



# 10 YEARS IN ENTERTAINMENT



## British Films Make Progress



*Nils Asther and Adrienne Ames in a scene from B.I.P.'s £130,000 production, .. "Abdul the Damned."*

[The following article was written for the "Radio Record" by R. L. Grant, general manager for New Zealand for Associated British Picture Corporation.]

ONE could better describe the rise of the British film industry as the "fall and rise," because prior to 1914, Britain was the world's leading film-producing country, but the Great War upset, among many other flourishing industries, that of film production. The year 1918 found British film

production sadly at sea, but, in characteristic fashion, she resolutely set about to bring back to its rightful place the fame she enjoyed prior to the war, not, however, that she was very successful in this attempt until the advent of the talking picture, when, overnight almost, the Mother Country, the country who invented cinematography, became a real force, and has, yearly, since then, further increased her one-time grip on the world markets, which to-day, by sheer merit alone, she rules, if not supremely, then co-jointly with her American cousins.

However, our concern is not with the industry, but with those famous pioneers who built this now mighty industry, about which we so proudly write. First and foremost is the gigantic parent company, Associated British Picture Corporation, controlling vast theatre interests, Associated British Cinemas, British International Pictures at Elstree, B.I.P. (Export) Ltd., and numerous other smaller but no less important concerns. The corporation is under the leadership of Mr. John Maxwell, who, in 1925, was the owner of a small theatre circuit in Glasgow. To-day, in 1935, a span of merely 10 years, the assets of this concern, still under the leadership of John Maxwell, are £7,000,000 sterling.

From almost obscurity in Glasgow, John Maxwell, a youthful-middle-aged man, born a Scotsman, and a solicitor by profession, set going the machinery that ultimately has given to the world many of its greatest pictures. Having built and acquired the silent studios at Elstree, and with the shadow of the talkie coming up over the horizon, he was able, when that moment arrived, to act, and act quickly he did, for almost overnight the silent studios at Elstree were converted to sound. Since that day many momentous steps have been taken:

(1) The first all-British, full-length talking picture, "Blackmail," was produced by British International Pictures at Elstree (one of the associate companies of Associated British Picture Corporation); (2) the first multilingual film was produced by the same company, "Atlantic";



(3) the first British "Film Weekly" contest, taken by public ballot for the best all-British film, was won by B.I.P., with "Blackmail"; (4) the first British talkie to introduce a colour sequence was from B.I.P., and the title was "Elstree Calling"; (5) the first all-British company to open up offices and distribution in New York was likewise B.I.P., who actually went into the very country who then claimed, and perhaps rightly at that time, world film supremacy; (6) the first British company to send ambassadors to foreign lands outside Great Britain was B.I.P., who, in 1930, sent the pick of her head office staff to Canada, South Africa, Berlin, Spain, South America, Australia, Singapore, Far East, India, Central Europe and New Zealand; (7) the first, again, was B.I.P. to import into Elstree stars from abroad, who could better fill certain types of parts and stories, and, as well, further stimulate the sale of British films in America and on the Continent.

To convince you of the sustained progress, allow us to recount that not only did B.I.P. win the first all-British ballot for the best film of the year in 1928, but three times since then, and again this year, with "Blossom Time," was this coveted honour won. This is purely a pioneer record of remarkable progress, which has been as financial to the company as it has been entertaining to the millions who, during the past 10 years, have seen British films in all parts of the world and in all kinds and classes of theatres. The biggest film expense B.I.P. have so far gone to in connection with a product is £130,000 spent on "Abdul the Damned." The story is of the despot sultan, who, together with his hirelings, ruled in tyrant fashion his people, and had no less than three hundred wives. It's a magnificent effort in film production, and a most fitting conclusion to 10 years of success.

Depression or no depression, the company has always shown her shareholders a good return; and going back only as far as 1931 (all of the preceding years there was also a profit showing) we have the following year, ending March, 1931, £495,452 profit;

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