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Film Reviews, by Jno.

BERGMAN REDIVIVA

ANASTASIA

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

WHATEVER it was that lengthened (and thickened) the queues for *Anastasia*—sentiment, recollected emotion, nostalgia, the expectation of a good show, or plain curiosity (for a good queue is a potent attraction in itself)—there can have been few who went away without some new understanding of the range and depth of Ingrid Bergman's acting, and of what we have missed in the years that the tabloids have eaten.

But then, this *Anastasia* is a players' piece. The direction of Anatole Litvak is frequently hesitant and unsure. His opening set is haphazard in design, his first sequence rather exasperatingly slow to get under way, his location shots (in Copenhagen) are the best contemporary travelogue, and don't sort well with the period of the story, and the final fadeout leaves one with a slight feeling of deflation. In between, however, there is some quite magnificent staging, in Hollywood's grand manner, some strong close-up photography (which might have been stronger in black and white than in De Luxe Color), and—above all—excellent acting.

For when I said this was a players' piece, the plural possessive was intentional. Bergman is the heart of the matter, the centre of things—as Garbo would have been. But there are others. Yul Brynner proves to be as convincingly Slav as he was Siamese, and with much more than muscle to make him three-dimensional. As the unscrupulous White Russian general who takes an unknown emigrée from the streets, drills and bullies her until she can pass for a princess, presents her to the world as the sole survivor of the massacred Romanovs, then falls under the spell of his own creation (the Pygmalion *leitmotiv* comes through strongly), Brynner achieves an impressive measure of character development. Helen Hayes as the Dowager Empress has a substantial part and plays it—as one might expect—as if she were indeed an aged Romanov living in the company of ghosts. And Felix Aylmer is notable among the minor players.

But inevitably one comes back to Bergman, and to the grace and conviction with which she moves through a whole spectrum of mood and emotion. For *Anastasia* is no clear-cut character. She is a woman divided within herself, unaware of her past, uncertain of her future, unable in the end to decide whether she is a Romanov or a lie. To clothe such a part in conviction, to give blood and bone and life to this kind of latter-day fairy tale—as Bergman does—demands acting of the highest order.

THE DESPERATE HOURS

(Paramount-VistaVision)

R: 13 and over only.

THOUGH it's VistaVision, this more than competent thriller is in black-and-white—black-and-white print, black-and-white characters (except for the law-enforcement officers, plain and fancy-clothed, who are a sort of ominous grey chorus to

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "*Anastasia*."
FAIR TO FINE: "*The Desperate Hours*."
FAIR: "*The Long Arm*."

the central melodrama). The blacks are represented by Humphrey Bogart, Dewey Martin, Robert Middleton—three escaped convicts; the whites by Fredric March, Martha Scott, Mary Murphy, and young Richard Eyer—whose home the convicts select as a temporary hide-out.

It's a fairly familiar set-up, almost a stereotype in fact. "He who hath a wife and child hath given hostages to fortune," and fortune in the form of three armed and hardened criminals is a raw deal. Indoors is terror, outdoors life must go on as if all was normal, lest worse befall. But if the situation is unoriginal, the players are more than competent, the director (William Wyler) is an expert in black-and-white, and the director of photography (Lee Garmes) is a skilled craftsman. These diverse talents manage to induce a pretty high tension, though it's AC rather than DC—the action alternating between peaks of high-pressure excitement, with spurts of violent action, and troughs of numbed despair.

Bogart—we'll miss him—plays his most familiar character with the smoothness of long practice (and manages to inject more into the part of the chief gangster than one would have believed possible from the bare dialogue). But I appreciated just as much March's portrait of the embattled father. I have seen him in a multitude of parts and off-hand I can't recall once being disappointed.

THE LONG ARM

(Rank-Ealing) G Cert.

BESIDE the raw excitement, the ruthless villains (and the somewhat ruthless cops) of *The Desperate Hours*, *The Long Arm* is almost prim—indeed, rather like a BBC documentary on the C.I.D. But there's good solid Ealing ground work, and Jack Hawkins is the very model of a modern Detective-Superintendent. He really carries the film. There are one or two slight twists to the story, and Charles Frend is here a competent, not an inspired, director; but the star (and the smooth documentary style that Balcon has encouraged) make *The Long Arm* seem better than it really is.



HUMPHREY BOGART

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 22, 1957.

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