

# Looking at Hollywood with Ed Sullivan



Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant in "Bringing Up Baby."

By ED SULLIVAN

THE GRAPH or life line of a star can be computed best from the opinions of the theater exhibitors, who write in regularly to the Motion Picture Herald, where their opinions are carried under the general departmental heading "What the Picture Did for Me." The opinions of the theater exhibitors and owners are of interest because the owner of a theater judges a picture on attendance and the opinions of his cash customers. The cash customers are you.

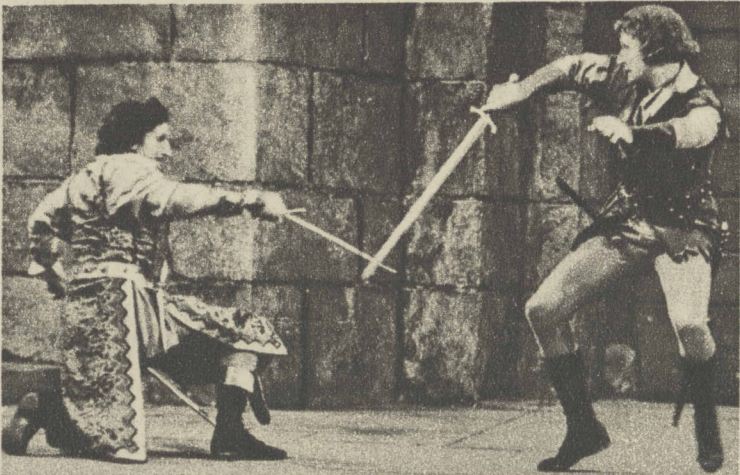
A. E. Hancock, manager of the Columbia theater at Columbia City, Ind., submits this estimate of Paramount's "Big Broadcast of 1938": "It was received with apathy, no decided opinions one way or the other. For those who like the blatant Fields and Martha Raye it is okeh. They dragged in Kirsten Flagstad—why I don't know, and neither did the audience, except to use her name. The Valkyrie bit she did didn't mean a thing."

Of "College Swing" Manager Hancock wrote: "From the reaction to this picture, and that means the business, the general consensus was that it was not hitting on all six. My judgment tells me that they are getting tired of shouting Martha Raye, and Burns and Allen do nothing in this one that the customers can't get free over the radio. Paramount gave the cast no story in this one."

The come-back of Joan Crawford to popular favor after a box office slump is best traced in the comments on "Mannequin," her latest picture. L. A. Irwin, manager of the Palace theater at Penacook, N. H., sums up this feeling in his comment: "This encourages the poor theater owner who has been getting only complaints of late after showing Joan Crawford epics. The cash customers liked this one. Both Crawford and Tracy were fine."

The mystery of Katharine Hepburn's unpopularity can be traced in the pages of the exhibitors' reports. C. T. Coney, manager of the Waldo theater at Waldoboro, Me., rushes in this report on "Bringing Up Baby": "I laughed at the whole film, but not for the reason you think. Cary Grant behind horn-rimmed glasses, trying to duplicate his success in 'The Awful Truth,' with a jumpy, screechy Katharine Hepburn. Miss Hepburn clattered through her lines as though she were doing a school-girl version of 'Beggars' Opera.' Terrible." Pearl C. Wisch, manager of the Grand theater at Mohall, N. D., a small-town house that plays to rural and CCC patrons, liked the picture, but said: "Have to admit that Hepburn was great in her part, but she is not liked."

But how the theater owners throw their hats in the air when a "Test Pilot" comes along to jam their theaters and send the patrons away convinced that they got their money's worth! "Test Pilot" is the best picture in ten years," says the manager of the Grove theater at Groveton, Tex. The opinion is echoed all the way down the line. A great picture pleases every section of the country equally. Exhibitor reports on "In Old



Errol Flynn battles with Basil Rathbone in "Robin Hood," which holds top box office ranking along with "Test Pilot."

## Main Street Fan—the Dollar and Cents Critic of the Movies' Success

Chicago, "Snow White," and "Happy Landing" were rave notices.

Carole Lombard fares poorly in the exhibitor reactions to her "True Confessions" and "Nothing Sacred." Of this last Manager Garland Rankin of the Plaza theater, Tilbury, Ont., writes: "A shame to give the public such a disappointment. No business." The Star theater at Hay Springs, Neb., played "True Confessions" and reported: "We were disappointed in both picture and the business it did. Really had been looking forward to something good, but did not think this one up to Lombard-MacMurray standards."

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Writers like myself can learn things about public preferences in these reports from all over the country. For instance, I saw "Of Human Bondage" when it was previewed here in Hollywood and thought it was an eight-reel picture that should have been cut down to a two-reel historical short. Drew E. Kolb, manager of the Municipal theater at Millheim, Pa., catering to small-town audiences, brings me up short with this rare notice: "The finest picture of its type ever to flash on our screen. It's hard to sell this picture, but if you succeed in the selling campaign the picture will back it up 100 per cent and patrons will come out of the theater thanking you for playing it. This is tops in entertainment."

You learn that Simone Simon, after a bad start, clicked finally in "Love and Hises" all over the country, and you realize why Twentieth Century-Fox didn't cancel her contract some weeks back, as they had intended.

You learn why Glenda Farrell was resigned hastily by Warner Brothers after you read the small-town reports on her popularity. You read the reports and see that the theater owners like Jack Haley, and you understand why Zanuck is giving Haley more parts and better parts. You read the smaller-city raves on Mickey Rooney and Barbara Stanwyck.

You learn that theaters can do business if a picture has the right title, and that "jungle" in a title is a business lure. You learn that titles



Myrna Loy and Clark Gable in a "performance shot" from their picture "Test Pilot," which continues one of the top box office favorites.

like "Baroness and the Butler" are hindrances to business, as the customers are leary of pictures which such titles suggest.

"Jezebel," acclaimed by Hollywood, didn't get to first base in the smaller towns. Here is one theater manager's report: "So this is the important picture that is supposed to have taken the edge off 'Gone with the Wind'? If it lays the same egg 'Jezebel' laid here in Indiana, Selznick had better save his money. Another all-dialog picture. Small-town patrons demand action, not talk-talk-talk."

It has been Hollywood's failure to read and study these exhibitor and theater owner reports that has contributed to the doldrums in which the industry finds itself at the present

moment. An influential trade paper, the Hollywood Reporter, gives you an idea of how deep are these doldrums when in a recent issue it lays the blame directly on the doorsteps of the writers and producers in this fashion:

"Wake up, Hollywood. Yesterday thirty-two big neighborhood houses in New York City closed because of lack of good pictures. Lack of product, meaning that theaters can't get pictures for audiences to buy. And that goes for you, Mr. Producer, and all the creators working under you. No new pictures or good pictures, because you are more interested in politics and social conditions than your own business. The suffering in Spain, the havoc in China, or the pages of the New Republic won't make more pictures or better pictures. With millions craving good pictures, you have only two current hits that audiences will buy—'Test Pilot' and 'Robin Hood.' Two shows that will sell tickets."

Helen Hayes comes to Los Angeles and does capacity business. Hollywood racing attracts 100,000 in three days. Baseball did record business on Memorial day. Legitimate theaters are crowded. Why? Because people want entertainment. Yet moving pictures are closing because of lack of product. Get back to work, Hollywood, while there is still work to be done and money to pay you."

To which the theater owners say, "Amen."



Bette Davis as Jezebel.

## Color on Parade—Army's Changing Uniform

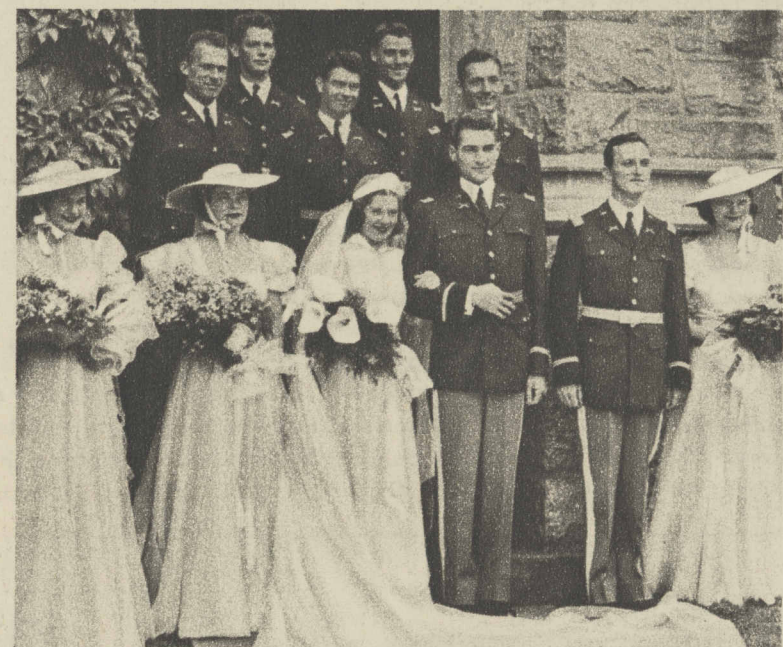
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military apparel in a modified way often is influenced by civilian styles. The turndown collar of the present uniforms, for example, is not only a concession to comfort but also an acknowledgment of the existence of coats worn outside of army life.

Remember the old-time high or choker collar of the tunic worn by the American officer as well as the enlisted man throughout the World war? This close-fitting standing collar, which was regulation for both full-dress and service uniforms, was a development of the stock which soldiers wore 160 years ago. It was Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, who decreed that his infantrymen should wear stocks around their necks so that they would be sure to hold their heads up when they performed their intricate and precise drills. In the olden days marines wore stocks of leather instead of cloth or linen. That was the origin of the term "leathernecks" for marines.

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Thirteen years ago the war department supplanted the choker collar with the easy-to-wear turn-down or roll collar that is regulation today. But it was only of relatively recent date that the blue uniform again replaced the olive drab in any appreciable numbers. The olive drab and khaki uniforms were



(Tribune photo.)

One of the nineteen post-commencement wedding parties at West Point. The bridegroom and his attendants are attired in new dress uniforms.

the regulation uniforms specified to be worn during the World war. Not a great while after the war, however, officers who possessed the old-time blue dress uniforms were permitted to wear them. The recent order will put all officers on active duty into the new blue dress uniform when the occasion requires it. This can be worn at informal affairs and must be worn by officers when they are in company of troops on dress parade.

The olive drab service uniform

is made of woolen material and closely approximates in color the khaki that is worn in the tropics or during the summer time when troops are in camp or abroad. The word khaki is of East Indian origin. The British pronounce it *kar-key*, with the accent on the last syllable, but the American pronunciation is *cock-y*, with the accent on the first syllable. The word means dust color or earth color. American troops of Theodore Roosevelt's famous Rough Riders wore khaki when they went to Cuba in 1898 to fight the Spaniards. Shortly afterward khaki garments became summer field regulation in the entire army and in the marine corps. The British troops were outfitted in this dust-colored cotton in the Boer war in South Africa.

The whole idea of khaki and olive drab is that they are inconspicuous in the field, that men wearing these colors are hard to see and thus difficult to kill, although of recent years special field glasses have been developed that make soldiers attired in these uniforms stand out as conspicuously as though they were dressed in bright red. The army is experimenting with various colors with the object possibly of supplanting the present olive drab and khaki.

Changing styles in uniforms represent swings from the gay and showy to the plainly severe and from the inconspicuous to the ostentatious. A study of old colored plates of the uniforms of earlier generations of soldiers discloses that there were times

when our officers and even our enlisted men were veritable peacocks. They wore tailed coats, cocked hats, and brilliant sashes in revolutionary times. During the War of 1812 they wore skin-tight pantaloons and various types of helmets. They went in strongly for plumed hats during the Mexican war. The Civil war revealed them in comparatively sober garb, with black floppy hats or curious little forage caps atop their heads. In 1888 some of them were wearing spiked helmets very much like those the Kaiser's troops sported on dress parade.

In colonial times, naturally, American troops were dressed in the mode of the British, with here and there modifications to agree with the nature of the service. Being soldiers of the king, their dress coats in most cases were of bright red. When the war of independence came, Americans, of course, did not wish to resemble British in appearance, so they turned to the direct opposite of red—they adopted blue as their official military color. Since the French were the allies of America in that war, French influence was noticeable in the design of the American army uniform.

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With the establishment of a small regular army after the War of 1812 the government authorized a regulation uniform, but state troops, or militia, as they were known, still were permitted to exercise much leeway in the choice of uniforms. Certain states, and in some cases individual cities, put their crack companies and regiments in the most brilliant of uniforms. This tendency remained during the Civil war and is in evidence even today in isolated instances. The red and blue Zouaves of the north and the famous Richmond Blues were dandy outfits that wore conspicuous clothing during the Civil war.

Only those officers who have the rank of general are entitled to wear dress uniforms of their own designing. Gen. John J. Pershing, the only full general of the army outside of the chief of staff, designed the dress uniform that he wore as American representative at the coronation of King George VI. of Great Britain. His coat was of midnight blue. He wore with this a maroon cloth belt heavily embroidered in gold, with gold epaulettes and a wide buff sash.

## Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Mae Tinée: I just saw the grandest movie, entitled "In Old Chicago," which happens to be my home town also. Now, this was the most colorful and most natural movie I've seen in a long time. And as for Alice Brady, she actually stole the entire picture. She was that good. The rest of the cast were also good. Tyrone Power was a honey, and Don Ameche. I wonder why the producers don't keep those great dramatic stars in dramas, where they belong, instead of silly comedies that never make any sense. For instance, like Katharine Hepburn in "Bringing Up Baby," which was the silliest picture I've seen yet. Now, there's a girl

IRENE DUNNE  
One fan calls her his "most favorite."

who really has something there. Don't you think so? My most favorite is Irene Dunne. And I would like you to please squeeze in a picture of her in your Sunday column. She's adorable, I think.

Wishing you success in your work and wishing you would put this letter in print if possible, I am, sincerely,

G. H. YOUNG.

Editor's note: A thrilling movie. And Alice Brady did a grand job. Here's Miss Dunne's picture. Hope you like it.

Dear Miss Tinée: I can't see why Katharine Hepburn isn't considered to be earning her salary. Personally I think she is a great actress! What if some of her pictures have laid the proverbial egg in the box office? We have more hens a-settin' than we need. Why doesn't some one pick their feathers first before they revert to Miss Hepburn's?

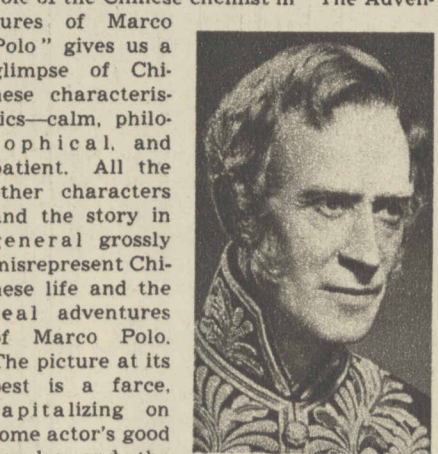
Thanks for helping me air my opinions, and I believe there are many people who will agree with me.

Yours,

V. A. R.

Editor's note: I agree with you! Wait till folks see "Holiday."

Dear Miss Tinée: H. B. Warner in his rôle of the Chinese chemist in "The Adventures of Marco Polo" gives us a glimpse of Chinese characteristics—calm, philosophical and patient. All the other characters and the story in general grossly misrepresent Chinese life and the real adventures of Marco Polo. The picture at its best is a farce, capitalizing on some actor's good looks and the public's clamor for excitement. Perhaps we should remember that this is only a play, not a true story from Marco Polo's experience in old Cathay.

H. B. WARNER  
Praised for characterization in "Marco Polo."

If Hollywood is going to produce any more pictures on China I suggest that it

give Mr. Warner the star rôle. He is a grand actor and deserves a break. Will you print a picture of Mr. Warner?

Very truly yours, RICHARD WEST.

Editor's note: I will. Come again.

Dear Miss Tinée: I have just finished reading your review of the motion picture "Three Comrades," and I am wondering if you are as simple as the readers of The Tribune, as it is quite obvious that is whom you are catering to. Does every picture have to have a joyous ending? Can't we have one picture true to life? Don't you regard Tone and Young's kidding of Taylor as humor? Evidently not.

Needless to say, I'm very disappointed in you and a paper that employs a critic who has no more right to review pictures than the Tribune readers.

Sincerely, W. T. WILSON.

Dear Mae Tinée: Thanks for your criticism of "Three Comrades." It is always so nice for the layman who, having formed his own opinion, sees it word for word in print by a critic. That seems to be a habit of yours. More power to you.

Sincerely, JOHN H. BULLEN.