

Ava and the Moody Mason

PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

(Romulus)

ALBERT LEWIN, who wrote, produced and directed *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, asks us to believe (or, as they say, to suspend disbelief) for a couple of hours in a story that twenty years ago the Flying Dutchman, on one of his sojourns among mortals, put in at a Spanish port, where he met the beautiful Pandora—a reincarnation, it turned out, of the wife he had murdered so many years before. This isn't, I suppose, an impossible sort of tale to put across, but neither is it an easy one, and it presented for me similar obstacles to those I faced in *David and Bathsheba*. Don't misunderstand me. The fact is, I seem to suspend disbelief in film versions of legendary tales or the lives of well-known historical characters just about as unwillingly as anyone I've met, and in all humility I ask readers to allow for this when I say that while *Pandora* didn't bore me, it seldom gripped me and sometimes made me squirm.

Filmed in Technicolor and including some beautiful photography by Jack Cardiff (of *The Magic Box*), *Pandora* begins at the end, then unfolds its story in flashback from just before the first meeting of Pandora (Ava Gardner) with Henryck (James Mason), who is, of course, the Flying Dutchman in mufti. As a destructive young woman who has her admirers prove their love by spectacular self-sacrifice, Miss Gardner seems more or less at home, but the other-worldly mood expected of her later is rather more than she can manage. Mr. Mason (still moody and frowning, as indeed you'd expect of a man condemned to live for ever), makes on the whole a better job of his part. Yet might not this sort of thing be more acceptable if the players' faces (and private lives) were less familiar?

Actually, I found the attempt on the world speed record by Pandora's fiancé (Nigel Patrick) the most exciting thing in the film, though the fine bull-fight sequences (Mario Cabré is a real-life matador) will probably hit you hardest if you haven't been conditioned by *The Brave Bulls*. Whether these incidents (like Miss Gardner's bewildering changes of frock) were really put in to carry forward the story in a film which ends up 11,000 feet long, I wouldn't like to say.

FLESH AND BLOOD

(London Films-Anatole de Grunwald)

GENIUS and the old Adam fight it out through three generations in *Flesh and Blood*, with a brilliant but wild young medical student, Charles Cameron (Richard Todd), his illegitimate daughter (Joan Greenwood) and her son (Richard Todd) as the evidence for the strength of heredity. Not knowing the James Bridie play which Mr. de Grunwald has adapted for the film, I was a little puzzled for a while by the pattern.

Flesh and Blood isn't a film of uniform quality, and it doesn't flow as smoothly as it might, but the best of it lifts it, in my view, into a class above the average. Here and there a scene or

BAROMETER

FAIR: "*Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*."

FAIR TO FINE: "*Flesh and Blood*."

MAINLY FAIR: "*The Man with a Cloak*."

STILL FINE: "*Stagecoach*."

a passage of dialogue suggests the stage, yet on the whole the film escapes from the theatre very well. The most exciting camera work, which dramatically captures the atmosphere of a city in which plague has broken out, is certainly far from the stage.

Each of the stories told is quite different, though each contains violence of one kind or another. (It isn't a film for children.) The main story, which has the popular medicine-against-disease theme, is told in the last "act." The Cameron genius, at last getting its head above the primeval swamp (and, perversely, losing much of its humanity in doing so), is joined by the emancipated, pacifist daughter (Glynis Johns) of a munitions king. This part of the film builds up well to the dramatic fight against the plague.

As the family doctor and guardian steering the Cameron clan as best he can through all its difficulties, André Morell gives an excellent performance. Richard Todd in his double role is the best I have seen him (I didn't see *The Hasty Heart*), and Glynis Johns is the same sweet (though far from spiritless) lass we all liked in *No Highway in the Sky*. Joan Greenwood (the second Cameron) and George Cole (her secret lover) also deserve a mention.

Anthony Kimmins (who made *Mine Own Executioner*) directed *Flesh and Blood*, with Otto Heller (*The Last Days of Dolwyn*, *The Queen of Spades*) as photographer.

THE MAN WITH A CLOAK

(M.G.M.)

BILLED as a fast-moving thriller, *The*

Man with a Cloak looks like becoming one, with the domestic staff plotting the liquidation of the old man. But, alas, for a thriller it turns out tediously slow. The old man (a sound piece of work by Louis Calhern) is an alcoholic and a very ill-tempered Frenchman living in New York a hundred years ago, and the story is about the attempt of a new arrival from Paris (none other than Leslie Caron) to succeed his rather unpleasant housekeeper (Barbara Stanwyck) as first favourite in his will. Miss Caron is helped by Joseph Cotten, as the man with a cloak—a mysterious character whose identity is not revealed till the final shot.

STAGECOACH

(Walter Wanger)

JOHN FORD'S *Stagecoach*, now about 13 years old, is among recent welcome revivals. Though I hadn't seen it before, I can't say that I went along in the best frame of mind to form an impartial opinion, for I knew, of course, of John Ford's fine record with Westerns since his first big effort, *The Iron Horse*. Though *Stagecoach* is even better than I expected, I'm inclined to agree that it takes a little too long to come to an end after the real climax in the wonderfully portrayed fight from the Apaches across the salt flats. *Stagecoach* warms the heart with its humanity; it crowds a whole little society into a swaying coach and has for its heroes and heroine three outcasts—an alcoholic doctor (Thomas Mitchell), a young outlaw (John Wayne) and a saloon girl (Claire Trevor).



NITROGEN

In 1898, Sir William Crookes warned the world that the human race might soon starve because intensive cultivation was draining the soil of essential plant foods. Yet today, agricultural land has become more productive than ever, for the chemist has learned the necessity for returning to the soil the nitrogen and other elements taken up by the plant in its growth. Nitrogen is a colourless, inert gas that forms four-fifths of the air we breathe. Hundreds of thousands of tons of it are available over every square mile of the earth's surface, but it must first be "trapped" and then combined with other elements before plants can absorb it in the form of fertilizers.

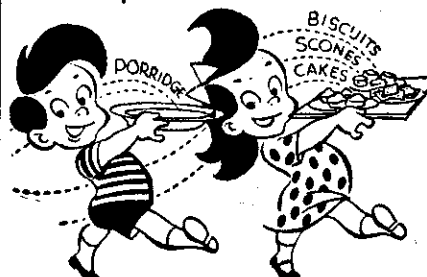
Every day, the great synthetic ammonia factories of I.C.I. convert hundreds of tons of nitrogen from the air into a range of fertilizers that have helped to make British farming the most efficient in the world. And not fertilizers only: I.C.I. also uses nitrogen to make explosives and plastics, resins, paints and leather-cloth. I.C.I.'s nylon and other synthetic textile fibres contain nitrogen. So, too, do many of the drugs which I.C.I. contributes to modern medicine.



IMPERIAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES (N.Z.) LTD.

Vitalise your diet with

Vi-MAX



"FINE or COARSE"

Both grades make porridge equally nutritious, equally delicious. Order Vi-MAX, Vi-BRAN and Vi-MEAL from your grocer.

Made by D. H. Brown and Son Ltd., Moorhouse Ave., Christchurch.