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THE FILMS, BY JNO.

BANG WENT 3D

MAN IN THE DARK
(Columbia)

LET me not lay perjury upon my soul: it was not a very loud bang. The preliminary shock-wave of publicity might have led one to expect from the first impact of three-dimensional film something in the way of an atomic explosion in the entertainment world. As it was, the detonation seemed scarcely audible above the drum-beating, and at the epicentre even the echoes were slightly overlaid by the whimper of cash-customers passing the box-office on their way out.

Man in the Dark, however, requires a place on the record because it is the first three-dimensional feature film to be shown here—even if it does not deserve much attention for its intrinsic merits as entertainment. It is noteworthy as a portent rather than as a performance. For some filmgoers—those who were in circulation in the middle 'thirties and can recall one or two stunt shorts which we watched through coloured spectacles—stereoscopic film will not be quite the novelty it is for a younger generation. They will not find the use which is made of these special effects very novel either, if they can remember what they saw in 1935. *Man in the Dark* depends almost entirely upon shock effects—and while shock effects may be acceptable enough in a short film they have a numbing effect when the treatment is unduly prolonged. The producer of *Man in the Dark* prodded me in the eye with surgical forceps, dropped a flowerpot on my head, shot at me, slammed doors in my face, punched me on the nose, ran me down with a roller-coaster—in fact, generally galumphed around and trod heavily on my corns. And I'm getting too old for that. If he had only squeezed in a few three-dimensional shots of Jane Russell (and goodness only knows why that sort of angle was forgotten) I might not have felt so old and decrepit, so ripe for a disability pension, by the time the lights went up for the last time.

The story of *Man in the Dark* exists only as a setting for the optical skull-

BAROMETER

OVERCAST: "Man in the Dark."
MAINLY FAIR: "Plymouth Adventure."
MAINLY FAIR: "The Marriage of Figaro."

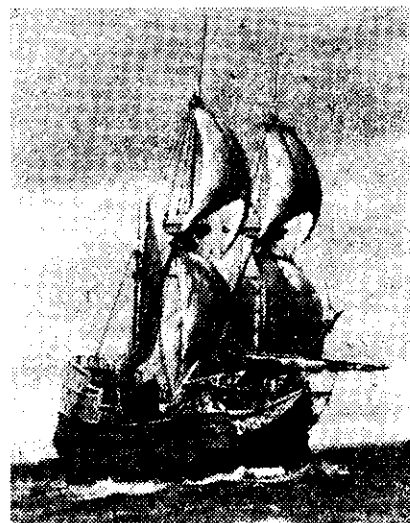
duggery I have mentioned—indeed, the characters are so flat they almost cancel out the 3-D effect—and I wouldn't call it, by any stretch of the imagination, a moral tale. Judgment on this form of 3-D must, in fact, be reserved until something worth judging comes along. There is no doubt that the true stereoscopic film has immense dramatic possibilities to counterpoise the awkwardness of spectacles and eyestrain. These possibilities will in time be explored with sense and sensibility—and with a little more care than has been shown here.

PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE (M.G.M.)

THIS is the story of what really happened to the Pilgrim Fathers (and Mothers) on the long voyage from Southampton (Eng.) to Provincetown (New Eng.) back in 1620. And after the three-way stretch of *Man in the Dark* it was quite a relief to set sail in the old Mayflower (Master, Spencer Tracy). True, we were back on two dimensions again, but it was 2D-coloured, and there was such a diverse assortment of, as you might say, colourful characters that any absence of depth seemed scarcely worth noticing. The story proves that, just as a clot of blood on the brain of an emperor could at one time change the face of Europe, so the cut of a kirtle and the colour of a lipstick helped decide the fate of the first New England colony. The kirtle and the colour are worn by Mrs. Bradford (Gene Tierney), who draws the attentions of the bully skipper and eventually throws herself overboard in an agony of divided loyalty. By that time, however, her constancy has shamed the bold captain. Before the Mayflower drops anchor he has suffered a sea-change and instead of abandoning the Pilgrims for a pack of canting hypocrites (as he had intended) he stands by in the roadstead through the little colony's first terrifying winter. As you might guess, it's pretty free-and-easy history, and the characterisations are generally novelettish. But I enjoyed Noel Drayton's portrayal of Myles Standish (and his musketry instruction even more), and the film has the most ambitious and technically successful sea-storm I remember seeing. The 'tween-deck storm shots and the manipulation of tank models—a *tour de force* by the backroom boys—are in themselves well worth seeing.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO (International Films)

THERE has been more encouraging evidence recently that exhibitors are prepared to take at least calculated risks at the box-office and revive old films of quality or introduce new ones. Each of the four main centres has seen one or more film classics in the last week or two (*Louisiana Story* and Renoir's *The River* were double-billed in Wellington), and others are promised. *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart plus the Berlin State Orchestra, Erna Berger, Tiana Lemnitz and others) is for those who like to see as well as hear comic opera. Synchronisation of sound and image is not perfect, and purists may criticise some of the recording, but enthusiasts will enjoy the fun. (In German, with brief subtitles).



MINIATURE MAYFLOWER
A tour de force from the back room