

The Film World

By
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Mae West, What America Calls A Wiseguy, Finds That No One Loves Her Any More

POOR Mae—the public doesn't love her any more!

Rumours filtering through from Hollywood for the past few months are now confirmed and Mae West finds herself travelling with the "baggage not wanted on the voyage." I remember her in the first picture in which anyone took notice of the famous West curves. "Night After Night" it was called, and George Raft and Alison Skipworth were in the cast too. The picture public liked Mae West, and Hollywood decided that there was gold in them thar hills. She made a big hit in her first starring film, "I'm No Angel," became the vogue, the subject of a million not-so-drawing-room stories. She was a gusty, grotesque, amusing creature, too essentially a parody on sex to be really immoral. Nobody took Mae West seriously—except Miss West. And that's where the trouble began.

She Was a Wiseguy

AN English film writer has commented very sensibly on the situation. "If she had been clever," he writes, "if she had put herself in the hands of a comic genius like Lubitsch, if she had commissioned scripts from Ben Hecht and Donald Ogden Stewart, she might at least have delayed the end, but she had other ideas. She was what America calls a wiseguy. She knew it all. No sooner had she made a hit in one picture than she began to take herself seriously. She not merely insisted on writing her own stories, which might have been put down to a thrifty desire to make a bit both ways, but she also thought she knew all about direction, casting and all the other technicalities that go to make a successful moving picture. She demanded handsome young leading men, but would never give them a chance."



Upstage!

MAE WEST developed a temperament, made scenes, quarrelled with her producer, and generally showed every symptom of that commonest of stage and film complaints—being upstage! She insisted on having a certain cameraman who alone knew the angles from which to photograph her curves—as if photographing her was an esoteric craft! And while Mae's temperament has been mounting, public interest has been slipping. With every picture it has become clearer that she is not, in the real sense, an actress at all—that she has only one line, one make-up, one joke.

Over to Suva

THE Fiji Islanders, according to Mr. George M. Dillon, New Zealand manager for Warner Brothers, have given up head-hunting (if they ever did) for star-gazing—and they know as much about Bing Crosby and Mae West as you or I. Mr. Dillon travelled out to Suva on the Monterey recently, and he is full of enthusiasm,

not only for the beauty of the islands, but for the manner in which the picture houses are run. "There are two theatres in Suva," said Mr. Dillon, "one, the Lilac, being run by a Brahmin of high cast, John Grant. The other is called the Universal. At Nandaviratu, a town on the goldfields, there is a new theatre which was opened the other week with one of my company's films. At Tofua there are two theatres, both run by Indians."

Films for Natives

"IN the Fiji group," continued Mr. Dillon, "there are about 150,000 natives, 80,000 Hindus and 5000 white people. The natives and Hindus go to the cinema quite often, and for this reason there are a number of Indian films shown. Of the ordinary American picture the majority are musicals and Westerns—those are the ones the native population likes best. The pictures are sent from New Zealand and are usually released shortly after the first city releases in this country. The Fiji Islands are great for a holiday—I'm sure if New Zealanders knew more about them they'd often sail over for a vacation. I went over on one Matson boat and came back to Auckland on the next."

Down Dunedin Way

DUNEDIN'S last citadel of the legitimate theatre falls before the talkie onslaught next month when His Majesty's Theatre, which was partly rebuilt and completely redecorated last year, will screen its first cinema programme, Warner Brothers' film, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "His Majesty's will be used to screen big and unusual features," said the publicity manager of Fuller-Haywards (Mr. A. R. McElwain), "and it will be opened on September 18. This does not mean, of course, that legitimate productions will be shut out—talkies will be suspended when flesh and blood shows are offering." Much the same policy is observed in Melbourne, where