

PREMIERE

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'Reap the Wild Wind' Lusty Sea Thriller

BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

A new theater dedicated to pictures, a 30th anniversary in the films of a producer-director, who has stood out indefatigably against time's changes, and a production of flaunting excitement and tempest-tossed pictorial effects last night furnished the main components for Hollywood's first big wartime premiere. Even with suppressions invoked by the present world conflict, this illuminated opening more than attained the gala distinction.

The theater, former El Capitan, made its debut completely redone in the interior as the Paramount Hollywood. It is a resplendently modernized establishment with waves of blue forming its sides, and a coppery curtain that fairly dazzles. A new peak of comfort has been devised in seating arrangements, especially in the upper balcony with its loges.

CERTAIN OF POPULARITY

The initial film, which is on view today in regular showing manner is Cecil B. De Mille's "Reap the Wild Wind," which looks like sure-fire box office. In fact, it shows that once again its chief, who started in California in 1912, can go all out, and over the hills and far away in time and space to insure that his audience lacks naught of excitement. Whether this excitement be real or the mammoth theatrical—and he rather specializes in the latter—he succeeds again in keeping the pictorial panorama at a summit.

This time it is the mighty crests of waves on a tempest-ridden ocean that most attracts him, and he makes the camera wrestle with them valiantly. Meanwhile he gets an effect of turbulence and storm throughout his production with its shipwrecks, marauding salvaging expeditions, human conflicts inspired by love, hate and greed. Ultimately he even drags in a big blue-eyed octopus to supply a tumultuous climax beneath the waters.

MOST AQUATIC OPUS

In short, I would be inclined to say that this is De Mille's most aqueous picture ever—despite he has shunned the bathtub. I might even be tempted to assert, were it not so woefully bromidic, that he had done everything but drag in the kitchen sink in this one.

But what he uses of dependable, splendid, and even hckumish expedients, does count up to make this film, despite its banal and ordinary moments, one of his most remarkable syntheses, and De Mille's films are inevitably in a measure synthetic.

Whether you cavil at a certain lack of artistry, condemn De Mille's almost wilful flamboyancy, you can never say that he doesn't hit straight out for what the majority of the public want, and give it to them with the touch of grandeur.

EXCEPTIONAL CAST

His "Reap the Wild Wind" has one of the most amazing casts he has ever assembled, color that never ceases to flaunt itself exuberantly, and action and word at high staccato. Further-

more he packs the whole affair with plot and situations that continually strive and strain for the maximum of interest.

All in all he gives his audience a show, and one that most of them will probably want to see more than once for the sake of its enlivenment.

Story of the film unfolds in earlier annals of America. It has its setting among the reefs of Florida and in the vicinity of Charleston and southward. Mostly it is sea swept, depicting activities of salvage pirates who work in the fifth-column manner and manage always to cover their nefarious practices in a legal way.

De Mille himself, now renowned as a radio commentator, speaks a lengthy foreword, while beautiful panoramas of ships and seas are revealed.

He introduces most of his characters quickly in a turbulent sequence concerning a wreck. Disclosed as the main menace of the film is Raymond Massey, attorney and salvager. His rival is the girl played by Paulette Goddard, who is a bit of the Scarlett type, with a man's kind of courage. She, too, takes a flyer at salvaging, although she is no wily schemer.

STORMY EVENTS

The captain, whose vessel is wrecked, is nursed by her of injuries he has suffered at the hands of his villainish first mate on the ship, and she falls in love with him.

A romantic conflict later develops when she meets the attorney of the ship line, which is fighting the piratical salvagers. The two men play a big part in her fate, while she herself, one way and another, spells plenty of trouble.

Shanghaiing, a courtroom battle, the hero's failure to remain true to his duties as a captain, a final delve into the submarine depths by the girl's two rivals, all have a part in the stormy events, with real hurricanes in the background.

Youngsters especially will prob-



MUTUAL ADMIRATION—While Mrs. De Mille watches, Paulette Goddard congratulates C. B. on "Reap the Wild Wind," and he in turn praises her portrayal in the film which opened last night with a gala premiere at the Paramount Hollywood.

ably go wild about "Reap the Wild Wind," and the young in heart won't be far behind them in their acceptance of the feature, which is splendiferous pictorially wild, unbelievable at times, but at all odds enormously engrossing.

Best of the performances in its reality and conviction is that of Raymond Massey. His is competent acting in the highest degree. Ray Milland is also more than capable in his interpretation while Lynne Overman seems at home with the elements in a delightful way.

There is no denying the competence of Paulette Goddard for the De Mille demands, and the picture will undoubtedly mean the intensifying of her popularity, despite the role has many phony attributes. She evidences tremendous spirit in the interpretation.

CAST APPRAISED

Susan Hayward is pleasing but pallid in this. One is rather disappointed in the opportunity afforded her in view of all the advance singsonging, but at all events she is attractive. Martha O'Driscoll flashes rather brilliantly through a few scenes.

John Wayne is fullfledged in his most natural way. De Mille kept him on a fine keel throughout and he too will benefit from the engagement.

Also De Mille gives excellent values to the work of Robert

Preston, who will go far on the strength of his portrayal.

De Mille has always had marked success in the use of players, and casts them to decided advantage. Among the train who shine out if only briefly are Louise Beavers, Walter Hampden, Elisabeth Risdon, Hedda Hopper, Victor Kilian, Oscar Polk, Janet Beecher and numerous others.

Screen play for "Reap the Wild Wind," taken from a magazine story by Thelma Strable, was written by Alan LeMay, Charles Bennett and Jesse Lasky Jr., while Victor Milner and William V. Skall were directors of photography.