

SPEAKING CANDIDLY... REVIEWS of the NEW FILMS

Bing Crosby At His Best

["Sing, You Sinners." Paramount. Directed by Wesley Ruggles. Starring Bing Crosby, Fred MacMurray. First release: Wellington, November 25.]

THE other day I had a visit from a Dunedin reader, a Bing Crosby fan of the deepest dye, who took me sternly to task for having said that "Double or Nothing" and "Dr. Rhythm" represented Bing at his best. His complaint was that Bing didn't do nearly enough straight crooning in those pictures.

I'm afraid that fan and I will never agree—but his real grievance is with Crosby himself, who is steadily pursuing a policy of becoming more of an actor and less of a crooner. The success of that policy is strikingly demonstrated

in "Sing, You Sinners," which—disregarding at least one protest from down south—I claim to be the nicest piece of entertainment Bing has ever made.

As it happens, I made a rather interesting experiment with "Sing, You Sinners." I took with me to the preview, under protest, a person who ordinarily holds the opinion that all crooners, and Bing in particular, are one of the lowest forms of animal life. Yet that person thoroughly enjoyed the show.

No Girl For Bing

AND why not? It is a most ingratiating piece of entertainment, with Bing very neatly handling a real character role as the bad boy of an American family, who can never resist the temptation to "swap" everything in sight



ELLEN DREW

"Young and eager."

and furiously gamble the proceeds away. For a change, Bing has no heroine to interest him in this story. That is left to his stalwart big brother, an honest, hard-working fellow (Fred MacMurray), who intends to marry Ellen Drew just as soon as the ne'er-do-well will find a steady job and cease being a drain on the family finances.

Finally, Bing makes good by buying a racehorse, training it himself, and winning a big race. (The horse, by the way, is one of Crosby's own; the race-track on which he performs in a first-class finish is Crosby's own property at Del Mar.)

Family Feeling

THE musical side of "Sing, You Sinners" is logically introduced by a twist in the story, which makes Mother Beebe (Elizabeth Patterson) determined that, having spent her money giving the boys a musical education, they shall sing for their supper. Bing warbles willingly, but Brother Fred resents having to make ends meet as a public entertainer.

Though still a trifle noisy on occasions, MacMurray is quieter and much more likable than usual. His romantic relationship with Ellen Drew is very pleasantly handled. She is a charming newcomer, young and eager.

There's also a very clever small boy, Donald O'Connor, who is the third of the Beebe brothers, and who figures prominently in the comical and musical interludes.

Three scenes stand out—the thrilling finish of the race, the comical sequence in which Bing "swaps" race tickets with Tom Dugan and wins every time, and the rip-roaring fight in the finale.

You may remember "Sing, You Sinners" for these moments or for its music; but I think you are probably most likely to remember it for the real feeling of family life that permeates so much of the footage.

Dorothy Lamour Goes Mexican

["Tropic Holiday." Paramount. Directed by Theodore Reed. Starring Dorothy Lamour, Ray Milland. Just released.]

DOROTHY LAMOUR, having escaped from the crocodiles in "Her Jungle Love"—a matter for rejoicing or regret according to the extent of one's appreciation of Miss Lamour's comely contours—is now to be seen for a change in Spanish dress. But not for a whole picture. That was not to be expected or, should I say, desired. So into "Tropic Holiday" they have obligingly introduced a sequence of a semi-nude Mexican bathing party which enables Miss Lamour to don the familiar sarong.

The story of "Tropic Holiday" need not detain us, being once again the orphan child of the production whom nobody apparently bothered about. But there is plenty of romantic Mexican moonlight, tuneful Mexican music at colourful Mexican fiestas, and a generous helping of Bob Burns and the ample Martha Raye. There's also an amusing little Mexican boy called Bobbie Noya, whose role consists of playing gooseberry to hero and heroine, and a persuasive Mexican tenor, by name Tito Guizar.

Local Colour

IN "Tropic Holiday," Martha Raye looks more than ever like a relief map of Taranaki standing on end; but she's a bit less boisterous than usual, and her bull-fight sequence definitely has its moments—several of them.

By wooing Miss Lamour by moonlight to the sound of Mexican guitars, Ray Milland (a Hollywood script-writer seeking local colour) maintains his cinematic reputation as a young man with a preference for native girls, but adds little to his reputation as an actor. Yet he's a likable fellow, and Miss Lamour, whether in sarong or skirts, is undoubtedly to be preferred to Binnie Barnes, the jealous film star from Hollywood, who turns up in Mexico to spoil the tropic holiday when she becomes suspicious that her boyfriend is laying the local colour on a trifle too thickly.

Best Laugh: Bob Burns walking into the sea for a fake suicide act and being hauled out by a fishing-boat. He describes it by saying he started in "A Star Is Born" and finished up in "Captains Courageous."

Ginger Minus Her Dancing Shoes

["Having Wonderful Time." RKO Radio. Directed by Alfred Santell. Starring Ginger Rogers, Douglas Fairbanks, jun. Just released.]

"HAVING Wonderful Time" should, I feel, have been a much more notable picture than it is. It is the film version of the play by Arthur Kober which won a prize as the best American comedy of 1937 and packed the theatres for record runs when produced by Marc ("Green Pastures") Connelly. RKO paid a large sum for the screen rights.

Still, it's largely because one knows of the film's eminent origin that there is a sense of disappointment. Otherwise it would be (and in fact, actually is) a modest but agreeable light romance dealing with troubled young love at one of those holiday camps so popular in America.

Whatever happened to the story in process of translation to the screen, its stage origin is still obvious. There are realistic outdoor settings, of course, but the pattern of the story is formal and circumscribed, and dialogue far outweighs action.

Miserable Time

NOBODY can portray the average American girl—quick-witted, well-poised, self-possessed—better than Ginger Rogers. Here, as in "Vivacious Lady," she brings warmth and a delightful sense of

DAD AND DAVE

Came To Town All Right!

THERE'S a happy smile these days on the face of Alec Regan, manager of the Majestic Theatre, Wellington. The Cinesound film "Dad and Dave Come to Town" had its premiere there last week, coupled with the personal appearance of Bert ("Dad") Bailey, and the business registered is bigger than for most of the biggest pictures. It looks like being a three weeks' season in Wellington's largest picture theatre.

This is probably the best business ever done by an Australian film in New Zealand, including even the original "On Our Selection."

intimacy to her romantic moments, as the overworked stenographer who leaves a nagging family and a bumptious fiancé for a fortnight's freedom among the mountains and lakes.

However, her reaction to that great American institution, the summer vacation camp, makes the title "Having Wonderful Time" distinctly ironical. The hearty, back-slapping communal atmosphere suits her about as much as I imagine it would suit me.

The heroine is having a miserable time until she meets Douglas Fairbanks, jun., a penniless law student earning his vacation by working as a waiter at the camp—and even then there are plenty of obstacles in the path of young love, including the problem of marriage without money.

Game For Two

A SIMPLE but appealing entertainment, "Having Wonderful Time" reaches its peak in that delicious incident where the heroine tames the camp Don Juan, who has marked her down as his victim, by insisting on playing backgammon in his cabin until he falls asleep from sheer exhaustion! A few more scenes of that quality, and this would have been easily one of the best romantic comedies of the year.

See if you like Ginger Rogers in comedy-drama, without her dancing shoes. But don't expect too much.

Personal

GEORGE BROWN, formerly of Universal Films, Wellington, has been appointed South Island representative for Amalgamated Theatres, Ltd., and will take up his new position at the State Theatre, Christchurch. This theatre, completely reconditioned, if not rebuilt, is expected to open its doors for business about November 30.

Much Pleasant Ado About Nothing

["The First 100 Years." M.G.M. Directed by Richard Thorpe. Starring Robert Montgomery, Virginia Bruce. First release: Wellington, November 25.]

IN gratifying the current taste for happy endings involving the stork, M-G-M make Virginia Bruce, the heroine of "The First 100 Years," so ignorant of the facts of life that the news of her approaching motherhood is the common property of most characters in the story before she even suspects it herself!

And yet Miss Bruce is no innocent miss but a married woman-of-the-world, so emancipated in her views on sex equality that she not only works for a living and earns far more than her husband (Robert Montgomery), but she also refuses to give up her career and make home for him when he lands a lucrative job which makes him financially independent.

So they decide to part—though in ordinary life probably all that would have been needed to solve the whole problem was for husband and wife to have five minutes' frank discussion. But if they'd done that there wouldn't have been any story at all.

Civilised People

IMPROBABILITIES such as these cloud but by no means extinguish the light entertainment of "The First Hundred Years." The picture has a surface sparkle which makes up a lot for the lack of depth, and the witty dialogue is well spoken.

Also, there is to be noted a welcome departure from the prevailing craziness of screen comedy. When husband and wife have their big bust-up, they don't bite bits out of the furniture or go paddling round bare-footed in the rain. Apart from their refusal to talk things over sensibly and the heroine's lack of obstetrical knowledge, they behave more or less like polite, civilised human beings.

Should Wives Work?

THE acing of Robert Montgomery, Virginia Bruce, Warren William, Allen Dinehart and Binnie Barnes helps immeasurably to make much amusing ado about nothing. It is quite a pleasant change also to find Robert Montgomery appearing as a nice young man who wants to put his feet up on his own mantelpiece, instead of in his familiar role of the caddish, though charming, home-wrecker who only settles down to domesticity under protest in the last reel.

I still can't quite understand what it is M.G.M. see in Miss Bruce to make them give her so many choice roles; but I'm ready to admit she's attractive and competent enough as the self-willed ambitious wife, in spite of her being so obviously in the wrong over this marriage-versus-a-career business.

That last opinion, you'll understand, is the dominant male in me speaking. The producers obviously weren't prepared to commit themselves to a definite answer on the burning question of "should wives work?" So they wriggled out of it by presenting the heroine with an unexpected baby.

But unless the stork was prepared to be more or less constantly on the scene at the Montgomery-Bruce ménage, I'm afraid the prob-



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