

OUT OF THIS WORLD

DESTINATION MOON

(George Pal Productions)

TWICE in the past week-end I have been exposed to concentrated charges of the fantastic, and I am still tut-tutting away like an overworked Geiger counter—but in neither case was the fantastic element responsible for the reaction. Generally speaking, I respond most comfortably to actuality, or to its screen simulacrum; I like to keep my feet as close to the ground as my flattened arches will allow, and I can best enjoy a story which does not retreat too far from the prosy levels of my own experience. But like most other people I'm not allergic to pure fantasy or whimsy once in a while—*Et ego in Purilia vixi*, so to speak. It's when the fantasy is adulterated with propaganda, or the whimsy tainted by bad taste, that my psyche comes out in a heat-rash.

Destination Moon (in Technicolor) is a far better attempt to forecast the form of man's first voyage into outer space than was *Rocketship X-M*, but I was highly depressed to discover that in the present critical world atmosphere Hollywood seems incapable of devising even such a fantastic story as this without relating it to the cold war.

In one of the earliest sequences of the film, starring a group of leading American industrialists (I knew they were men of distinction, they reminded me of the whisky advertisements), the proposition is put quite plainly. "If we want to stay in business," says one of them, "we have to build this ship—only U.S. industry must get to work now. There is no way to stop an attack from outer space. The Power using the Moon for the launching of missiles can control the earth. . . . If any other Power gets a satellite into the air before we do it's the end of these United States."

Several reels later the intrepid leader of the first space expedition sets foot on the surface of the moon and makes a formal proclamation over the intercom in his space-suit. "I take possession of this satellite," he says in a

BAROMETER

FAIR: "Destination Moon."
FAIR: "Harvey."

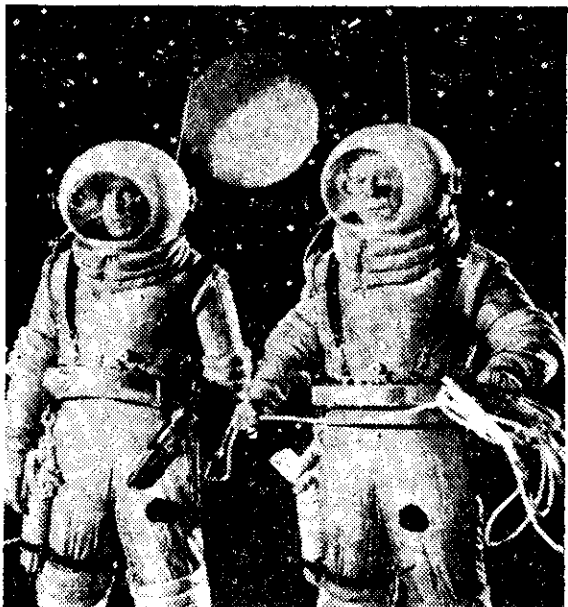
voice understandably overcharged with emotion, "in the name of the *honk-honk-squawk-horkle* for the benefit of all mankind." I didn't catch the name of the Power invoked at all, because at the critical moment there was a burst of static on the soundtrack. And a few moments later, when the proclamation was relayed to Washington by short-wave the same thing happened. Maybe it was those Russians jamming the broadcast; maybe it was just some anonymous film-editor or censor anxious to save Hollywood from the last extremity of nationalistic paranoia.

Apart from these chauvinistic passages, *Destination Moon* is an ingenious and entertaining effort, and it provides a wide field for that speculation and argument which cheers the long road home. The space-suits seemed a little frail to protect their occupants from explosion in an absolute vacuum, and how magnetic boots could work on what looked like a duralumin spaceship was beyond my scanty knowledge of physics (the magnet on my radio just ignores a potlid). But the film manages to work up quite a head of excitement at times—even if the causes will hardly bear close examination—and beyond the field of terrestrial attraction it has its lighter moments. I was just a little disappointed that the producers were so fatally committed to the two-worlds-or-none proposition, and that having got so far out of this world we had not, as it were, got away from it all.

HARVEY

(Universal-International)

THE success of *Harvey*, which by all accounts was a riot when it was produced first as a stage-play on Broadway, depends on the ability of a gentle and amiable eccentric, Elwood P. Dowd (here played by James Stewart), to convince the audience of the existence of his invisible familiar, Harvey, a 6ft. 3½ in. rabbit. If he does so, then he is sane and the attempts of his relatives to have him "put away" are acceptable comedy, since Elwood has the edge on them all the time. But if he doesn't convince you of Harvey's existence (and in spite of some camera tricks Stewart didn't convince me) then Elwood is just a harmless lunatic—and no one can laugh comfortably at lunacy, however convivial the lunatic may be. But though I found the first half of this film a little disturbing for that reason, the second half (where the final discomfiture of other characters is the source of the fun) was well worth waiting for. Among the discomfited, Josephine Hull and Cecil Kellaway are outstanding.



"Out of this world but not away from it all"

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 24, 1951.

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NEW ZEALANDERS at work

Casting in Iron Foundry



An original drawing by PETER MCINTYRE

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