

# The Wild Goose Tamed

JEDDA

(Charles Chauvel-Columbia)

"LITTLE wild goose" is how "Jedda" translates, apparently, and a little wild goose Jedda looks like becoming for ten minutes or so while the didgeridoo throbs and a magnificent bearded aborigine tries to "sing her to his blanket." This is the point where the film really comes to life. It's here also that it develops into a chase story which, kept alive by a variety of adventures and the well-trying practice of cutting back and forth between pursuers and pursued, maintains a fair state of tension for the rest of the distance.

What happens before this? Jedda is an aborigine orphan who is brought in to a Northern Territory cattle station soon after the owner's wife lost her baby. She is reared as a white child, kept away from the other blacks about the place, courted by a young half-caste; but her restless desire to taste the life of her people flows over when the wild young native, Marbuck, comes to the station. In the exciting sequence I've mentioned she is drawn to his camp one night by his primitive dance. Considering her upbringing, it should astonish no one that she's immediately disillusioned, but Marbuck flees with her, pursued by her lover and the police—for it turns out that the black is rather a bad egg.

The first part of the film is moderately interesting. Of course, the setting is unusual, and the warm, dry, sun-baked north comes through beautifully in Gevacolour, which from an earlier encounter I had remembered for its blues. There are some good moments in the life of Jedda as a child, and Ngarla Kunoth conveys something of her conflict of spirit as a young woman between two worlds. On the other hand, George Simpson-Lyttle as the station owner never looks like coming to life as he delivers in a flat voice some pretty flat lines. Robert Tudawali as Marbuck has an animal vitality that has every opportunity to express itself, and, the plot apart, it's not surprising that the film takes a turn for the better when he arrives. Once his climactic scene with the girl is over she isn't called on for

## BAROMETER

FAIR: "Jedda."  
FAIR: "Love's a Luxury."  
OVERCAST: "The Surf."

much more than some variations on a note of fear, though it must be said she does these quite well.

Neither of these aborigine players, by the way, is a professional actor, and I think the director, Charles Chauvel, has done a remarkable job to make them carry the burden of a film which, even without the crocodiles, the wild-looking tribesmen, and other incidental excitement, would never be dull. I can only hope, since my knowledge of the Australian native is very limited, that he has shown respect for the truth. This is a film which many will enjoy; and but for an agonising reappraisal this week of some of my recent gradings it would have reached a higher point on the barometer.

## LOVE'S A LUXURY

(Film Studios, Manchester)

THE night I looked in on *Love's a Luxury*—only because there was a full house next door—the sound had broken down. The first support started and with everyone else I laughed unrestrainedly while a male quartet ran through their first number or two, silently opening and shutting their mouths and assuming soulful expressions—all with considerable virtuosity. Thus conditioned I found myself greatly entertained and amused by the feature, the sort of comedy for which I usually have no taste at all. This one is about a theatrical producer whose wife has walked out on him. He goes off to the country for quietness, and, of course, soon everyone who shouldn't be there—including his wife and the other woman—has joined him. The opening is stagey. After that the unwelcome entrances, misunderstandings, deceptions and what not come so fast that I just relaxed and took it. If you like English farce you'll like this film; not aiming too high, it comes off very well. Those involved include Hugh Wakefield, Derek Bond, Zena Marshall and Michael Medwin, and the director is Francis Searle, whose name, I'm sure, should ring a bell, but doesn't.

## THE SURF

(Northern International)

THE SURF, which is being shown in New Zealand as *The Isle of Love*, is a Swedish film in which Ingrid Bergman appeared before she went to Hollywood. Otherwise I'm sure we would never have seen it, which wouldn't have been a great hardship. It's about a young man, forced into the church by a stern father, who finds when he meets an old love (Miss Bergman) that he can't control his desires. Since he gives up the struggle while a great storm rages, there's opportunity for a riot of symbolism—flaming trees, tossing waves, flashing lightning and goodness knows what else. Miss Bergman gives here and there a foretaste of the very beautiful woman she was to become and some of the camera work is well done—bits like the fishing boats going out on a rising sea. But the exaggerated acting, particularly of the male lead, and the flickering light took me back to my childhood in the silent cinema, suggesting that this piece belongs to the fairly early days of the Swedish sound film. Not surprisingly, then, it also has the merit of being thoroughly visual in its approach, so that speech seems hardly necessary.

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