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## FILM REVIEWS, BY JNO.

# What's Your Allergy?

## LADY AND THE TRAMP

(Disney-Buena Vista) G Cert.

SOME unfortunates can't bear to be in the same room with a cat (Mr Disney, incidentally, may be one of them); for others it's simply the hair of a dog that bites them. Wherever they come from, our allergies are fearfully and wonderfully contrived, and I suppose mine are no odder than my neighbours', though in one or two instances they seem to intensify rather than weaken with the years.

As I edge closer to the sere and yellow, for example, I react with increasing discomfort to Hollywood's overdoses of sentimentality, and there were too many moments in *Lady and the Tramp* where I came close to uttering the kind of despairing raspberry a fly emits when finally entangled in the flypaper. Not even the well-sustained satire of the middle reaches of the film (and though it may have been devised simply as whimsical parody it rings sharply enough in the adult ear) can altogether purge away the cloying stickiness of some of the lyrics or the marshmallow mushiness of those two shadowy figures Jim Dear and Darling.

If he goes anywhere at all, Disney goes from bad to worse in his treatment of the human figure, but happily humans (J.D. & D., etc.), occupy only the peripheral area of this production. It's a dogs' world we are introduced to, and I would do Walt and his band of animators (eight directing animators, four character animators, two effects dittos) considerably less than justice were I to suggest that the animal creations of *Lady and the Tramp* are other than brilliant. Indeed, except for the creaking and ill-articulated human figures (how much the Buena Vista boys could learn from U.P.A. if only they would!), the general draughtsmanship and the flow of movement are superlatively good. And the dogs themselves are invested with quite memorable personalities. Lady, it's true, is at times a bit over-sweet (you may not like spaniels, either), but the Tramp—an engaging mongrel with whom she contracts an irregular but subsequently legitimised liaison—is a delightful and enduring creation. So is the Scots terrier, the aged bloodhound (with his old Southern courtesy), the emigré Borzoi, and the faded Pekingese who sings torchily in a gin-soaked soprano at a seance in the dog-pound. They're all in their way entrancing and to some extent the mark of Aesop is on most of them. Listen carefully, too, to the lines they're given and see if you can find any that haven't been used in other and more pretentious Hollywood scripts. There's bite as well as bark in this dog-opera.

I should also mention that there are two quite ferocious cats, and two brief but rather horrible fights. These may, temporarily, have the smaller fry clutching at mother's hand—but only temporarily. This, in fact, is a family picture which most families will enjoy.

## THE GOLD RUSH

(Chaplin-United Artists) G Cert.

TO class a Chaplin film as anything less than alpha-plus is a judgment so unorthodox—even heretical—as to require either immediate amplification or recantation. And I shan't recant. I can, however, perhaps save myself from investigation by pointing out that the causes of my dissatisfaction lie not in

## BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "Lady and the Tramp."

FAIR TO FINE: "The Gold Rush."

OVERCAST: "Isn't Life Wonderful!"

the film itself, but in the manner of its current re-presentation.

I found it constantly disturbing to observe the Procrustean mutilation of the original print in accommodating it to the wide screen. *The Gold Rush* (naturally) was shot in the old standard frame, and enlargement to the width of the new screen has meant that a frequently critical segment of the vertical area has been cropped short—and when you recall that not a little of Chaplin's comedy business occurs near the bottom of the frame you will understand that there were times when the possibility of irreparable damage came too close for one's peace of mind. Two classic passages—the episode in which Charlie and Big Jim, starving in a prospector's hut in the Klondyke, dine on one of Charlie's boots; and that other gem of comic invention, the ballet of the bread-rolls—escaped disaster by what looked like a hair's breadth. And I suspect that some hand or foot work here or there may have been lost altogether.

And I can't in honesty approve of the commentary which Charles Chaplin added to this edition of the work. Charlie hardly needed sub-titles. To offer more than that seems as sensible as reintroducing the three-line joke, while in the film's sentimental passages the mood is too fragile to support the spoken word.

But with these objections recorded, it was good to have Charlie back again, good to hear youngsters who had perhaps not seen him before laugh as heartily as the old hands. I have often enough grumbled at the quality of term-holiday screenings, but there are times when gold pans out after all.

## ISN'T LIFE WONDERFUL!

(Associated British-Warners) G Cert.

PICTORIALLY this film is a pleasant enough evocation of Edwardian England, dramatically it has scarcely more than the camera to keep it moving. A small boy is employed by the director (Harold French) to address the audience from time to time and tell them what happens next and, so help me, I'd have had the greatest difficulty following the story (if such it could be called) without his aid. The film, indeed, seemed little more than a stage for solo comic turns by Cecil Parker and Donald Wolfitt, but you could have as much fun looking through grandmother's photo album.



CHARLIE

No captions needed

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