

WESTERN THEATER OPENED

Warner Brothers' New Playhouse on Wilshire Inspires Unique First-Night Arrangements

(Reprinted from Thursday's late edition)

BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

Bringing added show-world luster to Wilshire Boulevard and creating a link between downtown and outlying first-run film playhouses, Warner Brothers' new Western Theater held forth with a festive housewarming last evening. Ceremonies of dedication, elaborate display in connection with the arrival of the stars and the first showing here of George Arliss' "Alexander Hamilton" were events of the celebration, which marks a pioneering effort in what might be termed new theatrical territory.

Wilshire at the intersection of Western avenue, where the theater is located, was uniquely spanned by a bridge over which the audience for the opening crossed to enter the theater. Stars, film executives and civic personages were among those welcomed by theater attaches, radio announcers and photographers, while the crowd stood on the street below and watched the procession passing across the arch of welcome, which was illuminated by flower-like electroliers in vivid ensemble of color.

This was something altogether different in display, as members of the audience heretofore have passed between the files of onlookers on the ground level. Access to the theater was thus made comparatively easy although the traffic and crowds were heavy in the vicinity.

The dedication was conducted with William Powell as master of ceremonies and the speakers included Harry S. Hargrave of the Uptown Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Porter, Senator Samuel M. Shortridge, Joseph Scott and J. L. Warner. Preceding the dedication a vocal rendition was given of "The Star Spangled Banner," with a patriotic tableau and immediately following the film program was presented, including news reel, comedy, short comedy, "Looney Tunes," organ solo by Albert Hay Malotte and ultimately "Alexander Hamilton."

The theater itself, modernistic in style, impresses the beholder by its quiet color tones, pastel green verging on blue and the suggestion of mauve and old rose under the lights, with not-too-obtrusive gold. There is a spacious and vaulted foyer that carries out similar color harmonies.

Interesting on the program were some films showing Western avenue, Wilshire and vicinity a little more than a cowpath of days gone by. The development was thus interestingly indicated to the position of the intersection as one of the busiest in the world today.

Henry de Rouiet, as builder of the theater, was presented on the screen to make a brief talk preliminary to this film, and Mrs. Germaine Pellissier was introduced during the ceremonies from the audience and took a bow.

The Arliss feature necessarily will be the center of attraction, in ad-

dition to the theater itself, during its stay here, and it is the first film to follow in the wake of the star's brilliant success in "The Millionaire." Again Arliss returns to the historical hero—a type which is associated with his present high favor with audiences, since the first talking picture in which he appeared was "Disraeli."

"Alexander Hamilton" depicts a period of history virtually unexploited on the screen, namely the building of America after the Revolutionary War. Washington and Jefferson, besides Hamilton and other figures of the political evolvments of the period, are depicted in the story that tells of the struggle to unify the aims and ideals of the various States after peace was established. In all of this Hamilton is the dramatic figure, heavily opposed politically, and even incriminated in a sort of blackmail plot, because of a woman who seeks his protection and in whom he becomes romantically interested.

The picture is a worthy enterprise, sustained in its qualities of appeal largely through the star, who even though he has to talk excessively at times, manages to do this with a grace and polish that cause the polemics to be highly effective. Arliss proves in this film that he has an unmistakable command of the light and shade of voice whether he is dramatically haranguing a vindictive mob; or pleading sympathetically for the leniency of his political opponents. There is no such craft and willness in the role as there was in "Disraeli," and Hamilton as a film character is less interesting, but Arliss makes the role forceful and dominating.

The picture itself inclines more heavily to talk than pictures should, but is a dignified, painstaking and beneficial accomplishment, worthwhile particularly in some of its patriotic elements.

Doris Kenyon is the wife of Hamilton, and June Collyer the lady who lures the statesman, while Alan Mowbray as Washington and Montague Love as Jefferson do the primary historical honors. Dudley Digges and Ralf Harold are more maleficent presences. The film from a stage play was written by Arliss himself and Mary Hamlin while John Adolfi directed.