

SR Goes to the Movies

THE BIG SWITCH

"**B** WANA DEVIL," a motion picture written, directed, and produced by Arch Oboler in all three dimensions (count 'em), has ushered in the 3-D age. Its primary distinction is that it is the first feature-length stereoscopic movie; its next distinction is that audiences are flocking in to see it; beyond those, it has no distinction whatever. It is the worst movie in my rather faltering memory, and my hangover from it was so painful that I immediately went to see a two-dimensional movie for relief. Part of the hangover was undoubtedly induced by the photography process itself. To get all the wondrous effects of the stereoscopic motion picture one has to wear a pair of polaroid glasses, made—so far as I could determine—from tinted cellophane and cardboard. These keep slipping off, hanging from one ear, or sliding down the nose, all the while setting up extraneous tickling sensations. And once you have them adjusted and begin looking at the movie, you find that the tinted cellophane (or whatever it is) darkens the color of the screen, so that everything seems to be happening in late afternoon on a cloudy day. The people seem to have two faces, one receding behind the other; the screen becomes unaccountably small, as though one is peering in at a scene through a window. Everything keeps getting out of proportion. Nigel Bruce will either loom up before you or look like a puppet. Sometimes there is depth and sometimes there isn't. One thing is certain: it was all horribly unreal.

I became dizzy, vaguely nauseous, and had the feeling of gasping for air.

The story, by the way, is something about man-eating lions in Africa.

As just about everyone knows by now, Hollywood has gone into a terrible tizzy about the 3-D movie. The box-office is coming back, they all say. Every studio is announcing its own 3-D process, and, just to make things more confusing, some of the studios are making movies in the peripheral vision process, or what *Variety* calls the "illusion pix." The stereoscopic processes—whether they are given the names of Natural Vision, Stereo-Techniques, Paravision, or Bolex—are based on the same general system, which has to do with the linking of two cameras for photographing a scene, and which requires the wearing of polaroid glasses. A good many movies are now in production, using one or another of the above-named systems. Truth to tell, it is highly doubtful whether any of the systems has ironed out a tremendous number of distortions inherent in the stereoscopic process. And there are always those annoying polaroids.

This is why some of the studios look with more hope upon the "illusion pix," the kind that utilizes a wide and curved screen and need no glasses. By spreading the image around the audience and by using something called stereophonic sound (three or four sound channels are utilized) one supposedly gets an illusion of depth. I carefully looked at Cinerama not long ago, and found this

Once More the Tide

By Daniel Whitehead Hicky

ONCE more into the tide, O love, once more
To feel the lifting wave, the falling air,
Ranges of foaming mountains breaking clear,
Their sun-hot music thundering to the shore.
Once more to find a singing shell or two,
The starlike printings of the sandpipers' feet
Scudding along the shore; suddenly, the sweet
Wild breath of the sandflower blinking wide eyes of blue.
These are the hours our quickening hearts must know.
Not the long years for us. In moments only
Love blossoms, love dies; I swear these words are so
By all the broken and old, the weary, the lonely.
Once more the tide, O love, the lifting spray
Before the long winter breaks upon the sea.

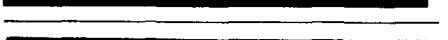
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system full of bugs too. The three separate images thrown on the screen never did join up properly. Sometimes, too, one part of the Cinerama screen would have some depth, while another part would be just as flat as any postcard. It is quite probable that these bugs will eventually be ironed out and we will have a perfected panoramic screen, a prospect that does not fill me with joy—not after seeing Cinerama's short subjects. Meanwhile, Twentieth Century-Fox seems to be holding at least a couple of the aces with its Cinemascope, a panoramic system that throws only one image on the wide screen and is simpler to instal in a theatre than Cinerama. The studio has gone ahead and announced a heavy schedule of movies in the Cinemascope process; M-G-M will also use it for a couple.

All this, of course, has nothing to do with the making of good pictures. One of these days Hollywood is simply going to have to face up to that problem, whether the movies will be made in Paravision, Naturalama, or whatever.

—HOLLIS ALPERT.

SR Recommends

Lili: Waif Leslie Caron wanders into a French carnival and takes up with the puppets in a charming musical. (SR Mar. 7.)

Justice Is Done: A French courtroom drama which poses a haunting human problem. (SR Feb. 28.)

The Story of Mandy: Mandy is a seven-year-old deaf mute whose story is told in this sympathetic and adult British film. (SR Feb. 28.)

I Confess: Alfred Hitchcock conducts a victimized priest through numerous suspenseful tribulations in this thriller. (SR Feb. 21.)

My Cousin Rachel: Olivia de Havilland in a photoplay of Daphne du Maurier's melodrama. (SR Jan. 17.)

Little World of Don Camillo: Don Camillo, the priest, and Peppone, the Communist mayor, wrestle for the soul of an Italian village in this comedy-satire based on Giovanni Guareschi's novel. (SR Jan. 17.)

The Member of the Wedding: Julie Harris, Ethel Waters, and Brandon de Wilde collaborate in an accurate screen translation of the Carson McCullers play. (SR Jan. 10.)

The Bad and the Beautiful: Hollywood looks at itself in a film notable for first-rate acting, particularly by Lana Turner. (SR Jan. 3.)

Come Back, Little Sheba: Shirley Booth's magnificent Hollywood debut as the slovenly, adolescent-minded housewife of William Inge's moving play. (SR Dec. 27.)

Face to Face: Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, and Hollywood collaborate here in a highly valuable "duo-drama." (SR Dec. 20.)

Two Cents' Worth of Hope: Life in an Italian village, imaginatively re-created by director Castellani. (SR Dec. 13.)

TV and Radio

ON A BRAINY SUNDAY AFTERNOON

THE two big television networks have finally decided that people are more intelligent on Sundays than they are during the work-a-day week. So on this day, set aside for meditation, introspection, and a general inventory of life during these times that try men's souls, they have programmed a series of shows which appeal to the minds of the viewers—or at least to those viewers who read king-sized newspapers.

On a Sunday afternoon we may tune in a whole batch of items which no self-respecting time buyer would be caught sponsoring during the rest of the week. "American Forum of the Air," "Lamp Unto My Feet," "Victory at Sea," "Man of the Week," "Here's to Your Health," and "State of the Nation," to name a few.

And for two-and-a-half solid hours the Columbia Broadcasting System, in a fit of utter abandon, has scheduled the ninety-minute "Omnibus," followed by "You Are There," which in turn is followed by the impeccable Edward R. Murrow and "See It Now."

"Omnibus" is an hour-and-a-half variety show and is usually made up of such a diversity of departments as to capture the attention of most of its viewers most of the time. But, being a variety show, "Omnibus" is to be commended not only for what it is but also for what it is not, and for what it doesn't do as well as for what it does. It has fallen into none of the cliché pitfalls in which most variety shows now flounder.

It's a quiet show. Nobody shouts, "AND HERE HE IS NOW, YOUR MASTER OF CEREMONIES, ALISTAIR COOKE!" Mr. Cooke just wanders amiably on scene, quietly outlines what is in store for the viewer, introduces the various items on tap, and steps aside to permit his guests to perform.

And Mr. Cooke is never surprised to see one of his guests on the show. Tune in any variety show and you will find its star suddenly turn as his guest enters and shout, "Why it's Penny Singleton!" When the shock of the surprise and cued-in applause have faded the show goes blithely on as rehearsed. Mr. Cooke has thus far avoided turning and shouting, "Why it's Abraham Lincoln!"

Mr. Cooke has also refrained from thanking his guests "for being with

us, and good luck to you on your new picture, soon to be released by Twentieth Century-Fox." This, of course, eliminates the reply, "Thank you for having me, Alistair, the pleasure was mine." "The pleasure was ours, thank you again and goodnight." "Thank YOU and goodnight."

"You Are There," as has already been pointed out by more objective critics, was a better radio show than it is a television show. The added dimension of sight to the anachronistic microphone at an ancient historic event has eliminated the important dimension of imagination. Seeing Walter Cronkite in a modern business suit announce the news of the day on which "The Boston Tea Party" was held doesn't come off as well on the seventeen-inch screens of our television sets as it did on the three-inch screens of our imaginations.

Edward R. Murrow would be the last to agree that "See It Now" is a half hour of personal editorial comment on the news which must soon shape or shake our world. Of course, Mr. Murrow never comments on the film he shows except to say that he thought we might like to see and hear, for instance, "two unsuccessful Presidential candidates who made speeches at the Waldorf last week."

There follow alternating clips of Thomas E. Dewey talking to Republicans and Adlai Stevenson speaking to Democrats. Skilful editing made this a wonderful study in contrasts. When it was over, Mr. Murrow turned abruptly in his chair before his monitor and said, "Two unsuccessful Presidential candidates and the speeches they made last week."

That was all, he said. As usual, his face was pleasantly inscrutable, but somehow I got the feeling that he agreed with me that the editorial was in favor of Stevenson. I'm sure a Republican got the feeling Mr. Murrow had just shown up Mr. Stevenson as a political wise-cracker and Mr. Dewey as a brilliant statesman. "See It Now" is that kind of show—you write your own editorial.

With these three shows ended it is now seven o'clock (EST), the witching hour when, the networks have decided, by some strange metamorphosis we revert to juvenile delinquents, and here are Gene Autry and Red Skelton and Ann Sothern in "Private Secretary," and that's enough thinking for one day.

—GOODMAN ACE.

