undesirable woman.