

Erosion in the West

THE INDIAN FIGHTER

(Bryna-United Artists)

G Cert.

"THE West," says Kirk Douglas, in one of the profounder moments of this king-size horse opera, "is like a beautiful woman to me—I don't want to see her spoiled." Though the simile isn't one I'd have picked myself, it's an elegant sentiment (and, in the circumstances in which it is uttered, one which any member of the Forest and Bird Protection Society might well applaud). But observing what Mr Douglas himself has done to the West in this same movie—the first film to come from his own production unit—it seemed to me that the film-maker was out of step with the film-player.

This was, in fact, the fourth occasion in recent weeks in which I found myself shaking my head a little sadly over Western film-making in its current grandiose format. It's not that I'm sighing nostalgically for ye olde West. One may recall its pristine simplicities with a sentimental affection and at the same time remember that it was a juvenile's



ELSA MARTINELLI
Buff-coloured Indian

BAROMETER

MAINLY FAIR: "The Indian Fighter."
FAIR: "An Artist With Ladies."
MAINLY FAIR: "That Certain Feeling."

world. There is, in fact, everything to be said for the grown-up Western which makes an honest attempt to look at the American frontier story with both eyes open—and there has been an encouraging number of them. Films like *Stagecoach*, *Red River*, *High Noon*, *The Gun-fighter* all had an inner integrity because the drama grew naturally out of character and circumstance. Today's overblown epics—and even Ford himself does not appear altogether immune from the contagion—seem at times to have been devised in the first instance for the comic-book trade or the more sensational Sunday papers.

The Indian Fighter (CinemaScope, Technicolor) is by no means the poorest I've seen recently, but I couldn't help feeling that it was getting off on the wrong foot when the opening shot was a voyeur's peek at Elsa Martinelli bathing in the buff. From what I saw of her then she scarcely looked like a Red Indian, or even a shocking-pink one, being a pretty uniform buff-colour all over; and the same spuriousness seems to dog most of the characters.

But it was the story (by Frank Davis and Ben Hecht) that seemed most hollow at the core. It follows the currently popular line in presenting the Indians (here the Sioux) as harassed by evil whites seeking gold and peddling fire-water, and provoked into retaliation against guilty and innocent alike. It is quite probable that this is the historic fact, but it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that historical accuracy wasn't an element of prime importance. What the film seemed more concerned with was the smell of firewater and blood—and, of course, the amphibious cavortings of Kirk Douglas and Miss Martinelli. But if anything saves the film—apart from a good old-fashioned set-piece in which the Injuns besiege the pioneers and the U.S. Cavalry in-

side Fort Laramie—it is the engaging grin of Mr Douglas. I know no other Hollywood player whose dentition is so disarming.

AN ARTIST WITH LADIES

(Savoy)

R: 16 and over only

FROM the cut of the clothes, the style of the hairdressing, even the shape of the female characters (fashion will always be a more accurate method of dating films than Carbon 14), I should say this Fernandel comedy wasn't made last year or even the year before. But its basic ingredient (the kind of allusive joke that the Freudians found a name for) has been the common property of mankind from time immortal. Old Maître Fernandel presents himself as a born *coiffeur des dames*. From humble beginnings—plaiting and ribboning horses' tails for agricultural shows—the film sketches (with a comic celerity) his rise to fame in the salons of the Champs Elysée and his final acquisition of the symbols of Parisian success: a faithful wife, an unfaithful mistress and the ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur. It is, you will gather, exceedingly Gallic comedy, but is too much dependent on the double entendre to rate as vintage Fernandel, but once or twice I felt that the jokes (especially as translated in the sub-titles) hung a little precariously "on the knuckle." On the whole, though, the old villain gets away with it.

THAT CERTAIN FEELING

(Paramount-VistaVision)

G Cert.

FOR any person with a sophisticated taste in humour, this is a comedy that takes the wrong turning. It begins with a jibe at the big-time American comic-strip cartoonists (represented by George Sanders) and might have developed into a salty piece of satire if it hadn't run into the shallows of romance (Eva Marie Saint) and sentimentality (represented by a small orphan boy and a large shaggy dog). The satire does persist, but too thinly for those who like their humour dry. Nevertheless, there's Bob Hope and where Hope is most of us laugh in spite of ourselves. *That Certain Feeling* is fair entertainment, but no more—satisfying enough, no doubt, for those who are content with the fugitive comedy of the wisecrack.

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the Frank Martin *Petite Symphonie Concertante* with harp and piano as the other solo instruments. Gwyneth Brown was able to study harpsichord technique with Dr Thornton Lofthouse when he was in New Zealand last year. Before that her studies had concentrated on the piano.

Gwyneth Brown returned to New Zealand in 1954 after studying for two years in Paris on a Government bursary. There her teachers had included Lazare Lévy and Nadia Boulanger. Although now in her 70s and internationally celebrated in many fields of musical activity, Nadia Boulanger has undiminished energy, Gwyneth Brown told us. "As a teacher she is very vital and manages to keep personal contact with her students. She still conducts quite frequently, and her sweep and knowledge of music is encyclopaedic. She trains people of all ages from 11 on, she has composition classes, choral classes—what doesn't she do!" Twenty years ago Nadia Boulanger was the first woman

ever to conduct a whole programme at a concert of the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

Gwyneth Brown's interest in choral singing is still strong. She is interested



Role photograph

GWYNETH BROWN

in all kinds of music making and has recently become répétiteur for the New Zealand Opera Company, for whom she will play the piano part in *The Medium* at the Auckland Festival.



[T'S one thing to bid "Ying Tong Iddle I Po" for a fiendish Chinese upright rosewood piano and quite another to make the same bid for top place on the Hit Parade, but it shouldn't surprise anyone to hear that the Goons have done both. The Chinese

GOONERY

upright rosewood piano incident doesn't need to be explained to those who follow *The Goon Show*—it was repeated recently from YA and YZ stations—and now we hear that not so long ago one of the Goons laid a bet that he could produce a record, both unmusical and unintelligible, which would reach the top of the Hit Parade. "Ying Tong Iddle I Po," a completely nonsensical record, was the outcome. It got to the top of the Hit Parade in Britain and sold in millions—making, we imagine, lots of money for someone.