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COURIER'S CURRENT CINEMA COMMENTS

By JOHN SPRINGER
EDITORS NOTE: The motion picture "We Were Dancing," originally classified as "B" by the National Legion of Decency has, because of revisions made, been reclassified as "A-2." Listed as "B," this week, by the National organization is "A Gentleman After Dark." Objection: "Inadequate retribution for crimes committed by one of the principals."

"The Male Animal"—A-2

Another of those rare movies—a comedy that is adult, intelligent and genuine, not merely a collection of slapstick gags—has turned up and its appearance is cheering news for those movie fans who were beginning to see Nazi spies and Gestapo chiefs in their sleep. Don't decide that the terms, "intelligent, adult and genuine," infer that you must be Johnny Highbrow to appreciate the picture. For, taken at its face value, "The Male Animal" is funny enough for anybody. The dialogue sparkles, the action moves and every characterization is a gem.

Some audiences will see in it just a delicious ribbing of the time-worn triangle tale; others will get a kick out of its good-natured debunking of the old college rah-rah spirit. And there will be a few who will see both of these angles, but will get a deeper meaning out of the picture, too. Yes, there is a message—but don't let that scare you if you are allergic to messages in the movies. It's very subtly introduced and doesn't interfere with the fun making at all.

Elliot Nugent was co-author (with James Thurber) of the original popular play, had a hand in its production and starred in it on Broadway, so that he knows what he is about in his direction of the picture. It follows the play closely, with due regard for the wider range of the camera. And Nugent is fortunate in his cast.

As Tommy Turner, the young professor who risks his job and wife to make a stand for academic freedom against a fascist-minded board of trustees, Henry Fonda is well-nigh perfect. And once more he backs our opinion of him as the most versatile young actor on the screen. Consider his record—Tom Joad in "Grapes of Wrath," certainly one of the most honest portrayals the screen has ever seen; his powerful portrayal of the bitter, bewildered young criminal in "You Only Live Once"; his realistic portrait of the young Lincoln; his sparkling comedy characterization in "The Lady Eve"; and his memorable playing in such other roles as the taciturn, tobacco-chewing Frank James, outlaw, and the idealistic young "Slim." Now, in "The Male Animal," he plays high comedy with an adroit and skillful touch. Yet, in all the comedy he keeps his characterization so believable—never stooping it at all—that the climactic dramatic moment when he defies the whole college is not the least bit incongruous despite the hilarity which has preceded it. It's a moving and memorable moment in the midst of high comedy and that is acting of the highest order.

Olivia deHavilland plays with shading and charm as the wife and Jack Carson's ex-All American football hero is a shrewdly comic performance. In fact, all of the cast—Joan Leslie, who continues to grow more attractive with each picture, Eugene Pallette, Ivan Simpson, Hattie McDaniel, Herbert Anderson, Don DeFoe and Minna Phillips—contribute notably. And the picture is fresh and continually engaging comedy, which ranges from quiet, penetrating humor to madcap merriment. It is sure of a spot, well toward the top, among the best pictures of 1942.

"The Vanishing Virginian"—A-1

A gentle and likable little picture, "The Vanishing Virginian" studies the human and humorous story of a small-town lawyer and his family of the period around 1913. Rebecca Yancey Williams' book belonged to the same set of autobiographical reminiscences as Clarence Day's "Life With Father," Bellamy Partridge's "Country Lawyer" and Harriett Spence's "One Foot in Heaven." Jan Fontaine's screenplay and Frank Borzage's direction has retained the appeal of the original story of a family steeped in the traditions of Americanism, and the picture has the further advantage of performances by Frank Morgan and Spring By



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