

A BIG CHUNK OF MOVIE

GIANT

(Warner Bros.)

G Cert.

WITH enough good material to make a very worthwhile film of reasonable length, *Giant* runs on for nearly three and a half hours, sprawling and in places overblown. Though impressive at times, the fact is it hasn't in the end the feeling of an epic. The story follows a Texas cattle king, Bick Benedict, from his marriage to a Maryland bride till they have several grandchildren. Meanwhile one of their hired hands, Jett Rink, bequeathed a small piece of the ranch, has become an oil millionaire.

The impact of Texas on the young bride (its arid, depressing vastness after the green fields of Maryland, the uncouth manners and customs of her new neighbours) and Jett's discovery of oil make the most impressive sequences of *Giant*—and they are impressive. But there are others as well: Jett in silhouette stepping out his inheritance, the body of a young Mexican killed in the war arriving at the bleak railway station, Bick forcing his young son to ride a horse. On the other hand, the director, George Stevens, has tried to wring too much out of such scenes as the wedding of Leslie's sister and the many domestic dialogues between Bick and his wife. Leslie's civilising influence on the rough Texan has worthwhile significance, but simply as man and wife they are not all that absorbing.

I must confess also that Bick (Rock Hudson, beginning to look like an actor) remained for me a rather unpleasant character, though I don't think that was the idea, while for a film whose point of view is in many respects commendably civilised (on the colour question, especially) *Giant* is, I feel, in the second half notably unsympathetic towards Jett Rink, the self-made man. As Jett, James Dean (in his last role before his untimely death) does not add to his range; yet having seen him also in *Rebel Without a Cause* and *East of Eden* I feel sure he was an actor of real and considerable talent. Elizabeth Taylor as Leslie has seldom if ever played better, and Mercedes McCambridge as Bick's sister is among the best of a good supporting cast. The fine camera-work is by William C. Mellor.

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

(Paramount-Ponti-de Laurentiis) A Cert.

THE best short stories, says H. E. Bates, give one a feeling of being slightly lifted off the earth, which is the effect *L'Oro di Napoli* had on me, even in this dubbed English version. These are stories of the Neapolitans, the most warm-hearted of the Italians we are told. A household deals with a guest who has stayed with them, unwanted, for 10 years; an aristocratic gambler down on his luck plays with a small boy; a prostitute marries a gentleman with a conscience of sorts; and the gay young wife of a pizza seller loses—and recovers—a valuable emerald ring.

Three of these pieces are fairly slight, amusing rather than solemn, which should make them enjoyably entertaining even to those who don't in the ordinary way go to Continental films.

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 8, 1957.

BAROMETER

FINE: "Every Day's a Holiday."
FAIR TO FINE: "Giant."
FAIR TO FINE: "Attack!"

By any moviegoer's standards the list of players also is interesting. Familiar faces include Silvana Mangano as the prostitute and Sophia Loren as the young wife—played with a pert, infectious gaiety which shows an interesting new facet of her talent; and there are fine performances by Vittorio de Sica as the gambler and Erno Crisa (the gamekeeper of *Lady Chatterley*) as the bridegroom in the third story.

Although this film was not meant to be neo-realistic—Cesare Zavattini, who adapted the Giuseppe Marotta stories on which it is based, has said so himself—it is full of the life and movement of the streets of Naples. Otello Martelli's camera is beautifully mobile; de Sica has directed the film with a wonderful eye for detail—not least in the scenes he plays himself; and the film's enchanting liveliness is underlined by Alessandro Cicognini's expressive score.

ATTACK!

(United Artists-Associates and Aldrich) A Cert.

MOST war films have heroism as a central theme, and however realistic the battle sequences heroism rather than horror is what we are meant to remember. *Attack!* is different—a film brave enough to suggest that even in wartime ambitious men may abuse their power. Set in Europe in 1944, this is the story of an American unit whose captain, a coward, is allowed to throw away the lives of his men because it suits the post-war political ambitions of his colonel to leave him in command. Mrs Luce, I seem to remember, walked out when *Attack!* was shown at Venice, though it is not so much about bad Americans as about human weakness and the horror of war. The main battle sequences are concerned with two attacks by a squad led by Lieutenant Costa (Jack Palance), to which the captain (Eddie Albert) hasn't the courage to give promised support. Both are well done, and indeed direction (Robert Aldrich) and photography (Joseph Biroc) are always impressive.

Matching the battle sequences are scenes in which the colonel and the captain reveal their characters. The colonel, played by Lee Marvin with a cool and wholly convincing insensitivity, is of course the real villain, and the film could have spared a little compassion for the captain—especially since it makes some attempt to explain his character. Jack Palance gives a disturbing performance as a man at the end of his tether, and William Smithers gives solid support. In spite of some relatively minor faults, then, including a tendency to over-emphasis in places, *Attack!* is an event: a war film which doesn't sell out.



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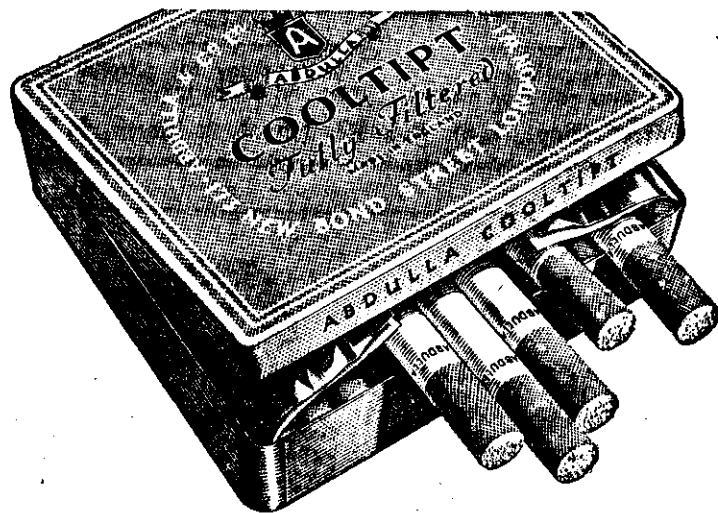
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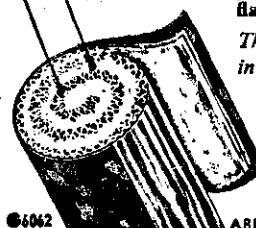


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