



Lights, Camera, Action!

By DAN MERKUR

Samuel Goldwyn is a rather ignorant man, who professed to make his movies for twelve-year-old mentalities, and who somehow produced some of the finest films ever to come out of Hollywood. Recently a Toronto firm has acquired the Goldwyn films, and they are now playing at The Cinema in the T-D Centre.

Essentially, Goldwyn knew his own ignorance, and so bought the best talent he could find: directors William Wyler, Howard Hawks and John Ford; cameramen Gregg Toland, Lee Garmes and Ray Renahan; writers Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur, Lillian Hellman, Billy Wilder and Robert Sherwood; and players Gary Cooper, Humphrey Bogart, Frederic March, Bette Davis, Helen Hayes, Ronald Colman, Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, and Barbara Stanwyck.

Consequently many of Goldwyn's films are exceptional works, some of the best, most intelligent, exciting and beautiful films ever made. They all operate on a simple level as well, since they were made to be understood by juveniles, and by Goldwyn himself.

There is no denying, of course, that Goldwyn has little taste and no discretion. He was also responsible for material starring Eddie Cantor, Bob Hope and Danny Kaye, and such overblown duds as *Porgy and Bess*, and *Guys and Dolls*. Yet somehow his successes are considerable, and his batting average high — both commercially and artistically.

Upcoming at The Cinema are Wyler's *Dodsworth* (1936), from the Sinclair Lewis novel and starring Walter Huston and Mary Astor; *Dead End* (1937), adapted by Lillian Hellman from Sidney Kingsley's play, and with Bogart, Sylvia Sydney, Joel McCrea, Claire Trevor and the Dead End Kids; and *The Little Foxes* (1941) with Bette Davis and Herbert Marshall, also written by Lillian Hellman; Sam Wood's *The Pride of the Yankees* (1942), with Gary Cooper as Lou Gehrig; King Vidor's *Stella Dallas* (1937) with Barbara Stanwyck; and other films by John Ford, Archie Mayo and others.

Currently playing *The Westerner*, directed in 1940 by William Wyler, and starring Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan and several now-forgotten players. Very simply, it is one of the finest westerns ever made. *The Westerner* is a slow moving drama (a little unevenly paced to tell the truth), set in the 1880s in Langtry, Texas, where Judge Roy Bean (Brennan) rules arbitrarily as "the law west o' th' Pecos" — like making change on a \$10 gold piece, and later fining the drinker the other \$9 for drunkenness.

Enter the Westerner, in the person of Cooper, who simply won't submit to Brennan's rule, and there begins a strange amity between rivals, which draws to its inevitable end in a cleverly and originally staged gun duel in a dance hall.

Based to a certain degree on historical fact, and to a greater degree on legends, *The Westerner* is a brilliant examination of the nitty-gritty side of the old west myths, beautifully photographed by Gregg Toland (*Wuthering Heights*, *Citizen Kane*) and masterfully directed by Wyler (*Best Years of Our Lives*, *The Collector*). Cooper is as good as he ever was, which was a standard of acting no screen actor today can match; and Brennan, who won an Oscar for his work here, is so exceptionally fine that he steals every scene he is in.

Of particular note is the special care given by Wyler, the art director, set decorator and costumer to the sets and costuming. The streets, bar and outfits are fairly accurate to historical fact, imbuing the film with a realism that today's westerns with their machine tooled sets, professionally-made props and tailored clothes do not approach.

Of all the westerns made since 1903's *The Great Train Robbery*, only a handful — the films of William S. Hart, Victor Fleming's *The Virginian*, *Law and Order*, and John Ford's cavalry trilogy and *My Darling Clementine* — are more realistically presented, and even fewer — de Mille's *The Plainsman*, Hawks' *Red River*, Ford's *Stagecoach* — match *The Westerner* as classic western legendry.

The Westerner is a peculiar blend: historically based, accurately depicted, imbued with legends and tall tales, visually beautiful, at once remote and immediate, moving, tragic, vivid and real. It is archetypal and classic; and on a level beyond the limits of the western genre, it is a magnificent and flawless film, "film art" on a high level. Even though it was made for 12-year-olds.



Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan in *The Westerner*

Cinamalumiére, 290 College Street at Spadina, has announced its new schedule, which is cause for a great deal of excitement. December 3 - 6 *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (1956), directed by Luis Bunuel and starring Jean Moreau. December 7 - 8, Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (1959), with Kirk Douglas, a brilliant anti-war film. December 9 - 10, Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt*.

December 11 - 15, Karel Reisz' *Morgan*, which I recall as one of the funniest and best of the films to come out of the English Free Cinema of the late fifties and sixties. December 14 - 15, Sidney Pollack's *The Scalphunters* double bills with *Morgan*. It is a gruesome, gritty western with Burt Lancaster, if you can dig it.

December 16 - 20, a double bill of Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (with Polanski, Sharon Tate and Jack MacGowan) and J. Lee Thompson's *Eye of the Devil* will be showing. December 21 - 22, Roger Corman's maudlin effort of this year, *Bloody Mama*, with Shelley Winters will be playing, to be followed by Fellini's 8-1/2, on December 26 through 29.

TWP's Piper is out of tune

By BRIAN PEARL

Toronto Workshop Production's novel idea, called Theatre of the Moment, got off to a lackluster start last week with the opening of *The Piper*. Written by Nancy Jowsey, TWP's artistic director, *The Piper* is an adaptation to an abstract stage of Robert Browning's romantic poem, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. From the innocent basis of an imaginative fairy tale (which, of course, is a fine poem on the nature of human justice), Miss Jowsey has managed to create a hodgepodge of morals and maxims laced with archtypal characterizations which she has called a play. Toronto Workshop, working on this assumption, tries hard to instill some dramatic life into the stilted drama, but nothing seems to work.

To start from the beginning, the set, designed by Nancy Jowsey herself, which should have been totally abstract but actually seemed like a pier stacked with Swiss cheese surrounded by pilings stuck in some shallow stream, is incongruous. The set has all the necessary features; a central elevated platform for the town council and the rat spokesmen and moveable platforms for the actors to pose appropriately upon. But the platform and the pilings do not



The Hamelin Carnival

relate to each other physically except during the static moments of tableau construction. It would have been a very simple matter to move the screen out from behind the platform to where the audience could see the slides, but even this obvious adjustment escaped Miss Jowsey's vague attentions to the stage treatment of her own play.

The play itself opens with the Piper on the platform, sleeping,

The Double Exploding Cubes

By HARRY KITZ

Robert Downing's exhibition of sculptures and prints on display in the Ross Building Art Gallery is a good example of the capability of this fine Canadian artist. His work, basically metal and plexiglass abstractions, is based on an in depth exploitation of the vagaries of the cube.

Not a reflection on Mr. Downing, I find all plexiglass pieces of the type displayed, although pretty, much too geometric, reminding me of the sterility of a crystal lattice. His metallic sculptures though, were marvelous.

Cubism, the ever present theme, creates a subtle, but unifying undercurrent which comes to the surface in such obvious forms as *Double Exploding Cubes* #9. The majority of wire sculptures were interesting where not overpowered by their symmetry. The line drawings left me cold, I classify them with the plexiglass, the creations of a linear Spirograph.



The rats entranced by the Piper

with rats (played by the cast in baggy jump-suits and belts to which long leather tails are attached) creeping up on him. He pulls out his trusty pipe, toots a few and the rats mysteriously retreat. End of scene one.

The next scene is a thirty minute shouting match among the rats, who act in human political ways. They bemoan their lack of security in Hamelin and resolve to select an ultimate leader to act decisively for them all. The argument is very loud and very abstract; an incongruously directed scene. Perhaps aware of the textbook-dry potential of the script, the director, George Luscombe, thought that what he lacked in emotionalism he could make up by turning up the volume, heating the argument. Instead, the scene goes on far too long and inspires little in the audience except, perhaps, a few headaches.

The scene shifts to the human inhabitants of Hamelin who are meant to resemble the rats when they complain loudly about their lot and assault their leaders as incompetent and useless, which they are. The humans, inexplicable, do not revolt as the rats did. Nor is it adequately explained why the people of Hamelin continued to support their comic, corrupt councillors. The parallel sense of human and rat reaction fails to be adequately exploited by the playwright and the director. Basically, the rats resemble a revolutionary proletariat and the Townspeople, fascists. This dichotomy in the basic structure of the play becomes a problem instead of one of the play's major strengths.

A needed break

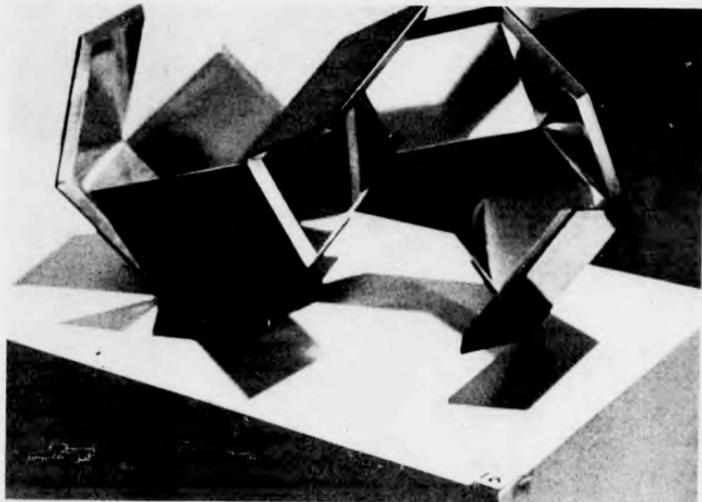
The second half opens with a song, the first one of two, called *Hamelin Town*, dirge-like in nature and very heavily directed. It would have served much better as a needed break in the overexertions of the first half. Eventually, though, the plot reached the point where the Piper appears and is

hired (after he was thrown in jail) whereupon he does his thing and the rats, to the tune of the flute and Browning's own exquisite verse, dance off to drown themselves. A word here about Doug Johnston, who wrote the music and plays much of it himself in the his role as the Piper. Johnston was probably chosen for the role because of his fine flute playing and impressive stature, not his acting. As an actor, he is quite lacklustre and this vagueness in a central character nearly does the show in all by itself.

Dialogue Debatable

One of the important aspects of the play's second part, now that the parallel machinations of humans and rats have been exposed, is a lengthy, ongoing debate between the Piper and one of the rats, called Julius Caesar, who is played (in what is the best performance in the play) by Ray Wheelan. The debate is set into the play in much the same way Peter Weiss set the debates of Marat and De Sade in his great play *Marat/Sade*. But that was an intensely dialectic, soulful life-or-death struggle. In *Piper*, nothing seems to ride on the outcome of the argument and the dialogue resembles two simultaneously running tape recorders rather than a real debate.

In the end, it was patently obvious that *The Piper* was a play of missed chances. First, the novelty of a cast portraying rats was not innovatively exploited. Then the interesting parallels between the rat and human community were so obvious exposed with so little style, that both sets of characters, the humans and the rats, lost their own dramatic identities in the contrast instead of gaining them. Finally, the possibility of a fine debate to give the play a central theme and a metaphysical direction was neglected by the writer, the director and the actors themselves. Much of the play then became merely gratuitous once these central, binding, dramatic conventions fell to pieces.



Downings double exploding cubes #9