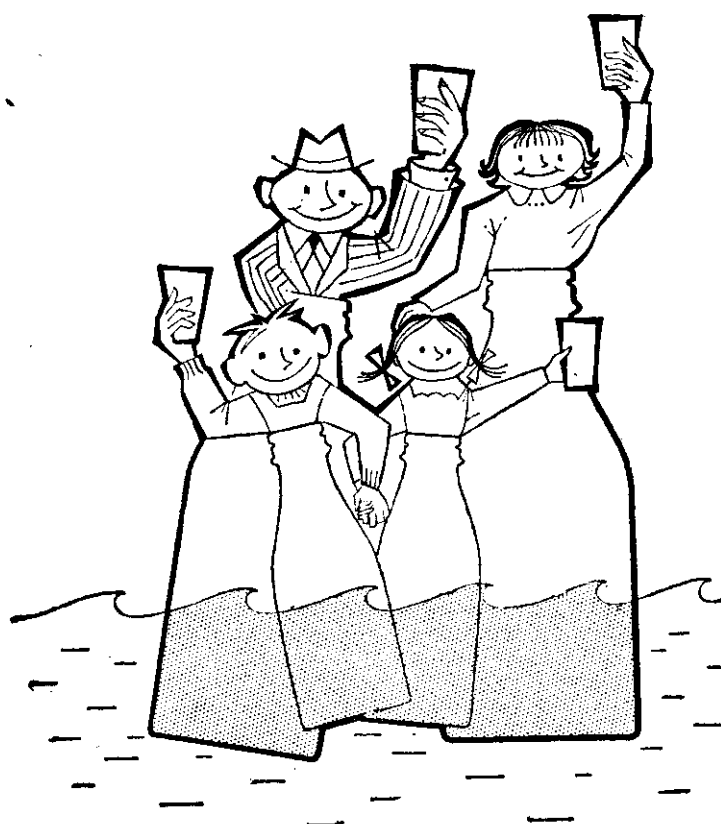


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Milk builds healthy, vigorous children . . .

keeps grown-ups youthful into

sprightly old age!

Milk is a must for growing children

Film Reviews, by Jno.

VIOLENT WEEK-END

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

(Warner Bros.-CinemaScope)

BLACKBOARD JUNGLE, which was withdrawn from the Venice International Film Festival because of the distorted impression which it might give of the American way of life, could no doubt be classed as explosive material if one concedes (as I think one must) the potency of the film in forming attitudes and fixing opinions. But I would not consider it such high explosive as *Rebel Without a Cause*. The delinquents of *Blackboard Jungle* could be regarded as the victims of conditions common to the slums of all great cities. The rebels of the new revelation come from comfortable homes, ride to school in their own cars or motor-scooters, enjoy a standard of living which would be regarded as exceptionally good in this country—and are apparently quite uncontrollable.

The book from which the film title was apparently borrowed is the study of a criminal psychopath, the film (if one could take it as portraying reality) is the picture of a perverted society where authority has abdicated in the school and in the home, and where the only "deterrence" to delinquency—and not apparently an effective one—is the massive retaliation of an armed police force.

From the point of view of American foreign relations—which are, of course, no concern of mine—this is a bad film. As a treatment of juvenile delinquency, a subject on which we are all perhaps a little sensitive, it seemed to me potentially dangerous, quite apart from its gross over-simplification of the problem. I don't want altogether to condemn the studio for making it—Warner Bros. have a fairly good record as makers of "socially-conscious" pictures—but here their sense of social responsibility seems to have backfired.

One can't, of course, examine the problem of delinquency with one's eyes shut, but it is another thing to present drunkenness among high school pupils, spring-knife duels, or death-rides in stolen cars as the prime sources of excitement and tension in a CinemaScope movie. *Rebel Without a Cause* is not a social document (unless by accident), or a psychological case-history, it's a plain thriller. Or rather, a WarnerColored one. And if it is seen generally by the kind of audience with whom I saw it—pre-



MICKEY SPILLANE

The half had not been told

BAROMETER

FAIR: "Rebel Without a Cause."

MAINLY FAIR: "Twenty-three Paces to Baker Street."

OVERCAST: "Kiss Me Deadly."

ponderantly teenaged—it could do damage. This view, I'm aware, is not shared by the Films Appeal Board, which allowed the release, subject to a "16-or-over" certificate, but I feel bound to enter a dissenting opinion.

The theme of the film, repeated almost *ad nauseam*, is that parents are to blame—and, of course, the only parents we encounter are tailored to measure. I can't argue very effectively with the psycho boys on their own ground, but I distrust any such sick generalisations. We've been told that there are not bad children, only unhappy children. Now, in effect, we learn that there are no delinquent children, only delinquent parents. Sooner or later someone will discover that there are no delinquent parents, only a delinquent society. That is, in effect if not in intent, what *Rebel Without a Cause* really suggests. Perhaps it is not so far wrong either, but don't let us imagine that that society is exclusively American.

Viewed as an entertainment, the film is of fair quality. The parents involved are almost caricatures, and therefore can barely carry conviction to the average New Zealander, but the late James Dean (of whom I would not say more than that he had promise) did manage to wring an unwilling sympathy from me. The direction (Nicholas Ray), and the editing, too, produced one or two sequences of tension which were as gripping as anything I've seen since *Bad Day at Black Rock*. Since it's fair as entertainment, it gets a fair grading. But don't ask me to approve of it.

TWENTY-THREE PACES TO BAKER STREET

(20th Century-Fox-CinemaScope)

A MISS, they say, is as good as a mile, and a mere 23 paces from Baker Street (scarcely more than the width of a CinemaScope screen) proves to be a long step from the austere simplicities of a Sherlock Holmes story. But, of course, these are more complicated times and the model for this whodunit seems to have been *Rear Window*. The prying, physically handicapped amateur this time is a blinded American playwright (Van Johnson), who overhears snatches of a suspicious conversation in a London pub and commits what he has heard, in the form of dialogue, to his tape-recorder. The police (Maurice Denham) are polite, but do nothing, and the hero finally comes to grips with the murderer in a blacked-out flat (a variation on Jimmy Stewart's flash-bulb defence). And, of course, there's the attractive girlfriend (Vera Miles) to add a decorative note to the milieu. A shrewd head on pretty shoulders, too. "I don't know," she says to Van, "why you insist on acting this way." I couldn't fathom it either—unless he was acting under Henry Hathaway's orders. If so, black mark, Henry!

KISS ME DEADLY

(Parklane Pictures)

"MIKE HAMMER combats sex, sadism and villainy with red-hot action," said the advertisement. Next day the sex had been dropped, but the sadism remained. There's nothing reprehensible (apparently) about sadism so long as it's kept off the Rugby field.

Because I hadn't seen a Mickey Spillane movie, I went along. The ad., I can now depose, was wrong both times. It should have read, "Mike Hammer combats sex, sadism and villainy with sex, sadism and villainy." I had thought to use this paragraph to condemn inflammatory and inflated film advertising, but for once the half had not been told.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 10, 1956.