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Film Reviews, by Jno.

TWO PLUS TWO MAKE THREE

1984

(Associated British-Holliday) A Cert.

Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.

SITTING here contemplating the almost vacant page I have just had the slightly unnerving feeling that, by some dislocation of time and space, old George Orwell is, in big-brotherly fashion, watching me. It isn't a comfortable feeling at all, because I have already decided to recommend—at least to serious filmgoers—a production which

has taken Orwell's own two-plus-two theorem and, by a process of concealed subtraction, made it add up to three.

This motion-picture is "freely adapted" (the makers admit it themselves) from Orwell's novel, but the freedom which they have taken is the freedom to corrupt the text, to compound with conscience, to reject the uncompromising pessimism of the book, to betray—there is no other word for it—Orwell's own picture of the ultimate betrayal.

But half a loaf—even when the flour is adulterated—is better than no bread, and it is true, too, that the film is faithful in small things. It reflects the drab grey world of Airstrip One much as Orwell envisaged it—though I felt that the pressure of budgetary economies rather than any particular inspiration in the art department was responsible for this. The art director also deserves a black mark for passing police uniforms which look like cheap fancy-dress (yet which remind one of the much more ominous outriders of death in Cocteau's *Orphée*), and for an Inner Party uniform which makes Michael Redgrave look like a regional commander of the Salvation Army. I could say, too, that Edmond O'Brien is too full in face and figure to fit comfortably into the lean hide of Winston Smith, the Outer Party-member whose dangerous thoughts are the prime movers in the drama. But that would, I think, go beyond reasonable criticism. O'Brien satisfied me at almost all points of his performance, and that was a shade more than Michael Redgrave achieved. He, perhaps, because he is not allowed much scope, does not quite realise Orwell's horrifying vision of the torturer-redeemer. (Hawkins came closer to it in *The Prisoner*.) In the white corridors of the Ministry of Love, on the threshold of Room 101, it is the American's face that purges one with pity and with terror. For, as we remember, the smell of 1984 is still in the air—men still babble their admissions of guilt in public forums, still thank their persecutors for saving them from greater error. The merit of 1984

(director, Michael Anderson) is that it reminds us of what these displays mean, and for that alone it should be seen even if it balks at the last hurdle. And when you have seen the film, read the book again. I hope it scares you stiff.

OH MEN! OH WOMEN!

(20th Century-Fox)

G Cert.

I WILL confess that there were times in the course of this movie when I could hardly make out what the producer-director (Nunnally Johnson) was driving at, or what route he was taking. The general impression which remains with me is of a band of highly-skilled comedy players clowning their way through almost 9000 feet of film without noticeable benefit of direction. Much of the fun is highly specialised and sophisticated, and when I laughed I laughed loudly, but there were too many fallow patches and awkward pauses and altogether too much theatrical grouping. And the mixture of satire, farce and slapstick just would not jell. Still, David Niven, Dan Dailey and Ginger Rogers have talent enough, and it was worth going along simply to meet Tony Randall in the role of a psychiatrist's nightmare. I just wish there hadn't been so much pointless horsing about.

RENDEZVOUS IN MELBOURNE

(CSA Film Production)

G Cert.

THIS official record of the 1956 Olympics, made by a French group, is the third Olympic film I've seen, and the least exciting. Perhaps I expect too much, but I should have thought that a French team would have shown a little more psychological insight and avoided koala bears, kangaroos and commonplace folksiness—and the air of patronising the Melbourne provincials. If you are interested in track and field events, this is a fair record. Delaney's run is exciting and the amazing Vladimir Kuts gets a fair trot, too, in his two record-breaking runs. Pole-vaulters, discus-tossers, high-

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EDMOND O'BRIEN as Winston Smith—good enough if not doubleplusgood

