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Film Reviews, by F.A.J.

JOHNNY ON THE RUN

A HATFUL OF RAIN

(20th Century-Fox) R: 16 and over

THE day Johnny Pope's father turned up at his son's New York apartment there was nothing in the welcome of Johnny's wife, Celia, to suggest that her husband was a drug addict. Why should there be, when Celia herself didn't know? Instead, she put Johnny's strangeness down to another woman. That was the sort of fog through which they saw each other in quarrels that reached their raw nerve ends—and that almost reach ours. So *A Hatful of Rain* is not only about drug addiction: it illuminates also the relations between all its principal characters—between Johnny and his wife, between Johnny and his brother, Polo, who lives in the same apartment, between Polo and Celia, and between the boys and their inadequate but demanding father. Nor is it without significance that Johnny's breakdown is touched off by war service in Korea, and that Polo, in a terrific scene which will be funny only to the unimaginative (quite a number in the audience I saw it with), seeks escape in drink.

Because the Papes are ordinary decent people, *A Hatful of Rain* never seems so very remote from our experience ("There but for the grace of God . . ."), and for that reason it should interest many different kinds of film-goers. Played out in the streets and apartments of the big city—which is strikingly photographed and seldom in my experience more dreadful as a place to live in—it brings together a cast which never looks less than distinguished. Eva Marie Saint (of *On the Waterfront*) is Celia, Don Murray (of *Bus Stop*) is Johnny, Lloyd Nolan is the father, Anthony Franciosa is Polo, and Henry Silva, Gerald O'Loughlin and William Hickey are a drug pusher and his hangers-on—a terrible trio. Michael Vincente Gazzo, author of the original play, wrote the script with Alfred Hayes; and the director is Fred Zinnemann, who has not, I think, made a bad picture and has made many good ones. Of these *A Hatful of Rain* is one of the best.

WOMAN OF THE RIVER

(Columbia-Pont-de Laurentiis) A Cert.

WITH considerable good looks and a primitive vitality and passion that (as I've said before) has something of Magnani in it, Sophia Loren is about the most torrid young actress in films today. Dancing a mambo and taking a pillion ride in *Woman of the River*, she almost sets the screen on fire, and I began to suspect that Mario Soldati, who made the film, was taking us for a ride as well. Personally I could always take a pretty big dish of undiluted Loren anyway, but there's much more than her sultry charms to this film. For one thing, there's the Po River and its people, which since *Paisa* has always had a special attraction for me. The second half of the film is set among the cane cutters of its great delta, captured in some fine Eastman colour, and that would be worth seeing even if Miss Loren were not there, carrying her story of the village orphan Nives a significant stage further.

Woman of the River is mainly a love story, for Nives has, after a show of resistance, taken as lover an unpleasant philanderer (Rik Battaglia)—he's also a smuggler—who deserts her while she is bearing his child. This much, and a bit more, happens against a background of

BAROMETER

FINE: "A Hatful of Rain."
FAIR TO FINE: "Woman of the River."
FAIR: "Island in the Sun."

the riverside village where Nives lives, the eel-curing factory where she goes each day by bicycle and ferry, the local carnival (where she does that mambo), and the nocturnal comings and goings of the cigarette smugglers. More disturbing, however, than any of this is a quite unnerving search for a lost child in the second part of the film. Based on a story in which Alberto Moravia had a hand, *Woman of the River* is all the better, one must add, for a characteristic Italian concern with the lives of ordinary people.

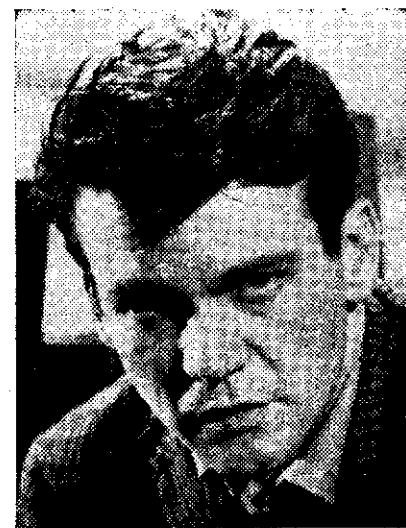
ISLAND IN THE SUN

(20th Century-Fox)

A Cert.

HARRY BELAFONTE, one of the numerous big stars of *Island in the Sun*, has called it "a terrible picture based on a terrible best-selling book," but since he also thought *Carmen Jones* a bit of a stinker ("bootleg Bizet" was the term, I think) perhaps he shouldn't be taken too seriously. *Island in the Sun* is nevertheless disappointing—a quite impressive collection of incidental good things which doesn't make a satisfactory whole. Set in the Caribbean, the film has caused a stir in the United States as the first to show a love affair between a Negro and a white woman. The courage of those concerned is no doubt praiseworthy, but in the event it doesn't take them all that far.

Concerned with a number of more or less complex relations between various people, the story's final effect is bitsy. Still, I would not have liked to miss James Mason, at his surly, neurotic best suspecting his wife of having an affair; and on the coloured side I'll remember Mr Belafonte joining in a work song, and Dorothy Dandridge catching fire as she dances with a man—a European—who has fallen in love with her. Other people of talent in the piece include Joan Fontaine. There is a considerable number of well-written scenes (the script from Alec Waugh's novel is by Alfred Hayes), F. A. Young has handled the camera imaginatively, and Robert Rossen's consistently capable direction preserves for much of the way an atmosphere of tropical heat and tension.



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