

OUT OF THE PIGEON-HOLE SOUTH OF ALGIERS

(Associated British)

WITH some qualities that should appeal to several types of filmgoer and a freshness that should appeal to all, *South of Algiers* is still somewhat disappointing. It is about the efforts of an archaeologist, Dr. Burnet (Eric Portman), to find the mask of Moloch in a lost tomb in North Africa. With little money and less time, Burnet rather unwillingly allows an American journalist and amateur archaeologist, Nicholas Chapman (Van Heflin), to help him. There's an emotional complication because Burnet's daughter (Wanda Hendrix), who meets them in Algeria with her fiancé (Jacques François), soon becomes interested in Chapman; and there are rivals in the search for the mask who have only a mercenary interest in finding it. However, the outcome, reached by way of a cave-in, a stolen clue, evil spells, torture by bandits, a wonderful pursuit and fight in the desert, and the usual quota of improbabilities, is quite satisfactory.

Perhaps one shouldn't expect films to fit into pigeon-holes, but this is apparently an adventure story, and as such it moves slowly, deriving much of its ap-

peal from the passages when it isn't being what (one feels) it ought to be. Algeria is shown in brilliant sunlight—its Roman ruins, lost cities, desert and colourful peoples (and, in subdued night-light, its dancing girls). Most of this, as far as I can make out, is the real thing and very good to look at; but you have the feeling that you're being taken for a ride (on foot, actually) when Mr. Chapman makes a quiet moment with the girl an excuse for a conducted tour—with the director of photography (Oswald Morris) ambling unseen in the rear, ready to take some more exciting shots with his colour camera. Then there are the Arab children (Marie-France and Messaoud), an attractive pair from whom Chapman buys a donkey and who make the deal an excuse for following him to the ends of the earth—they're still going, anyway, when the film ends.

Well, one can only suppose the director (Jack Lee) meant this to be a film of indeterminate type, and you just might like it. I didn't dislike it myself, but neither did I find it really satisfying.

TAKE THE HIGH GROUND

(M.G.M.)

MANY people will suppose when they read some of the advertising for *Take the High Ground* that it's one of

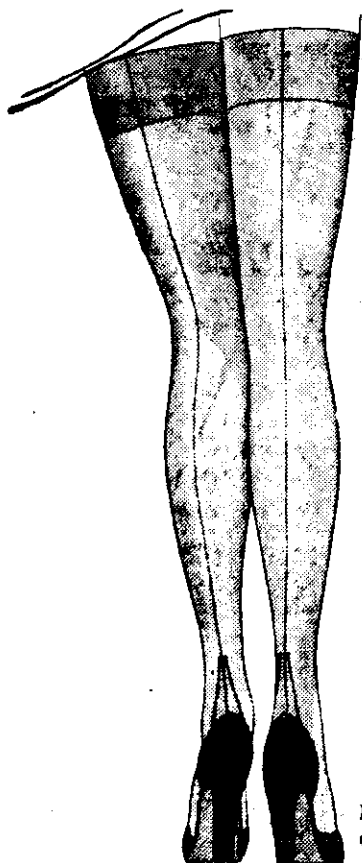
these rollicking films of army life that either bore you to tears or have you rolling in the aisle. Quite a number of filmgoers do seem to have found bits of it funny, but the overall impression I got was quite different.

Set and apparently filmed in an American army training establishment, it isn't much more than a record of how a ragged group of recruits is turned into a disciplined squad of soldiers. Much of this is interesting enough and well-photographed in Ansco colour; and, assuming it to be accurate, it has a certain semi-documentary interest. Like the off-the-beat passages of *South of Algiers* it will be for many people the best part of the film. It is held together by a fairly thin story in which the recruits react in varying ways and Sergeant Ryan (Richard Widmark) and Sergeant Holt (Karl Malden) become involved with a

(continued on next page)



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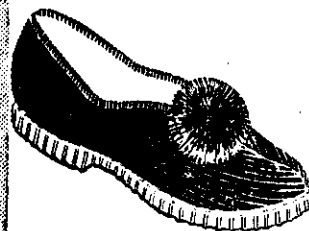
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