

# Palm Springs Goes Hollywood With Kleig Lights and Celebs At Opening of Plaza Theatre

Palm Springs went Hollywood last Saturday night when the Plaza Theatre had its grand opening with the world premiere of *Camille*. Powerful searchlights sent long moving shafts of light into the desert sky long before the hour of the opening arrived. A full hour before *Camille* was scheduled, a dense crowd pressed against the roped-off pathway kept clear for the arrival of first-nighters by police officers. Soon the long sleek cars began sliding up to disgorge their occupants at the head of the solid packed rows of bystanders. Under floodlights bright enough to search the soul, movie celebrities and villagers in best bib and tucker, made their way regally or otherwise across the walk, up the wide shallow steps and along the open patio to the theatre entrance. As a setting for the display of important and brilliant people, the approach to the Plaza Theatre has few equals.

A battery of camera men in Tuxedos saluted the more gilded customers with bursts of flashlight. Cal Pearce, not in Tuxedo, but looking tall and handsome, announced arrivals through a microphone, apparently for the benefit of the arrivals themselves, as most of the innocent bystanders knew them better than he did.

The occasion marked the largest turn-out of dinner coats and even tails, ever seen in Palm Springs ever, and evening gowns were brilliant and modish. Very beautiful was Mrs. Robert Ransom in a crimson velvet wrap with high fur collar; very beautiful was Miss Dolly Harrison in violet evening gown, violets in her hair and grey fur wrap; very also was Ona Brown Barnes in a metallic brocaded gown in divers shades, which swept the pavement with an expensive swish; Mrs. Nellie N. Coffman wore black chiffon ornamented by a single pink camelia; Louella Parsons, who was in

her party, wore black with a silver fox cape, May Robson, also in the party, was scintillating as anything in white with sparkling sequins and a diamond dog collar. Countess de Jordy was arresting with one of the new fangled hair-dos, a creation of red flowers and great vivacity, her gown red under a fur wrap. Barbara Stanwyck, on the arm of Robert Taylor, was swathed to her red hair in ermine; also swathed in ermine, sables and assorted jewels were Viscountess Castle-Rosa, Mrs. Richard Hoffman, Lady Tredegar and Mrs. S. K. Lathrop, various unidentified handsome elegants and a large collection of minor movie stars.

Once in the theatre, the audience which filled every single one of the 850 lodge seats upholstered in old ivory leather, had ample opportunity to admire the unique and artistic interior. Spread above them was a sky of midnight blue and twinkling stars, about them were the picturesque walls of a street in Spain; in front of them was a blue shimmering curtain which ultimately swung back to reveal the master of ceremonies, Ralph Bellamy. Mr. Bellamy looked handsome and well groomed in full dress, executed his duties with the charm and simplicity which have made him not only a successful movie star but a man of many and sincere friendships.

First to be introduced was Mrs. Nellie N. Coffman, who began a suave set speech, got mired in the rest and recreational facilities of the theatre, came through with, "I can't think of the next word, 'cause I'm scared!" From then on it was plain sailing. She said what she thought about Earle and his new theatre and her thoughts were proud and happy. Others who contributed their quota to the success story of the evening were Louella Parson, May Robson, Pete Smith, Bob Woolsey, Frank Mor-

gan, who allowed he was an old habitue of Palm Springs, Robert Taylor who hoped the audience would like Garbo and himself in the premiere of *Camille*, Charlie Hill of Lone Palm who did some tune detecting, the boys of the Dunes who said it with music for Al Wertheimer, Bob Woolsey, another Palm Springs native son, Reginald Owen.

Fewest words were said by Earle Strebe, manager and lessor of the new theatre.

After news flashes, a Pete Smith sports short and an inane comedy about shoes, the audience settled back for a good stiff jolt of Garbo and Robert Taylor in the world premiere of *Camille*. By the time this high romance set in old Paris had reached its tragic close, there wasn't a dry eye in the house and most of the audience adjourned to the Dunes to solace its sadness.

Although it was about midnight before the first showing ended, a second show was presented for those whose best efforts had failed to secure tickets for the premiere.

All in all, according to old habitues like Frank Morgan, it was an epoch in Palm Springs history never to be forgot by those who participated therein.

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