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The Screen's Star-Crop For 1939

Many Promising Players Coming Forward To Meet Demand For New Faces

SOME years ago, there was an American cinema organisation which, regularly once a year, chose a batch of ambitious youngsters from among the hosts of unknowns, who are for ever clamouring at the gates of screen fame, and nominated them as likely candidates for stardom in the coming year. I can never remember the full name of that organisation, but its initial letters gave the lucky chosen few a label which will not have been forgotten. They were called Wampas Baby Stars.

Sometimes the select few managed to justify the choice; and there are a few famous personalities on the screen today who got their first real chances when the brand of the Wampas organisation was placed upon them. But, generally speaking, I seem to recall that Wampas Babies were always beautiful and blonde, but not always particularly talented.

The custom of choosing Wampas Babies appears to have died out now, possibly because it served no very useful purpose. Yet the fascination of trying to pick winners in the film field remains almost as strong as that of trying to pick winners on the race track—and considerably less expensive. Also, the chances of success are roughly about equal.

THIS is the season of the year when, in all walks of life, people are weighing up the shortcomings of the past and trying to assess the prospects for the future. Having chosen the ten best pictures of 1938—or had them chosen for them—most film fans are now becoming interested in what the new year will bring, and naturally the question of who are likely to be leading screen personalities of 1939 comes uppermost.

Who, then, are candidates for stardom in 1939?

But before trying to answer that question, it should be pointed out that the star-crop for 1939 is likely to contain an even larger proportion than usual of players who, at the moment, are comparatively

unknown. The reason is that the great picture-going public is tending to become slightly wearied by its established favourites. More than ever, it seems to be looking for new faces, fresh personalities to worship.

You'll probably remember the furore caused fairly recently when some exhibitors in the U.S.A. had the temerity to brand several of the best-known Hollywood stars as "box-office poison." Whether or not one agrees with their verdict regarding any of the particular stars who were mentioned—personally, in several cases I think they were wrong—the fact remains that the general indictment is symptomatic of the public's new critical attitude toward some of the biggest stars, and of its desire for unfamiliar faces.

ALIVE TO THIS ATTITUDE, MOST OF THE STUDIOS ARE NOW



ELLEN DREW
... "candy-store Cinderella"

SEARCHING FOR NEW PLAYERS TO TAKE THE PLACES OF STARS WHO SEEM TO BE ON THE WANE.

M-G-M is a studio very partial to foreign importations. Not all have been the success anticipated, but to this statement Luise Rainer is a notable exception. Miss Rainer is not the big star now that she was a year ago, but M-G-M have another sensational foreigner on hand in Hedy LaMarr,

who is to be co-starred soon with Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy. Actually it was not M-G-M, but United Artists, who introduced Hedy LaMarr to the Hollywood screen, following her appearance in the banned Austrian film "Ecstasy."

In "Algiers," with Charles Boyer, she brought sultry sex-appeal back to the screen, coupled with unmis-



HEDY LAMARR
... certain to leave mark.



PRISCILLA LANE
... youngest and brightest.

takable acting ability. She is certain to leave her mark on the coming year.

There's a real "success story" behind the fact that Ellen Drew, of Paramount, is now a prominent candidate for stardom. She's known as the "candy-store Cinderella" because she stepped from behind a counter in a Hollywood confectionery store into the lead opposite Bing Crosby and Fred MacMurray in "Sing, You Sinners." Critics and studio officials alike expect big things of this girl, who's soon to be seen with Ronald Colman in "If I Were King."

AT Universal, Deanna Durbin is likely to remain the studio's biggest asset during 1939, but they have at least two promising newcomers in reserve. One of these, Dorothea Kent, is not exactly new, having specialised in "dumb blonde" parts for some time in



ANDREA LEEDS
... consolidating her position.

B-grade pictures; but there are now signs that she's coming to the fore as a comedienne.

The other is Danielle Darrieux, French girl, who was given a not particularly auspicious launching in "The Rage of Paris." Much will depend on how La Darrieux shapes in her forthcoming Hollywood drama whether she's just another foreign flash-in-the-pan or a lasting asset to the screen—and Universal. But in view of her

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Hot Shots

MARRIAGE is a great thing—no family should be without it.

A FEW people these long alleged summer days get up bright and early, but most of us just get up early.

FOR Mr. Semple: The way some people drive you'd think they were late for their accident.

AND then this: Traffic jams cause fewer accidents than pickled drivers.

LITTLE girl's prayer: "Oh, God, make all the bad people good and all the good people nice."

THE boy is a picture of his father and the girl is the talkie of her mother.

AFTER-CHRISTMAS styles for men: it now looks as though there will be some small change in the pockets.

DO not worry about what people are thinking about you—for they are not thinking about you. They are wondering what you are thinking about them.

A CHAMPION is a fellow who gets licked two or three times a week and keeps right on calling himself a champion.

ALIMONY is a system by which, when two people make a mistake, one of them continues to pay for it.

STORY is told in the States that a Pacific Coast town held a gala contest with prizes for the persons who could best imitate Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin heard of the contest, rigged himself out, won second prize.

GOLF defined: A game where the ball always lies poorly, and the golfer well.

WEBSTER'S definition of crooning: A continuous hollow sound, as of cattle in pain.

A LADY is a woman who always remembers others, and never forgets herself.

AS the British Consul said, "It's in the bag."

IT looks as if the Australian embargo on New Zealand potatoes will soon be lifted. In the meantime, with its back to the wall, the New Zealand potato keeps on fighting.

A NEW bomb which kills within 500 yards of impact was used in a series of experimental raids on Barcelona, it has been revealed. It's to be hoped the lucky Barcelonians appreciate the privilege of assisting in such an important scientific experiment.

NEW British air-liners will fly through the stratosphere at 300 miles per hour. That's still not high enough or fast enough to get away from it all.