

MASSIVE FOX USE OF ABC SELL

Too Many Writers Can't Shake Their War Years; Never Write A Good Woman's Role—Deborah Kerr

Hollywood, April 20. Hung up on their own war experiences and violence in general, male screenwriters continue to weave masculine-slanted filmic tales to the exclusion of good femme stories, insists Deborah Kerr, in Hollywood for role in Warner Bros. "Marriage on the Rocks."

"Writers still haven't got the war out of their systems," she avers, "They're still writing about fighting and relationships of adventurous men. Many of our best writers are in their 40's and 50's and their strongest and most vital experiences remain those they had in war and in the company of other men."

"They're the product of an era of war and violence. They're obsessed with war as well as crime and violence of all kinds. There are very few womens' stories being written—it's harder and harder to find them today."

Miss Kerr waited nearly 18 months after completing Metro's "Night of the Iguana" to go into a new film. "Marriage" lured her out of her self-imposed inactivity with its promise of a career departure—playing broad comedy.

Actress committed to do the film on basis of treatment which she had read and under pressure of Frank Sinatra's insistence—he co-stars in addition to producing through Artanis Prods. Sinatra phoned her in Switzerland from Italian location of "Von Ryan's Express" and gave her the pitch. Normally she wouldn't agree to do a film sans finished script in hand but says, "there are just one or two people on whose words I would do it." Sinatra, with whom she did "From Here to Eternity" is one, Fred Zinnemann (he helmed actress "Eternity" stint and "Sundowners" as well) is another.

Miss Kerr hasn't had a film here since "Beloved Infidel" for 20th-Fox in 1959. Physically, she says, the town has changed "enormously" but professionally she finds the scene status quo.

Anhalt Takes Loss For His Break-in As a Director

Hollywood, April 20. Edward Anhalt, who copped an Oscar for his "Becket" script, has wrapped his first directional assignment and reports experience was a monetary flop but educationally, a success.

To direct "A Time For Killing" from his own script for NBC-TV's Chrysler Theatre Anhalt had to come across with \$2500 for membership in the Screen Directors Guild. Writer, who is in the \$5,000 a week screenwriting bracket, was paid \$1,650 for his work—for a net loss of \$850.

Purpose of venture was to eventually aid Anhalt in getting a shot at directing a feature. To chore he brought past film editing experience, a couple of outings as a test film director and many years of set-side observation.

Says Anhalt of experience, "I found that what other directors had been telling me for years—that is an enormous difference between what's on paper and what plays on the set. I was constantly re-writing on the set. . . . From the experience I gained more respect for directors."

"A lot of people told me not to do it. They said unless you are extremely lucky or extraordinarily talented it doesn't help to direct tv because of the contempt in which television is held by film people. . . . So I deliberately chose an extremely difficult property so that

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PREM PROMISES PAR SEVEN FUTURE FILMS

Paramount Pictures has extended its deal with Otto Preminger from three to seven pictures, to be made within an indefinite period.

First film in deal, "In Harm's Way," is now in release. Second, "Hurry Sundown," starts shooting in the South this fall. No other properties are definite.

Preminger is now making "Bunny Lake Is Missing" for Columbia, his last for that company though a couple of others were originally announced. Deal for two more with United Artists is still in effect, but projects, including much-postponed "Genius," are in nebulous state.

MGM Pace Sturdy; TV Residuals As Golden Fountain

MGM first-half figures for fiscal 1965 showed company in second year of comeback, with net profits 91% ahead of corresponding period a year ago. But earnings, statement indicates that almost no profit was chalked up from theatrical distribution of features, and that sales to television were deciding factor.

Gross figures from features and shorts show \$57,473,000 taken in from theatres and \$6,943,000 from sales to television, but there is no breakdown between theatrical and tv distribution for net figure. Since almost entire amounts received from tv are clear profit, however, inescapable conclusion is that \$6,592,000 net from feature films and shorts is entirely, or almost entirely, from tv sales.

This despite fact that blockbuster "Molly Brown" was in considerable circulation during first quarter, and other films, notably "Americanization of Emily" and "Your Cheatin' Heart" were grossing well.

Other contributors to \$8,193,000 total net, before taxes, were tv programs, \$332,000; and records and music, \$1,152,000. Though deals totaling \$22,720,705 for sale of features and shorts to NBC, CBS and syndication were made during first half, no income from this source is included in net reported for period.

Profits after taxes for 28-week period ending March 18 were \$3,611,000 or \$1.38 a share, compared to \$1,886,000 or 73 cents for corresponding period in fiscal 1964. Second quarter earnings were \$2,045,000 or 78 cents, against \$1,201,000 or 47 cents last year.

Metro proxy Robert H. O'Brien, in his letter to stockholders, predicted an increase for entire year over the \$7,390,476 reported for fiscal 1964. Loss in 1963 was \$17,478,965.

Gross revenue for first half of 1965 was \$88,616,000, compared to \$87,703,000 the year before.

Solo Aide to MacEwen

Robert Solo has been appointed assistant to Walter MacEwen, executive associate of Jack L. Warner, in Warner Bros.' feature division. He'll assist MacEwen in creative areas as well as business affairs, starting at Burbank studio in early May.

Solo, who started in film business with the Ashley-Steiner agency in its motion picture department, left agency a year ago for an executive post at 20th-Fox.

POE SEES HOME SETS BIZ KEY

By VINCENT CANBY

A new, actually precedental, use of television as a selling medium for motion pictures is being undertaken by 20th-Fox which has contracted for a total of 189 one-minute spots on the ABC-TV network over a 52-week period starting this week. 20th, in effect, will become the first motion picture company to participate, on a continuing basis, in the sponsorship of network television shows.

The ABC-TV buy is a favored project of 20th exec veepee Seymour Poe who has long felt that the film industry has hardly scratched the surface potential of television as a film promotional medium. While the major distributors have occasionally bought time on net shows in the past, such buys have been confined to individual shows for the advertising of individual films. Television as an ad medium heretofore has been utilized primarily on the local level.

Results of the 20th move will be studied carefully by the other distributors, as well, perhaps, by competing ad media, though Poe says at this time the money involved in the ABC deal will be "supplementing" 20th's regular sell budget, and not taking away funds which might have been spent elsewhere.

The 20th buy breaks down this way: 54 one-minute spots on ABC-TV's Saturday afternoon Major League Championship Baseball show, covering 23 weeks starting this Saturday (24); 135 one-minute spots on ABC-TV's Nightlife show, covering a 52-week period starting Monday (26). The baseball show has a once-a-week slot, while Nightlife, ABC-TV's answer to NBC-TV's Tonight show, is on five nights a week.

According to Poe, who cohosted a press conference in New York yesterday (Tues.) with ABC-TV prez Tom Moore, 20th retains the right to slot its spots as it sees fit, though he doesn't anticipate ever using more than three one-minute spots in any one show. Cost of the 189 spots, if bought individually, would run upwards of \$2,000,000, but because of the size and scope of this buy, 20th enjoys a substantial rate reduction. (Because of this, cost is estimated at about \$1,200,000.)

20th's "message" thus will be exposed in the 191 cities covered by the ABC net, reaching a total (in ad agency-type figuring) of 3/4 of a billion tv sets over the 12-month period.

The cost of the tele buy will be amortized among 15 pictures, with 20th utilizing the spots not only

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MCA Credo on Screen Material: 'No Unsolicited Manuscripts'; It's Not 'Angel,' But a Scout

EMBASSY GUARANTEES IN GERMANY, AUSTRIA

A deal involving \$2,000,000 in guarantees, has been signed between Embassy Pictures and Germany's Interfilm for distribution in Germany and Austria of 12 Embassy productions.

This is continuation of long association between two companies. Agreement was concluded between Embassy veeep Leonard Lightstone and Interfilm's Willie Kuschel and Heinz Diedrich.

Brisson Readies 'Passion Flower' For Stage, Screen

Hollywood, April 20.

Producer Fred Brisson has acquired stage and motion picture rights to the Wolf Mankowitz book, "Passion Flower Hotel," and has set John Barry to clef the score, Trevor Peacock to supply lyrics. Brisson, who will stage the play in London's West End mid-July, plans to convert same to a feature film and subsequently bring it to Broadway.

Having wound score chores on Columbia's "King Rat," Barry today hops to Nassau to dig up native musical ideas for his fourth James Bond film assignment, "Thunderball." He then returns to his London homebase, where he'll commence cleffing prior to undertaking the "Passion" assignment.

On another take, Barry confides his share of "Goldfinger," which he scored for United Artists, comes to around \$150,000 to date, including all performances. The UA album was released only last Christmas. He adds the soundtrack was the first such LP from a non-musical pic to hit top 10 in England.

Ernest Sands Adds Braid

Ernest Sands, who became Paramount's assistant sales chief at beginning of year, has been named a vice president of Paramount Film Distributing subsidiary.

Sands was formerly general sales manager for Allied Artists, and prior to that was sales boss at Astor Pictures.

Facing Art, Middle Class Goes Numb

New York Times columnist Russell Baker delighted many industryites with his Washington-dated article, "They've Snatched Bogart," in the April 1 Times. Piece was a wry look at the indignities which must be borne by film patrons since films have suddenly been popularized as "arty" among the middle class and, as Baker observes, "when the middle class finds itself confronted with art, it tends to go to pieces."

"In the heyday of Hollywood," he goes on, "a trip to the movies was undertaken much in the same spirit as a trip to Coney Island. . . . By contrast, a trip to the movies now is often an ordeal from beginning to end," including talk about cutting, montage and the \$2 rap at the boxoffice. Lobbies, he says, have "been stripped of the plush excesses which made the most unlettered feel superior" and in their place are "paintings, a coffee pot, some china and a few people sitting about over coffee who have doubtless been hired to sit there and glance at you distastefully."

There are still fun pictures, he thinks, like "The Train" and "Jules and Jim," but there are also experiences like Ingmar Bergman's "The Silence," which he calls "a long, boring movie about some people who cannot communicate with each other."

Bergman's statement about the problems of communication, Baker adds, "is driven brutally home when the movie-goer leaves the theatre. The lobby is filled with people who have been bored catatonic for two years, but there people are incapable of communicating their boredom. They cannot say, as they could have in the swinish atmosphere of the Roxy, 'I thought it would never end.' Instead, submitting to the tyranny of cinema, they are forced to enthuse about Bergman's camera work, the symbols, the cutting, the sense of spiritual desolation, etc. In the old Roxy, you could have said, 'It's a piece of cheese.' In the new cinema you mutter, 'It's a cultural experience' and change the subject."

MCA is expanding its search for potential film properties. Principal sources will be theatrical productions and published literary works. With the former, however, the company wants it clear that "We're no 'angels'" and with the latter, while it is interested in all types of writers, well-known or still to be discovered, it will not accept unsolicited material.

"Our interest in properties, whether stage or literary," William Darrid, executive head of MCA's theatre department, told VARIETY last week, "is in their usefulness as film or television material, not in actual production. We are not interested in terms of making money as Broadway producers, that isn't the purpose. It is for the acquisition of a property, or even some phase of a property."

"This could, of course, include pre-production investment as in the case of Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon's "A Very Rich Woman." New product is constantly necessary and the theatre and literature will always be the two principal sources. With our involvement in motion pictures and television, we have a tremendous and constant need for good story material."

He explained that in the case of a Broadway musical, MCA's interest could be from several angles. The story itself for use as a film for Universal Pictures, as a tv production, the original cast rights for Decca Records, the music publishing rights for Leeds Music, etc. On the other hand, only one phase might be of interest and each of the MCA subsidiaries can work autonomously in the acquisition.

A frequent headache in purchasing properties for filmmaking, Darrid said, is that some theatrical producers and writers try to second guess what film producers will want and sometimes ruin the property by obvious slanting towards a potential screenplay. As most purchased properties have to be adapted, anyhow, they'd do much better to avoid this pitfall.

"Many film companies have neglected the off-Broadway theatre," added Darrid, "and because we are so deeply involved in tele-

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Another Vidpic Production Co. Turns Theatrical

It's becoming a trend: producers of tv commercials and industrial films moving over into feature film production. Latest to make the move is the New York-based Communications Group, headed by Gerald Auerbach, which with Argentine producer Orestes Trucco, starts production May 3 in Buenos Aires on "Stay Tuned for Terror," a Richard Conte starrer.

Film will be produced by Caldwell Pictures, a corporation set up by Gerald Pictures, a division of Communications Group, and Trucco. Richard C. Meyer is veeep in charge of production for Gerald.

Pic, a suspense film, will be shot in Eastman Color and in English on a budget of about \$150,000. Emilio Vieyra will direct the cast which, aside from Conte, will be recruited in B.A. It's hoped the film will be the first of a continuing program from Gerald.

Other commercial-industrial outfits which have expanded to feature films include Martin Ransohoff's Filmways, MPO Videotronics, which just set up a feature division under Paul Heller, and the Ernie Pintoff organization, which has just completed "Harvey Middleman, Fireman," for Columbia.