

for all. You may smoke—pipe, cigar, or cigarette are all *de rigueur*—and, if you have one, you may bring your bottle or can of beer and sip it while you are entertained by the people of the screen. You may comment on the film or express disapproval in very plain language, and if some one stands up in front, you will have vocal support from all around when you yell "Siddown." They are all open-air, so if it rains you wrap a ground-sheet or oilskin cape round you and carry on. Formality is at a discount and the atmosphere is free and easy.

The "theatres" themselves range from the simplest type, a screen at the lower end of a sloping patch of cleared ground (bring your own stool or squat on a cape), to the more elaborate ones with white-washed railings round the "house," a stage in front of the screen, and wooden forms for all. At one theatre in a forward area a sloping piece of ground had been cleared and felled and topped coconut trees laid in rows for seats. And as you sat on a coconut log, padded with your cape if you were wise, and puffed your cigar, waiting for the show to begin, the flying-foxes wheeled and swooped from the surrounding tall palms in the fast vanishing daylight.

The epithet *de luxe* could have been applied to one theatre. Here there were rows of benches made from sawn timber, a large stage on which frequently a local naval orchestra and soloists from camps in the area entertained, and at the beginning and end of the show a naval bugler brought the audience to attention for the entrance and exit of the Admiral and his staff.

The films ranged all the way from excellent to tripe. A serious film with a good story portrayed by first-class actors and actresses was assured of close attention from an appreciative audience, but any sign of mock heroics, over-emphasis, or sob stuff would bring hoots, catcalls, and ribald interjections. The critics were ruthless and vocal. Probably the most popular were comedies and musicals. There was little enough reason for mirth at times, and a show with plenty of tuneful melodies, chorus numbers, and a multitude of "luscious lovelies," preferably scantily attired,

wiped out the jungle; mud, heat, and stink faded from the mind for ninety minutes or so.

"Sexy" films were greeted uproariously. To fighting men who had not seen a woman for perhaps six months or more, and who were at that moment a thousand miles from the nearest one, they were ludicrous. Pointed wit and Rabelaisian suggestions were hurled at the screen to the accompaniment of whistles and hilarious laughter.

War films, in which the hero won the battle on his own and returned to his languishing lady love, were treated with scorn by men who were on the spot and knew that what counted was team-work. An occasional English film in which a few digs were made at some of the foibles of the English social setup misfired, being not understood by Kiwi or American. The blatant propaganda films which indulged in "jelly bellied flag-flapping," made every one squirm and feel uncomfortable.

Withal the films shown were at least as good and sometimes better than the average run of shows in any New Zealand town. And, after all, as some one remarked, it cost you nothing and you weren't forced to come. Films and audience together made the show, and if it is impossible to transcribe the wisecracks and repartee that sallied back and forth the reason is that they were transient and the wit of the moment, no less than that they were on many occasions too salty to set down in print.

Very few theatres had two machines, and the intervals while reels were changed were seized as an opportunity to stretch, look out for friends from other units, or find a more comfortable "possie." Sometimes the film broke or the power failed. Then there would be a chorus of good-natured jibes and suggestions to the unfortunate operator, but no one felt impatient, you smoked and chatted to friends, the social aspect transcended any feelings of exasperation, and it had to be a long break—perhaps forty minutes—before any one would bother to leave.

The film, the crowd, and the encounter with friends made the jungle cinema the rallying place for all.