

The Courier Covers THE NEW MOVIES

By John Springer

"To Be or Not To Be"—A-2

There aren't very many people laughing at the Nazis these days, and there are just a few times during "To Be or Not To Be" when the injection of slapstick doesn't seem to be in the best of taste. However, for the greater part, Ernst Lubitsch has produced and directed a picture that lampoons the Nazis in much the same manner in which his "Ninotchka" lampooned the Communists. The satire is broader; in this case, almost burlesque at times, but there are some bitingly ironic moments and, as a rule, the Lubitsch touch keeps the picture from degenerating into slapstick, even with the presence of Jack Benny seeming to forecast that type of picture.

Benny, as a matter of fact, is surprisingly good in "To Be or Not To Be." We must confess that for several years now, he has not been one of our pet enthusiasms. You could always say, "Oh, it's just Jack Benny again," and that was all you needed to say. At first glance, his appearance in "To Be or Not To Be" seems a rank piece of miscasting. His role is one in which, with very little rewriting, William Powell, Melby Douglas or Cary Grant would not have been out of place. But the surprise is that Benny, under the magic Lubitsch touch, becomes an adroit farceur and not "just Jack Benny again." There is enough of the old radio Benny to keep his most frantic admirers satisfied, but Lubitsch doesn't allow him to be Jack Benny at the expense of his character.

The picture provides a fitting climax to the career of the late Carole Lombard, presenting her at her loveliest in the type of role she did best. Felix Bressart has a memorable bit as a Shakespearean spear-carrier who gives his greatest performance off stage, and Stanley Ridges is sharply effective as a Nazi agent posing as a benevolent Polish professor. Robert Stack is a handsome young leading man and Sig Rumann does an amusing caricature of a high Nazi. Lubitsch's story is primarily escaped from Gestapo melodrama on the order of "Mister V" and "Night run," but he spreads it thickly with delicious humor and successfully avoids turning it into just another rehash of the old story that is becoming pretty familiar movie material these days.

"Remember the Day"—A-1

"Mr Chips" and "Miss Bishop" should not have surfeited audiences for one more movie about a teacher and her life, particularly when the teacher is so beautifully played by Claudette Colbert and the story, though slight, so richly nostalgic. "Remember the Day" has some of the elements of both of the other movies, with a little touch of "Maedchen in Uniform" added, but Director Henry King, though he retains the necessary sentiment, never allows it to become maudlin.

Miss Colbert is very real and understanding as the teacher and John Payne is again a likable and competent leading man. Douglas Croft is believable as the youngster who falls in love with his teacher and Ann Todd continues to be the one completely natural little girl of the movies. Anne Revere is a realistic young maiden lady school teacher, very earnest and well-meaning, and presumably fresh from normal school. You could get away with murder in Miss Revere's classes but it seems to us that Miss Colbert's class would be more fun. Little girls, however, would undoubtedly prefer the manual training course taught by Mr. Payne. Big girls, too, for that matter.

Macbeth and His Lady Offstage

Maurice Evans peek hastily through the dressing room door at the crowd that lined the backstage corridors at the Auditorium. "What do you think?" he asked his distinguished co-star, Judith Anderson.

"I'm exhausted," she confessed. "I'd like to get back to the hotel as soon as possible. (Miss Anderson's Rochester appearance was her first on the road, illness having kept her off the stage for the three evenings previous.)

"Then let's make a break for it," suggested Mr. Evans. He made it almost to the door before he was recognized. Evans, shorn of the beard and flowing locks of Macbeth, is totally different in appearance.

Miss Anderson had no such luck. Politely but firmly, however, she murmured, "No autographs,

please," as she pushed through the crowd. The crowd followed out to the car and your reporter stepped on the gas to whisk the lady away from her public, barked into a snow-bank and stalled. It was an uncomfortable few moments, but Miss Anderson retained her serenity.

She had a harder time keeping her composure after she returned to her hotel. Leaving the door open for her secretary she went to bed to catch up on a little sleep. Suddenly, just as she was dozing

Evans, "who look at an actor as if he were something in a zoo."

Although a long train ride and two performances in roles that are among the most exhausting in drama had wearied both Mr. Evans and the convalescing Miss Anderson, they were not too tired to express an immense satisfaction at the splendid response of capacity Rochester audiences to the production. They were particularly amazed that, in view of weather conditions, the huge Auditorium was sold out for both performances.

Both stars were very thrilled, also at the response in the audience when Evans in a curtain speech after the matinee, asked everyone who had never seen a

(Continued on Page 17)

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Movie Guide

NEW FILMS REVIEWED

Kid Glove Killer, A-1
Law of the Timber, A-1
Mayor of 4th Street, A-1
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, A-1
Brooklyn Orchid, A-2
Mr. District Attorney in the Carter Case, A-2
There's One Born Every Minute, A-2
The Male Animal, A-3
Three Hearts, B
Where Is My Husband Tonight, B

AT THE THEATERS

PALACE
The Lady Has Plans, B
Mr. Bug Goes to Town, A-1

LOEW'S ROCHESTER

We Were Dancing, B
Joe Smith, American, A-1

CENTURY

Dangerously They Live, A-1
Wild Hill Hickak Ride, A-1

REGENT

Song of the Islands, A-2
The Devil Pays Off (Not classified)

TEMPLE

Remember the Day, A-1
The Body Disappears, A-2

LITTLE

Lydia, A-2

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