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VENTURE
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Carnival and Puppets

LILI

(M.G.M.)

THE marquees and caravans of a travelling French carnival troupe provide the setting for this film about an orphan girl, an angry puppeteer, and a handsome magician. The title role is played by Leslie Caron, the dancing star of *An American in Paris*, with unusual talent and charm, and she is assisted by Mel Ferrer as the puppeteer, Jean Pierre Aumont as the magician, and Zsa Zsa Gabor as the magician's assistant. The carnival atmosphere is admirably suggested by some fine Technicolor camerawork and excellent use of a soundtrack based on the tune "Hi Lili Hi-lo."

Charles Walters, the director of *Lili* and choreographer of the film's two ballets, has handled his material with a sure feeling for the story's more delicate shades of sentiment and fantasy. He has invested the whole show with a spontaneity and zest reminiscent of Stanley Dopen's *On the Town* or Vincente Minnelli's early musical comedy, *The Pirate*. The dream-like ballet sequences, which develop out of the action in much the same stylised manner as they did in *An American in Paris*, have, as they did in that film, an almost Freudian authenticity. The occasion on which Lili sings her theme-song merges unobtrusively into the general background of the setting.

The musical side of *Lili* is, however, of minor importance. The film opens on a view of a French country town in the early morning, where Lili, having discovered for the first time that she is quite alone and friendless in the world, meets and falls in love with the young magician. She follows him back to the carnival, where he gets her a job as a waitress. But she is so gauche and unworldly that the carnival boss fires her after a brief trial. She is about to wander out into the streets again when the puppeteer, who has fallen in love with

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "Lili."
FAIR: "The Road to Bali."

her, persuades her through the medium of his puppets, to stay. Her naive conversation with the talkative puppets, which she believes to be real, attracts the attention of an amused crowd, and the puppeteer decides to take her on as a permanent part of his act. The remainder of the story is concerned with how she shakes off her infatuation for the magician, who isn't really interested in her, and finds her true love with the scowling, tender-hearted puppeteer.

Lili is a triumph for Leslie Caron, whose expressive features have been photographed in a way to make the most of her appearance of child-like innocence. The little ballerina dances with her usual grace, and altogether gives to the film a quality of refreshing vitality.

THE ROAD TO BALI

(Paramount)

IN this, the sixth of the *Road* series in which Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour established themselves as one of Hollywood's most popular comedy teams, the story moves from a vaudeville theatre in Melbourne, across country to Darwin, and from there to a mysterious but romantic isle named Vatu, not so far from Bali. Hope and Crosby, as the vaudeville team, are pursued across the Australian continent by indignant ranchers armed with stock-whips and boomerangs. In Darwin, disguised behind large beards and sun-downer hats, they take on a job as deep sea divers for Vatu's sinister Malayan prince (played by Murvyn Vye).

On the island they both fall in love with a beautiful princess (Dorothy Lamour), the daughter of a Balinese mother and a Scotch father. In the intervals of shaking off the dancing girls and wisecracking their way around the princess's palace, they do a song and dance number with kilts and bagpipes, disappear into the heavens in a version of the Indian rope trick, and dive for a box of jewels hidden in the wreck on the reef. Having secured the jewels and escaped from the coils of a giant squid in the process, they set off across the Java Sea for Bali.

Among their other encounters and adventures on the way, are a bout with a love-sick gorilla, a battle with head-hunters, an escape from an erupting volcano, a shipwreck, and visions at various times in the jungle of Humphrey Bogart (towing the African Queen), Bob Crosby, Errol Flynn (in voice only), Jane Russell (whom Bob conjures out of a cobra basket with a magic flute), and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.

The Road to Bali shows a somewhat paunchy pair of comedians and a plumper Dorothy Lamour. Its jokes and routines are also to some extent approaching middle-age. But the formula is still a pretty good one, and the old hocus-pocus which these three experienced entertainers are able to generate when they get together is still solid for one or two laughs.



LESLIE CARON

A reminiscent spontaneity and zest