

PEOPLE AT SEA

THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

(Paramount)

G Cert.

THE new face we meet on the Vista-Vision screen this week would not in the ordinary way set fire to the heart of a girl romantically inclined, for George Gobel—who comes to films from television—is one of those chubby, shy, apparently helpless comedians. This, it seems to me, is quite a good thing in a romantic comedy, where the love story mustn't be taken too seriously. His attraction for Jean Harris (Mitzi Gaynor) is his money, for she and papa (David Niven) are card sharps on a liner which is taking them all from Africa back home to America. She trips him (literally), takes him to her cabin, drugs him (almost) with her exotic scent. Soon, though, his simplicity and trust—yes, you've already guessed. Still, with this and that the story's kept going, afloat and ashore and afloat again, a long time after she finds she's in love and he finds she's her father's daughter.

If it's light entertainment you're looking for, here's a film you should like. Mr Gobel is a very amusing fellow—though it wouldn't surprise me if too much of him turned out to be enough—and in a couple of song and dance interludes, both of them captivating, he is quite a match for the talented Miss Gaynor. Mr Niven, in that old sophisticated role we know so well and enjoy so much, is supported in smaller parts by Reginald Gardiner and Fred Clark, two players you'll be glad to see again. Apart from some slapstick (several spoiled suits in about 10 minutes is surely overdoing it even if you like this sort of thing), the comedy is generally diverting—not over-sophisticated, but sophisticated enough to give those who like it that way a relaxed night out. Norman Taurog directed.

THE BABY AND THE BATTLESHIP

(Jay Lewis Productions)

G Cert.

I WAS going to say that *The Baby and the Battleship* is not nearly as bad as it sounds, but since I've been dodging it for weeks I think I can



GEORGE GOBEL, MITZI GAYNOR

BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Birds and the Bees."
FAIR: "The Baby and the Battleship."
FAIR: "Lost Youth."

afford to be generous and says it's much better. Though none of the obvious situations fails to turn up once the scene is set, it's really quite amusing. "I couldn't just leave the little basket sculling around on his own, could I?" asks Punchy Roberts (John Mills) when he finds himself with a baby aboard H.M.S. Gillingham, at sea for exercises after a night out in Naples. He has been left with this very likeable baby after a brawl in a café, and his mate (Richard Attenborough), whose girl was taking care of it, is still sculling around Naples looking for it after his ship has so unexpectedly sailed.

Of course, the story is in the efforts of the sailors to keep the baby hidden and take proper care of it. The officers' table napkins, the tips of the surgeon's rubber gloves, the cat's saucer of milk disappear; a visitor (from East Europe?) who comes aboard finds the baby hidden in a food container in the galley and suspects the worst; the captain, who has been made out a fool in an exercise, uses the baby as an excuse to call it off—and so on. There's a quite adequate performance from John Mills, though I was rather more taken with Michael Hordern as the self-satisfied captain—there are some scenes with his officers around him that I found very amusing. If you think that I sound a bit patronising about this piece you needn't take my word for it—if its run means anything there must be few people about who haven't seen it.

LOST YOUTH

(Lux Film)

A Cert.

PARTLY a thriller, partly a study (or so its title suggests) of the generation that grew up in the war years, *Lost Youth* doesn't completely succeed as either. This is a pity, because I suspect Pietro Germi, whose *In the Name of the Law* I reviewed a few months ago, might do something pretty good in a neo-realist style if he didn't let his stories run away with him. Perhaps he has succeeded in films we haven't yet seen here. As in some recent American movies, the lost youth of this film are relatively privileged—they can go to university, anyway. Their delinquency is not seen in such depth as in, say, *Rebel Without a Cause*, though the Italian dialogue might say more than one suspects; and while the best of the film's thriller elements—the night club hold-up towards the end, for example—are well handled, it hasn't the sustained tension of the out-and-out thriller. It will probably be remembered longest for very good playing by Jacques Sernas (Paris of *Helen of Troy*, no less) as a particularly cold-blooded youth'ul criminal. It's a comment on the film as a social document that we feel no pity for him. Massimo Girotti and Carla del Poggio are others in the cast whose names will be known to New Zealand filmgoers.

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