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## Film Reviews by G.M.

### THREE TIMES VICTOR

CONSIDER the case of Victor Mature, one of the strangest and in some ways one of the most disturbing phenomena that occurred on the screen in 1942. Here is a young man who has achieved greatness (of a kind) by deliberately exploiting the most unattractive side of his personality. As Hollywood's prime example of conceit, bad manners, and vulgar display, he delights in describing himself as "a very revolting sort of person," and in doing his best to live up to that description, secure in the knowledge that his lush good looks, his chest measurement, and his superabundant sex-appeal, coupled with his egotism, will exercise a kind of perverse fascination on a large (and mostly feminine) section of the audience. A circus freak does much the same sort of thing when he exploits a physical infirmity, and if Victor Mature can gain fame and fortune by calculated boorishness, I suppose he has some justification, but it is to be hoped that the present popularity of this star is not a portent of what is to be expected from leading men in the future.

### SEVEN DAYS' LEAVE

(R.K.O. Radio)



ALL about some American soldiers who've got seven days in which to help Private Mature establish his claim to a large inheritance by marrying a girl (Lucille Ball), who is specified in the will. At the outset, she very sensibly treats him as the bumptious boor that he undoubtedly is, but this is not really intelligence on her part: it is only a device to keep the plot moving while the producer brings in an imposing array of song-and-dance acts, radio turns and specialty artists. Most of them are so good that those people who like this type of entertainment will not think that seven days' leave is any too long.

### MY GAL SAL

(20th Century-Fox)



FORTUNATELY there are a good many things in this film besides Victor Mature—notably a sparkling performance by Rita Hayworth, lavish production and intelligent direction, many catchy, old-fashioned tunes, the nostalgic atmosphere of the 'nineties (in Technicolour), and a useful though not inspired script by the novelist Theodore Dreiser, based on the life of his brother, the songwriter called Paul Dresser. As the musical-comedy actress whom Dresser intermittently woos throughout the picture and eventually wins, Miss Hayworth uses her own beautiful legs to dance on and somebody else's voice (that of the radio star Nan Wynn), to sing with, and fairly easily walks off with the acting honours. The supporting parts are well taken, and even Victor Mature is mostly endurable in the character of the man who wrote "On the Banks of the Wabash" and other hits of the 'nineties. The role, as it happens, would not give much scope to any actor, for the career of Dresser, as described by brother Theodore, proceeds exactly along the

lines of a hundred other Hollywood success-stories, with the ambitious young composer refusing to study for the ministry, leaving home, and heading—via a medicine show—for Broadway, fame, wine, and women. For its undeniable entertainment value, *My Gal Sal* owes most to the songs which Dresser really wrote, to others which were composed in the Dresser manner specially for the film, and to the staging, costuming, and direction of Irving Cummings.

### THE SHANGHAI GESTURE

(United Artists)



ALTHOUGH our little man isn't yet quite clear just what *The Shanghai Gesture* is, and although there were various moments in the film when he could happily have made a frankly impolite one, he was, on the whole, interested in the queer set-up and curious to see just where he was being led. He now has the impression that he was being led by the nose, but he doesn't mind much.

Just what became of that game of poker, for instance, one in a long list of things that did not add up? At the time it had all the camera-pointing and trappings of Something Important. Oh, just an excuse for a whole lot of Powerful People to tell Mother Gin Sling (Ona Munson—but in the stage-play 16 years ago she was Mother Goddam, a much more serious matter. Ssh! She ran a Chinese bawdy house. Now it's only a gambling casino), that she must vacate her Gambling Casino within the next few weeks because Someone has purchased the whole district? What? Only an excuse to introduce that beautiful young creature Gene Tierney? She's Poppy; she's really the daughter of Mother Gin Sling, but she's also the very very very wealthy daughter of Sir Guy Charteris, who must have had another name when he was married to Mother Gin Sling a long long time ago. Or just an excuse to let Poppy and that immature Victor (yes, Victor again!), do some effective eye-work. Well, whatever it was begun for, that game of poker fell through—and somebody had a full house to the ace.

And the end of it all? Well, Mother Gin Sling invites a whole lot of Important People to a dinner party—Oh, lots of beautifully-dressed little Chinese servants, and baskets and baskets of food on that long, long polished table—and nobody ate anything! What did they do? They sat around while Mother Gin Sling uncovered the nasty bones in each one's cupboard—especially the bones in the cupboard of Sir Guy Charteris. A long tale, but the short of it was that Mother Gin Sling brought little Poppy's tinsel life to a quick end with a pretty little jewelled revolver. So that was the end of that little packet of trouble, and all those good and dinnerless actors—Albert Bassermann, Eric Blore, Maria Ouspenskaya (she just stood behind a chair, she didn't even have to speak), Walter Huston, and Phyllis Brooks—could go home, leaving the gambling wheel to spin and spin. . . .

Well, that's the way I saw it. But your guess is as good as mine.

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