

Hollywood Fairy Tale

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

(Samuel Goldwyn-RKO Radio)

THERE is a great deal of enjoyable music, ballet, and comedy in this fairy tale biography of the celebrated Danish teller of fairy stories, but the most satisfying parts are those in which Danny Kaye is able to display his astonishing gifts as an entertainer while recounting to groups of children such stories as "The Ugly Duckling," "Thumbelina," and "The Emperor's New Clothes." Generally, in the course of telling these tales he breaks into song, and those who are familiar with the tunes from Broadway musicals like *Guys and Dolls* will recognise the sophisticated style of Frank Loesser. This is the curious fact about *Hans Christian Andersen*: it manages to combine the slick, adult manner of a Broadway show with the direct and gentle style of a children's pantomime, and get away with it. The reason for this success is the great personal triumph of Danny Kaye in the title role.

The film opens with Hans, the happy, rather simple-minded cobbler of Odense, arousing the anger of the local schoolmaster by beguiling the children away to hear his stories when they should be in school. The burgomasters reluctantly decide that Hans must leave town, so he sets off for Copenhagen with Peter, the orphan boy who helps him in his shoemaker's shop. In the great city Hans is arrested and put in gaol for insulting the king's name by singing in front of a royal statue. But Peter, happening to go past the door of the Royal Danish Ballet, learns that the prima ballerina needs a cobbler to mend her shoes, and persuades the Ballet's impresario to obtain Hans's release. He mends the shoes, falls in love with the ballerina (Jeanmaire), and writes a

BAROMETER
FAIR TO FINE: "Hans Christian Andersen."
OVERCAST: "Fort Ti."

ballet for her called *The Little Mermaid*.

The Ballet leaves town, and by the time it returns Hans has become famous as a writer of fairy stories, through telling the tale of the Ugly Duckling to the son of the local newspaper editor. When the Ballet comes back it puts on a brilliant performance of *The Little Mermaid*, which the author can only visualise in his imagination because he is accidentally locked in the property room at the beginning of the performance. The next morning he calls on Jeanmaire and her bad-tempered dancing-master husband (Farley Granger), only to discover that his love for her is not returned and that what he had imagined to be an unhappy marriage is in reality a perfectly contented one. The film ends with Hans returning to Odense to tell more tales to the local children and set up cobbling again in his old shop.

The whole film, as scripted by Moss Hart and directed by Charles Vidor, is just as much a fairy tale as any of the familiar stories which are scattered through it, and this fact is pointed out at the beginning. The storybook atmosphere is maintained with considerable charm, assisted by the use of some very fine colour photography by Harry Stradling. (In this, as in one or two other things, the film resembles a Russian picture of a few years ago called *The Stone Flower*). Altogether, there are four rather decorative ballets in the film, with choreography by Roland Petit, and eight songs by Loesser. Danny Kaye's performance is one of the most talented, carefully timed, and restrained that he has ever given. He is admirably suited to the part, even to the extent of bearing quite a physical resemblance to the great Dane about whose life the film has been somewhat airily constructed.

FORT TI

(Columbia)

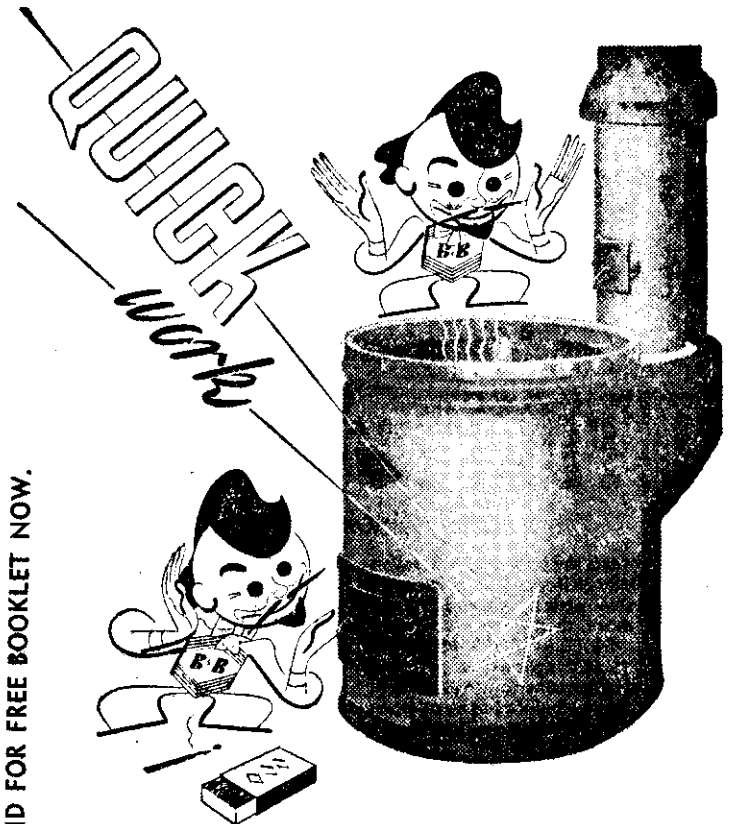
IN this Natural Vision 3D film produced by Sam Katzman and directed by William Castle we are given a three-dimensional view of the French-Indian wars between the British colonists of North America led by General Amhurst, and the French under Montcalm. George Montgomery, as an officer of Roger's Rangers, a gang of backwoods-men from New York State, manages to deceive the French long enough for Amhurst and his regulars to take Fort Ticonderoga in the year 1759. This is routine cowboys and Indians stuff, except that most of the arrows, cannon, muskets, and fiery torches are fired at the audience instead of the enemy.



DANNY KAYE

"His performance is one of the most talented he has ever given"

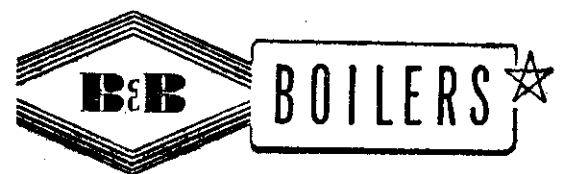
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