

tain to be whistled by every butcher boy for months.

And, oh, before I forget—bouquets to Gail Patrick and old Christian Rub for a brace of fine support performances.

["Mad About Music." Universal. Directed by Norman Taurog, starring Deanna Durbin, Herbert Marshall. First release, Auckland, Wellington, April 8.]

"Jeen Otree"

HAVING heard a great deal about Gene Autry—including the report that this singing cowboy star is more popular in America even than Clark Gable and Robert Taylor—it was with considerable curiosity and scepticism that I went to the preview of Autry's first film in New Zealand, "The Big Show." The result was not disappointing, though I must confess I still find it very hard to understand why Autry should be America's Number One Box Office Champion.

Ten or more years ago, Autry might have been booted off the screen. But that was before the day of the crooning cowboy, when Western heroes were long and lean and strong and silent. (Gene Autry (it is pronounced "Jeen Otree") is long enough and strong enough, but he inclines to plumpness, and is certainly not silent. His singing, to my mind, is his most pleasing feature. His voice has something of the quality of Bing Crosby's, without the latter's boops and doops, and it records well. It is pleasant enough to take one's mind off the singer's rather noticeable self-consciousness.

For all his singing and guitar-playing, Autry is a he-man among he-men. Not for years have I seen such slap-up fast action by a cowboy as those scenes in the early part of "The Big Show" where Autry goes bronco-busting, Indian-chasing and steer-throwing.

Modern Musical

FORT the opportunity it gives for these stunts and for a wide variety of songs, "The Big Show" is a suitable introductory vehicle for Autry. But now I'd like to see him in an honest-to-goodness old-fashioned Western melodrama. "The Big Show" isn't that. It's a modern musical story with a spectacular background at the Texas Centennial Exhibition. The villains aren't whiskey rustlers but city slickers, the Indians are just play actors and the hero isn't a Lone Star Ranger but a Hollywood stunt man who doubles for a film star when the latter is supposed to make a personal appearance at the Texas Centennial, and who wins fame on his own account.

Comic Relief

AUTRY's heroine is a very attractive lass named Kay Hughes, whom you may have seen in a Universal short subject called "Hollywood Screen Test."

Incidental variety items are supplied to the film by combinations known as the Beverley Hill Billies, the Light Crust Dough Boys, and the Jones Boys. The last-named are negroes who look like pathological cases but who can certainly swing a hot number.

For comic relief there is a publicity man (William Newell) and a croaking cowboy clown (Smiley Burnette), with the appropriate nickname of "Frog." But why must so many pictures contain a dumb-witted blonde in amorous pursuit of some member of the cast?



The stars of Cecil B. de Mille's Paramount production, "The Buccaneer." They are Fredric March, Franciska Gaal and Akim Tamiroff. "The Buccaneer" is due for release at the end of this month.

And why, whenever one sees a tub of water, must it be so terribly obvious that several people are going to fall into it? Can't Hollywood think up some new ways to make us laugh?

But these, after all, aren't such very important points. Perhaps they're only put in to give us nasty critics some-

GREAT VIOLINIST

Heifetz To Make Goldwyn Film

JASCHA HEIFETZ, perhaps the world's outstanding violinist, has been signed to a motion picture contract by Samuel Goldwyn, and will make his first screen appearance in "The Great Musical Festival," which the producer will film in technicolour in 1938. Indicative of the ambitious nature of the production is the fact that Goldwyn has also signed Fannie Hurst, noted novelist, to write the story and screen-play. Goldwyn commented: "I think that the screen is ready and the public has shown its willingness to accept really great music. And when a world-renowned artist of Heifetz's standing decides to bring his great talent to the screen, I feel that the entire motion picture industry has taken a firm step forward."

It is of interest to mention that Heifetz is married to Florence Vidor, star of silent pictures.

thing to write about. They aren't enough to mar the Autry personality or prevent "The Big Show" being a pretty good show, particularly for the less blasé type of audience.

["The Big Show." Action Pictures. Directed by Mack V. Wright. Starring Gene Autry. First release: Dunedin, April 8.]

Oh, Joy! Oh, Rapture!

THIS critic of yours can now die happy. He has heard "Land of Hope and Glory" played in swing time!

This glorious compensation for all the occasions that accursed jingoistic tune has made me squirm in my seat occurs for a few brief moments in Selznick's "Nothing Sacred," when, in a New York pageant of historical heroines, Britain's contribution to immortal courage is represented by—whom do you think?—Lady Godiva! Her entrance is the signal for the band to treat "Land of Hope and Glory" with the disrespect it deserves. Oh, frabjous day! Caloo, calay! I chortled in my joy!

More seriously, though, "Nothing Sacred" (and there's an appropriate title for you) is comedy of the wittiest. Many nasty things have been said about the craziness of current screen humour, and Carole Lombard's acting in particular. I have said my share of them, and will continue to do so; but here and now I want to put on record that "Nothing Sacred" is an exception, and that Carole Lombard's "daffy" role is a great piece of work.

Feast of Wit

THE reason is, of course, that "Nothing Sacred" has method in its madness. There's something for it to be crazy about—nothing less than a marvellous satirical hoax about a girl who is feted by New York because she is believed to be dying of radium poisoning. Waiters cry into the champagne they pour to enliven her last hours, school children serenade her with dismal dirges, the crowd at a wrestling match observes a ten seconds' silence when she appears, and the mayor sets aside a public holiday in advance for the "funeral."

All this throbbing of New York's great stone heart is a wow for the circulation of the paper which is sponsoring the Brave Little Girl's remaining days on earth. But Fredric March takes it pretty seriously, being the reporter responsible for the sob-story of the century, and having fallen in love with his victim. If she dies he's heart-broken; if she doesn't die he's ruined. Of course, she doesn't die, has never been in any danger of it from the start—but how does she get out of the mess?

I'd like to recommend every single person to go and see this wicked, won-