

Movies and Retailers Face Same Problems

Director Says Each Can Prosper From the Other's Experiences

By W. G. Van Schmus

Managing Director, Radio City Music Hall

The Fifth Ave. department store and the de luxe motion picture houses only a few blocks away have more in common than first meets the eye. Each has something to sell, and whether it is entertainment or merchandise it must be done on a large scale. It is not the occasional purchaser of yachts or diamonds or mink coats who spells the success of their enterprise, but the average consumer, the man-on-the-street who buys thousands of hats and shoes and common pins—and theater admissions every year.

To create a desire to satisfy that desire and to bring the customer back again and again is the fundamental problem of both the retailer and the theater manager. It demands showmanship, an understanding of human nature and honesty in keeping faith with the public.

Every merchant who creates an attractive store window to beguile the eye who has a fashion show or gives a gift, must on some sooths the frayed nerves of last-minute Christmas shoppers by cards from a mysterious choir, is proving himself a showman.

Theater Also a Business.

On the other hand, the theater is by the same token—another business in the last analysis. The patron in the front of the house indulges in all the comforts, luxury, glamour and artifice that imagination and ingenuity can contrive, but behind the scenes is a well-ordered, hard-working organization which combines efficiency, system and cooperation to achieve its results as in any successful business enterprise.

Because they have so much in common each can prosper from the other's experience.

Theaters must follow the example set long ago by the Fifth Avenue merchants of using advertisements in the newspapers which are striking by virtue of their simplicity rather than their extravagant claims. By tempering the exaggeration and relying upon simple statements, to sell their product on its merits alone, they better themselves in respecting the intelligence of their prospective public. Good taste and sincerity are rewarded by a will to believe and the creation of confidence on a firm foundation.

Employees Attend Preview.

Every new picture is, in a sense, a gamble, for the public taste is constantly changing. In our own theater we are fortunate in being able to "feel the public's pulse" by previewing each picture before it is booked for an audience of as many as one thousand persons who care to attend, a generous cross-section of all types and tastes. Written comments are studied carefully for the forecast they give of its degree of success.

In the same way we are keenly alive to our audience reaction by means of reports made by members of the staff on any comments or criticisms which we overhear.

All letters from patrons are read with care. Any legitimate criticism or complaint receives prompt attention and proffered suggestions are often constructive. It is surprising the number of gracious responses that are evoked by an intelligent, straightforward reply to a query.

It is our effort to learn not only what our audiences may like or dislike but also, and in this way more closely approximate the ideal of perfect entertainment.

Creating Confidence.

Occasionally approaching perfection is not enough, however, to insure success. It is the quality of any product that counts and only by consistently maintaining a certain standard is it possible to create confidence. Motion pictures still have a way to go in this respect, but more and more are producers awakening to the general interest of the great American public and beginning to branch out into new and experimental fields. So long as the evil of the double-feature continues the progress of the industry is impeded.

The first-run houses are able to fight it best by proving in dollars and cents the superiority of quality over quantity to the satisfaction of the public, the exhibitor and the producer alike. Building up faith, creating a "motion picture habit," is one problem of the theater manager which is best accomplished by adherence to a strong policy.

In the last analysis the retail store and the motion picture theater find their primary objective to be of service to the public. We are measured by the same yardstick—ability but our ways are additive, to be honest and exciting at the same time; our ability to maintain a certain standard and create a reputation; our ability to provide a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere, create a "mental set," a frame worthy of the picture within.

Gangster Plot for Musical

What happens when gangsters take over a recording studio forms the plot of Republic's "Manhattan Merry-Go-Round," a new musical which may become an annual feature. Incidentally, the scheme of the plot offers a fine opportunity to introduce the variety of talent that has come to characterize the screen's musical spectacles.

The gangsters, who are headed by Leo Carrillo, are loath sharks and they take command of the studio when someone defaults on interest. Then the complications start, most of them arising from the activities of James Gleason, who persuades such stars as Cab Calloway and Ted Lewis to perform at the point of a revolver.

While waiting for one of these performers to appear a young man named Joe DiMaggio shows up and he is taken for an opera singer.

Starred in the picture are Phil Regan, the ex-Brooklyn policeman who became one of radio's first stars, Ann Dvorak, Henry Armetta,



Season Offers Bette Davis

Three years ago a young lady from Massachusetts named Bette Davis played the self-centered waitress who spurns the love of a crippled and sensitive boy in the picturization of W. Somerset Maugham's distinguished novel, "Of Human Bondage." The crippled youth was Leslie Howard.

Since then Miss Davis has made a name for herself as one of the most capable actresses in American motion pictures. Last year she won the award of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the most distinguished performance of the year.

And now Miss Davis and Mr. Howard are reunited in a Warner Brothers film which will be released during the fall. "It's Love I'm After" is the name of it. It's a light bit of comedy about the adventures of an actor and an actress who make love on the stage—and off.

There are not so many in Hollywood who would be capable of the change of pace, but Miss Davis and Mr. Howard live up to the traditions of their craft.

A cigaret helps Bette Davis consider her lines in the Warner's film, "It's Love I'm After," that brings her together again with Leslie Howard.

Greta Garbo is more beautiful than ever as the love of Napoleon in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's forthcoming "Conquest."

Between shootings of Paramount's gigantic panorama of the old West, "Wells-Fargo," Frances Dee takes a leisurely stroll.

Greta Garbo's Director Explains How It's Done

Clarence Brown always smiles vaguely when someone asks how he directs Greta Garbo. Then, if he feels like talking, he says:—

"You don't direct her. You just let her do what she wants to do."

Although that sounds a bit paradoxical, Mr. Brown knows what he is talking about because he has directed the Swedish star in seven productions, including her latest, "Conquest," with Charles Boyer, which will be released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer later in the fall.

Sign of Herself.

"She comes on the set sure of herself, sure of what she is going to do." Mr. Brown goes on, "and she has an uncanny gift of expressing emotion."

"When she decides on the meaning of a scene, she needs only to tell her how to play it on the board to read her lines. A suggestion as to the right camera angle, the right movement for pictorial composition, may be necessary, but that's all. After all, a player cannot see himself."

"Once in a while we differ on the significance of a scene. Then we argue it all out until we are sure of ourselves. But that does not involve the question of how the scene is to be acted."

Studied Napoleon.

"'Conquest' is the story of a little known interlude in the life of Napoleon, his romance with the Polish countess, Marie Walewska, who was probably the only woman who ever really understood the French Emperor. Miss Garbo, Mr. Boyer, who plays Napoleon, and the

others in the cast became bibliophiles, more or less, during the filming of the picture in order that their characterizations might be vivid, yet consistent with historical records.

"Would she have done this?" Miss Garbo would ask Brown when some little action was in doubt. "Do you think this is in character?"

Memoirs and letters then would be consulted so that Marie Walewska might emerge as a woman, rather than a figure in history. Often Charles Whittacker, research expert, and Bernard Hyman, producer, were called into conversation to try to settle a point.

Personal Research.

In her dressing room on this set Miss Garbo kept such books as Winter's "The New Poland," "Poland," the Gasiorowski novel on which the play was based; Breed's "Opinions and Reflections of Napoleon," and a volume on French etiquette in the period of 1800 for ready reference. She conducted more personal research for country. Since then he has directed

the role than for any previous picture except "Queen Christina" and worked for days with Adrian on the twelve costumes she wears in the picture.

He in "Anna Christie," "A Woman of Affairs," "Romance," "Inspiration," "Anna Karenina," and now in "Conquest." Only once have directors have ever directed her more than once.—Edmund Goulding in "Love" and "Grand Hotel"; and George Fitzmaurice in "Mata Hari" and "Mysterious Lady."

The really remarkable thing about Garbo's work is her absolute sureness." Brown says. "She studies every bit of information, rehearses everything in her dressing room and when she walks out, she is utterly confident of what she ought to do. It is this trait that makes her a perfect actress. There is never a hint of doubt or uncertainty in her work."

Directed Silent Films.

Brown started directing silent pictures with Clara Kimball Young and Rudolf Valentino twenty years ago

and he was one of the few who succeeded in bridging the gap between the techniques necessary for silent and sound treatment. His first work with Garbo was "Flesh and the Devil," with John Gilbert, which was her first great success in this field.

Worried About Scene.

One morning Brown seemed worried after she finished a scene and she asked him what was wrong.

"I don't know exactly," he was said, "but something was out of tune."

Then a wardrobe attendant rushed frantically out on the set with a gold brooch in her hand.

Garbo had forgotten to put it on her gown, and this was what had bothered her the day before.

Garbo laughed apologetically.

"I was so busy learning my lines that I didn't look into the mirror before coming out," she explained.

THE LONG, LONG STORY OF A QUEEN.

One of the great film spectacles of the season will be "Victoria the Queen," produced by Herbert Wilcox and distributed by RKO-Radio Pictures. This picture presents Anna Neagle as the magnificent queen in gradually aging sequence from her coronation at 19 to her diamond jubilee at 70.

"Sixty years a queen!" Miss Neagle carries the difficult role on through scene after scene with ease and sublime understanding, say those who have seen the film in preview. Anton Walbrook plays the role of Albert, and their love story is one of the tenderest sequences ever captured on the screen.

Practically Every Star in Movieland

Appearing in One or More Pictures

(Continued from first page)

Frances Dee Beats Deadline

Let us, for the moment, consider the case of Frances Dee and how it came about that she is a Hollywood movie queen, to use a phrase that you never see in Variety. You remember that Miss Dee turned in a striking performance in "Souls on Sea," and this winter you can see her in Paramount's historical film, "Wells Fargo," an account of the development of the American West from 1844 to 1870.

Miss Dee was a sophomore at the University of Chicago in 1930.

Her family took her out to the West coast during a vacation, and Frances thought it would be grand to get in the movies. Her family thought her idea was foolish, but they let her stay in Hollywood on one condition:—If she was still an extra at the end of one year she would return to the university to finish her studies.

Time has passed and Miss Dee was still an extra. Then, one day, when the year was nearly up, she was having luncheon in the commissary and the appreciative French eyes of Maurice Chevalier lighted on her. Well, it was the Cinderella story all over again. Soon she was playing opposite him in "Playboy of Paris"; mama and papa never alluded to the subject of college again. Frances has gone from one part to another, each a little better than the last.

Isn't that a pleasant little story?

Musical Films.

Even in the musical films, producers are giving increasing attention to the type and quality of

the music.

And that's a quick preview of the biggest season Hollywood has ever planned.

Practically Every Star in Movieland

Appearing in One or More Pictures

(Continued from first page)

Frances Dee Beats Deadline

Let us, for the moment, consider the case of Frances Dee and how it came about that she is a Hollywood movie queen, to use a phrase that you never see in Variety. You remember that Miss Dee turned in a striking performance in "Souls on Sea," and this winter you can see her in Paramount's historical film, "Wells Fargo," an account of the development of the American West from 1844 to 1870.

Miss Dee was a sophomore at the University of Chicago in 1930.

Her family took her out to the West coast during a vacation, and Frances thought it would be grand to get in the movies. Her family thought her idea was foolish, but they let her stay in Hollywood on one condition:—If she was still an extra at the end of one year she would return to the university to finish her studies.

Time has passed and Miss Dee was still an extra. Then, one day, when the year was nearly up, she was having luncheon in the commissary and the appreciative French eyes of Maurice Chevalier lighted on her. Well, it was the Cinderella story all over again. Soon she was playing opposite him in "Playboy of Paris"; mama and papa never alluded to the subject of college again. Frances has gone from one part to another, each a little better than the last.

Isn't that a pleasant little story?

Musical Films.

Even in the musical films, producers are giving increasing attention to the type and quality of

the music.

And that's a quick preview of the biggest season Hollywood has ever planned.

Practically Every Star in Movieland

Appearing in One or More Pictures

(Continued from first page)

Frances Dee Beats Deadline

Let us, for the moment, consider the case of Frances Dee and how it came about that she is a Hollywood movie queen, to use a phrase that you never see in Variety. You remember that Miss Dee turned in a striking performance in "Souls on Sea," and this winter you can see her in Paramount's historical film, "Wells Fargo," an account of the development of the American West from 1844 to 1870.

Miss Dee was a sophomore at the University of Chicago in 1930.

Her family took her out to the West coast during a vacation, and Frances thought it would be grand to get in the movies. Her family thought her idea was foolish, but they let her stay in Hollywood on one condition:—If she was still an extra at the end of one year she would return to the university to finish her studies.

Time has passed and Miss Dee was still an extra. Then, one day, when the year was nearly up, she was having luncheon in the commissary and the appreciative French eyes of Maurice Chevalier lighted on her. Well, it was the Cinderella story all over again. Soon she was playing opposite him in "Playboy of Paris"; mama and papa never alluded to the subject of college again. Frances has gone from one part to another, each a little better than the last.

Isn't that a pleasant little story?

Musical Films.

Even in the musical films, producers are giving increasing attention to the type and quality of

the music.

And that's a quick preview of the biggest season Hollywood has ever planned.

Practically Every Star in Movieland

Appearing in One or More Pictures

(Continued from first page)

Frances Dee Beats Deadline

Let us, for the moment, consider the case of Frances Dee and how it came about that she is a Hollywood movie queen, to use a phrase that you never see in Variety. You remember that Miss Dee turned in a striking performance in "Souls on Sea," and this winter you can see her in Paramount's historical film, "Wells Fargo," an account of the development of the American West from 1844 to 1870.

Miss Dee was a sophomore at the University of Chicago in 1930.

Her family took her out to the West coast during a vacation, and Frances thought it would be grand to get in the movies. Her family thought her idea was foolish, but they let her stay in Hollywood on one condition:—If she was still an extra at the end of one year she would return to the university to finish her studies.

Time has passed and Miss Dee was still an extra. Then, one day, when the year was nearly up, she was having luncheon in the commissary and the appreciative French eyes of Maurice Chevalier lighted on her. Well, it was the Cinderella story all over again. Soon she was playing opposite him in "Playboy of Paris"; mama and papa never alluded to the subject of college again. Frances has gone from one part to another, each a little better than the last.</