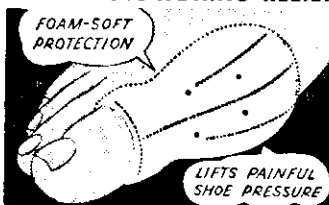


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FILM REVIEWS, BY JNO.

Long Day's Journey Into Night

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

(20th Century-Fox-CinemaScope)

G Cert.

It is not a comfortable thing to discover in oneself intimations of insensitivity and I feel at the moment a little ashamed to admit that *The Diary of Anne Frank* moved me less deeply than I thought it should. Other and lesser tragedies of innocence have affected me profoundly enough; a failure of response to this one, so heroically rooted in reality, was disquieting.

But there were, I think, contributory causes. The essence of Anne's story is surely the inextinguishable life in it, the resilience of her spirit, the simple devices by which the family and those with them sought to achieve some pattern of normality in an existence insanely abnormal, and not least, the long thoughts of youth and the first diffident steps towards maturity. Anne's story, like the sweet herbs

which sprang from the rubble of the Blitz, surprises first by the harsh incongruity of its environment, but the fragrance persists—a quality independent of contrast, though enhanced by it.

In the film (produced and directed by George Stevens) the environment is always with us. Here, I felt, was not so much the story of Anne as that of Otto Frank and his wife, of the Van Daans, and the sad little Mr Dussel who was "used to being alone." The voice of the narrator is the voice of Anne, but what we have is an adult's view, looking inward at the group immured in the obliette above the spice warehouse in Amsterdam as the days follow one another in an apparently unending monotony of apprehension. The film is long—it lasts nearly three hours—and the slow passage of time is the most over-powering ingredient in it. Even the seagulls, soaring overhead from the port, seem to flap with tired wings beyond the little attic window where Anne and the boy Peter first turn hesitantly to one another. That moment, delicately and sensitively recorded, islanded by silence from the recollection of things past and the fear of things to come, is the film's most touching passage and the point at which we come closest to Anne herself.

Elsewhere it records with an almost documentary fidelity the silent discipline of the long days (no sound or movement of any kind could be risked while the warehouse workers were in the premises below), the occasional alarms and the agonising suspense of waiting for discovery, the determined cheerfulness which eked out the occasional modest celebration, and the inevitable tensions which developed among the weaker members of the group. But it is the slow march of time and the ingrowing anxiety of the adults that colours the story most sombrely, and communicates unease of a sort not always in tune with the apprehensions which afflict the characters.

The casting is on the whole satisfactory. Joseph Schildkraut, who played the part of Otto Frank on the stage, is unobtrusively effective, and Gusti Huber is competent as his wife. The

BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Diary of Anne Frank."
FAIR: "Ice Cold in Alex."
OVERCAST: "Holiday for Lovers."

comedian Ed Wynn was surprisingly good as Mr Dussel and his account of what has been happening to Jews "outside" is one of the screen story's authentic moments of horror.

I wish I could grade Millie Perkins's achievement more precisely. I'd say without hesitation that she has not Susan Strasberg's acting capacity, but she has undoubted charm and she has been directed with sense and sensitivity. With the help of cameraman and director she occasionally achieves illumination, as in the idyllic passage at the attic window, but she does not make the part irrevocably her own.



MILLIE PERKINS

ICE COLD IN ALEX

(Warner Bros-Associated British)

Y Cert.

ICE COLD IN ALEX is the beatific vision of lager in dew-dimmed glasses which Captain Anson, R.A.M.C. (John Mills) vows to realise as, with three companions, he coaxes a decrepit ambulance back from Axis-encircled Tobruk via the Qattara depression. It's a long haul, and it has its ups and downs, but these are strictly physical. *Ice Cold in Alex* achieves no emotional heights and plumbs no profundities, and if there is an agreeable residue of desert salt in the dialogue there are passages that, for banality, would scarcely bear repeating aloud. But on its chosen level—action, excitement and deftly manipulated suspense—it works out pretty creditably for all concerned. I'd have been prepared to dispense with Sylvia Syms whose presence (as a nursing sister) seemed an irrelevant and unnecessary complication, but Mills, Harry Andrews and Anthony Quayle were a workmanlike and satisfying trio—the last, indeed, was rather better than competent in a carefully realised portrait of an ersatz South African. And the photography, much of it shot on the spot (special thanks to the United Kingdom of Libya), was invariably telling and dramatic in close-up, long shot and movement. J. Lee-Thompson directed.

HOLIDAY FOR LOVERS

(20th Century-Fox-CinemaScope)

G Cert.

THIS gallimaufry introduces Clifton Webb as a consulting psychologist whose two daughters lead him a dance through the flossier Brazilian tourist resorts. Perhaps some real psychologist some day will get around to analysing the decline of Mr Webb's screen persona from the omni-competent Mr Belvedere (who stood no nonsense from anyone) to this current mish-mash of henpecked ineffectuality. Apart from the dents which it inflicts on Mr Webb's dignity, *Holiday* suffers from a fatuous script, and Mr Gary Crosby is another of its liabilities. But some of the photography is fine and architectural students may well think the glimpses of Sao Paulo's avant-garde skyscrapers and interior décor all too fleeting.

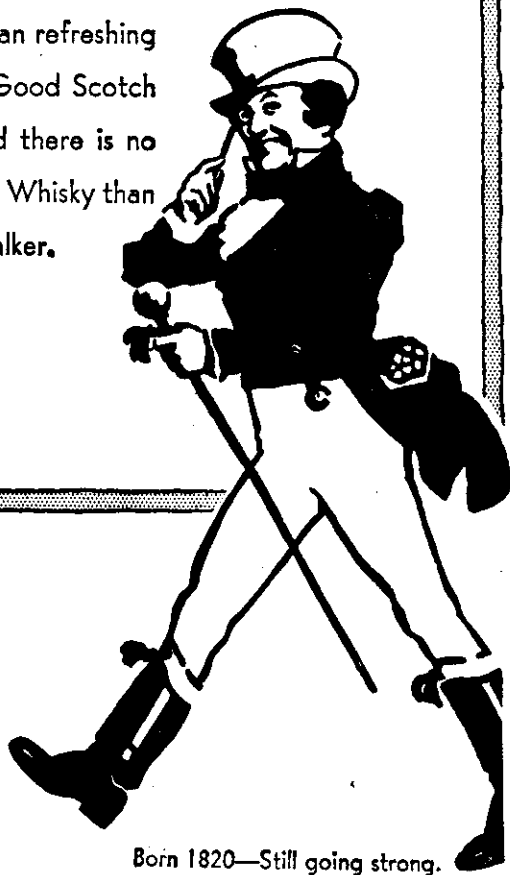
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