

Hard Labour Week-end

ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK

(Clover Productions-Columbia) G Cert.
I am willing to try any drink once.—Jurgen.

I SHOULD like to think that it was a capacity for experimentation, or, failing that, something resembling Frederick's inflexible sense of duty which persuaded me to *Rock Around the Clock* with an audience of desegregated secondary school children. But neither these nor the natural impulse of curiosity would represent more than a mild infusion of the truth. I went because there was little else to go to. All things considered (and I don't exclude the two dozen tomato plants that had to be set out between times) it was for me one of the most laborious Labour week-ends on record.

Rock Around the Clock, which has been directed with an infallible feeling for the banal by Fred F. Sears, introduces several musical combos—The Platters (a vocal group boasting one singer), Tony Martinez and his Band, Freddy Bell and the Bell Boys—but the bright particular stars are Bill Haley and his Comets, who, if they didn't originate Rock 'n' Roll (and the film is not precisely clear on this point), were apparently "fustest with the mostest."

The Comets (if the screen story is to be believed) first swam into ken at the local parish hall in Strawberry Springs, somewhere in the Middle West. The story of their metamorphosis from part-time, through small-time, to Big-time seemed to me somewhat drably similar in its general outline to the story of other entertainment celebrities who have been honoured by screen biographies. In Mr. Haley's case the big-time climax was a coast-to-coast TV hook-up, which is presumably the limit of a contemporary entertainer's ambitions. It seemed the limit to me, anyway.

No, I can't say that *Rock Around the Clock* got me one way or another, and I suspect post-teenagers in general will feel the same about it. I found it much more amusing to watch, and listen to, the audience. The juveniles were there simply to beat time to the music and were so obviously enjoying themselves that I wouldn't have had the heart to tell them that the style of dancing they were applauding was old hat before most of them reached the kindergarten. They wouldn't have believed me, anyway.



EDMOND O'BRIEN
Three dimensions

BAROMETER

MAINLY FAIR: "D-Day the Sixth of June."
OVERCAST: "Rock Around the Clock."
DULL: "Down With Riches."

Much more amusing were two old souls in the seats just behind me. They were, I'll swear, Minnie and Henry Crun, and obviously they had strayed into the wrong show. Henry was deaf and Minnie was doing her best to give him a running commentary, but the vernacular occasionally beat her. Henry couldn't reconcile what she said with what he saw and that would start an argument.

They left before the lights went up, but when I overtook them several blocks down the street they were still arguing.

D-DAY THE SIXTH OF JUNE

(20th Century-Fox-CinemaScope) Y Cert.

D-DAY THE SIXTH OF JUNE (producer Charles Brackett, director Henry Koster, plus De Luxe Color) would have pleased me more if it had stuck closer to its title. Photographically and in other ways as well the opening sequence was good. Special Force Six, whose particular task is the knocking out of a German heavy gun commanding two of the projected Normandy beach-heads, is shown embarking and weighing anchor. Good cinema, this, with a minimum of dialogue and such speech as there is clipped and tense. Officers are summoned to the wardroom for a last briefing. Their young C.O., Colonel Richard Todd (looking every square inch a soldier), gives them the final details of the assault, then suggests that they put the Operation out of mind until zero hour. I would have thought it almost impossible, but not so Col. Todd, and far less Captain Robert Taylor. Not only can these two withdraw their minds from the job on hand, but when it comes to the recollection of time past Captain Taylor has the gift of almost total recall. *D-Day the Sixth of June*, in fact, is for most of its length, flashbackwise, the story of D-Day Minus anything up to two years or more. Captain Taylor's story, indeed, is so long in the telling that I wouldn't have been surprised if his cross-Channel transport had run hard aground in the Place de la Concorde. The trouble with *D-Day the Sixth of June* is that both the Colonel and the Captain are in love with the same woman (Dana Wynter) and she, on her part, is in love with both of them, apparently simultaneously. And since Captain Taylor is already married it obviously takes him a lot longer to get himself unmixed inside.

Frankly, I found it difficult to become interested in the principals. Robert Taylor, who got the lion's share of the camera, isn't as beautiful as he once was, and he shows little compensating maturity as an actor. But Edmond O'Brien's Colonel Trimmer was quite a creation. Col. Trimmer is a shrewd, blustering, ambitious officer—a sort of extroverted Queeg—who is even prepared to risk the hazards of combat to win promotion. O'Brien made a major role of what was nominally a minor part, and when he finally disappeared from the scene he took the third dimension with him.

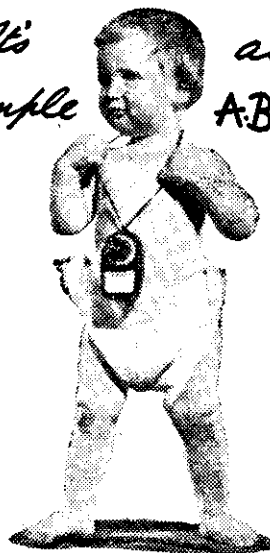
DOWN WITH RICHES

(Ora-Lux Films)

G Cert.

ANNA MAGNANI and Vittorio De Sica are the stars of this Italian farce (and Aldo Tonti photographed it), and if you have a fluent command of idiomatic Italian it is possible that you may find it funny. I haven't and I didn't, and the "Complete English Subtitles" claim made in the credits is complete humbug. I haven't seen Magnani in anything so poor as this before, and I trust I shan't again see her talents so pointlessly squandered.

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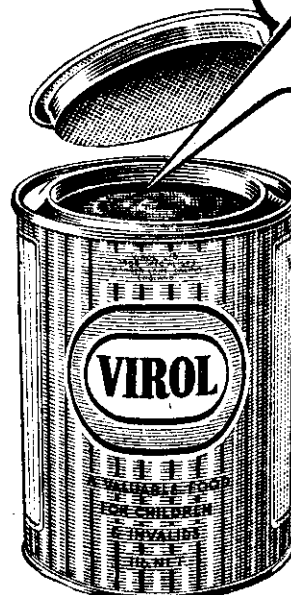
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