

A Question of Viewpoint

LA P . . . RESPECTUEUSE

(Films Agiman—Artes Film)

R: over 16 only

I SO often haven't been shocked or (worse) excited by movie scenes that I've been told should have that effect, that I sometimes stop to wonder why. There were Grace Kelly's kisses in *Rear Window*, for example: and now I see that some "open-mouthed" kissing has been cut from the new Elia Kazan film *Baby Doll*. I bare my troubled conscience this week because a friend had assured me that *La P . . . Respectueuse* (*The Respectable Prostitute*) was salacious. Undoubtedly it's unsuitable for children, and quite properly it has a restricted certificate; but for a film based on a serious play that's set entirely in a prostitute's room it seems to me to go no further than you might expect: what it adds to the play visually is probably no more inflammatory than some of the dialogue it leaves out. No doubt a puritan background (or the lack of it) will often make all the difference to judgment on these matters. Whatever their own views, censors (and others in that position) must, I suppose, assume that most people in this country have such a background and will be shocked or excited by certain movie scenes. I can see why, but I think it's a pity. It would be even more a pity if reviewers felt bound to write as if they shared that background.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Respectable Prostitute* has an odd subject for a French play—the colour question in the American Deep South. An unoffending Negro has been killed by a senator's drunken nephew. The senator's son spends a night with a witness, a young prostitute, then tries to bribe her to allege that the dead man and his companion tried to rape her. Where bribery fails, the double talk of the senator himself (Marcel Herrand) succeeds, and the girl signs the allegation. It's a fantastic situation, but not more so than the sort of thing we hear of from American sources. Here it would be more convincing if less emphatically stated and if the dialogue were not in French. Even so I found the film held my disbelief suspended well enough from around the time M. Sartre's play takes over. The earlier scenes which translate into action what the play tells in dialogue are less satisfactory and portray a different Lizzie from "the respectable prostitute." In this later, better part of the film Barbara Laage gives something like the performance I expected from her.

The play ends on a very cynical note: after Lizzie has sheltered the other Negro, sexual attraction between her and the senator's son triumphs when, fatally drawn, he returns to claim her as his mistress. I can't imagine what M. Sartre thinks of the film's more idealistic and hopeful ending. I shan't reveal it, but it surprised me a little since some effort had been made in the characterisation to soften us up for the ending the playwright intended. Still, you will find this film interesting with many scenes very well done and some especially well photographed.

N.Z. LISTENER, FEBRUARY 1, 1957.

BAROMETER

FAIR: "*La P . . . Respectueuse*,"
FAIR: "*Meet Me in Las Vegas*,"
FAIR: "*Davy Crockett and the River Pirates*."

MEET ME IN LAS VEGAS

(M.G.M.)

G Cert.

NO doubt about it, there are some good numbers in *Meet Me in Las Vegas*, but good numbers alone don't make a film, even a musical, and in the story department especially this one is pretty feeble. As in *It's Always Fair Weather*, Cyd Charisse is a frosty dame—a ballet dancer—who's only interested in her job. Conscripted by Dan Dailey into a spot of hand-holding at the gambling table, she's found to be lucky and after a bit of talk and a bit of booze they set out to break the bank. Of course they also fall in love. Whenever they sit around someone is putting on a show or a rehearsal, and there you have the numbers. Among those found to be hanging around this glorified mugs' alley are Frankie Lane, Lena Horne, Jerry Colonna and Mitsuko Sawamura. But easily the best number, which for me made a visit to the film worthwhile, was a new, delightful version of "Frankie and Johnny," sung by Sammy Davis, Jr., with Miss Charisse as Frankie. It made me want to be kind to a pretty sloppy piece of film-making, though I'm probably stretching it a bit far in grading it Fair.

DAVY CROCKETT AND THE RIVER PIRATES

(Walt Disney)

G Cert.

NOT one but two Davy Crockett adventures are told in this new film, which even more than the first one is very much a piece for children. (I'm sure many youngsters must have been confused by the political stuff in the earlier one.) My nine-year-old son enjoyed it very much, and I found it entertaining enough. Besides Fess Parker and Buddy Ebsen as Davy and pal, this one includes Jeff York as Mike Fink, "King of the River," and a rough looking crew. They're good fun. First Davy and Mike are rivals in a down-river race; then they work together to clean up a gang of river pirates. The setting is picturesque and the plentiful violent action and excitement is well leavened with humour. The boys will love it.

THE STRENGTH TO GROW

(Pacific Films)

TO mark the 60th birthday of Standard Vacuum in New Zealand, Pacific Films have produced one of their most elegant pieces, an Eastman colour film about the part petroleum products have played in the life of New Zealand. In the good tradition of oil company films (for one can never forget that Standard financed *Louisiana Story*), it doesn't plug its sponsor's product but tells crisply a story that was worth telling. My one criticism is that though a tanker's voyage is a satisfactory framework for the story, the stiff-lipped telephone conversations that are supposed to deal with a supply crisis are quite phony, just as the conferences were in the same unit's film about Kawerau.

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