

Latest Movies Shown in Front Line Camps Help Keep Fighters in Touch With Home

Picture Industry Donates Films to Army and Navy

Combat-weary Yanks, relieved from front-line duty by replacements and sent to the rear to rest, turn to movies as a means of escape from the mad business of battle, according to letters received in towns throughout the country by relatives and friends of boys now in foreign service.

These letters complained at first that the pictures were old, but recent correspondence ends complaints and indicates that conditions are improved.

New Hollywood productions fresh from the studios are shipped to all theaters of war by the Army Overseas Motion Picture service and are shown somewhere every night in every combat zone occupied by American troops.

Protected by top priorities, these film programs, printed in the 16-mm. size and known as "Films for Fighting Men" are a gift from the motion picture industry which began in February, 1942, with the presentation of 80 prints from four different pictures. Since then these free films have gradually increased until now a total of 189 pictures are issued each week, divided into 63 prints each of three different programs. Each program includes a full-length feature and at least one short subject. To date the grand total of 11,782 programs has been sent overseas.

These programs of new films are shown only to uniformed members of the armed forces in combat zones, and to sick and wounded in overseas hospitals, and to men on isolated outposts where other film entertainment cannot be had.

When troops are en route to battle-fronts on transports, they are shown specially selected 16-mm. film versions of "Hits of the Past." This avoids duplicate showings of new films, so servicemen do not see the same pictures twice.

Musical Shows Favorites.

Every feature-length picture and every short subject made by the major studios in Hollywood is included in this service, offered to our armed forces through a selection board in New York city composed of army and civilian personnel. This board is guided in its choice by expressions from soldier audiences in the various theaters of war. Opinions polled to date show that servicemen's tastes lean toward musicals, comedies and light drama. War pictures are last on their list, while features and shorts which bring views of the good old U. S. A. are always welcome.

Upon reaching the various war theaters, these 16-mm. films—less than half the size of those seen in your local theater—are sent to the various combat zones through 19 film exchanges maintained by the Army Overseas Motion Picture service. Handled in this reduced size, they are easy to ship and can be exhibited on portable equipment readily transported in active regions.

The showing of these pictures is always subject, of course, to the hazards of war. Usually they are displayed to battle-weary troops in rest areas behind the front. The object, however, is to get them as near the fighting line as possible. In some instances they have been shown so close to the line of battle that prisoners subsequently captured said they heard the sound track.

Although planned originally for the army only, recent arrangements made through the war department have thrown these showings open to all combat troops, regardless of their branch of service. This includes the



Members of the army service forces set up their motion picture equipment wherever there is a convenient spot for a show. Here they have erected the screen on a rocky field on some south sea island. The projector and sound equipment are being hooked up in the foreground.

Soldiers on Pacific Islands See More Pictures Per Week Than They

An average of more than 40 prints of three first-run productions, more than a soldier saw in an average civilian week, are turned over to the army every week, in addition to "G.I. Movies," "Screen Magazine," "Fighting Men," and other informational and educational features produced and distributed by army service forces. "Changes in station, constant shifting of the tides of battle, make it impossible for all soldiers

navy, marine corps, the coast guard when their own films are not available in active areas; also members of Allied armed forces operating in these zones. Both the Red Cross and USO are authorized as agents to show these 16-mm. pictures.

Movies in Training Camps. The motion picture industry's 16-mm. gift films should not be confused, however, with the 35-mm. showings of the Army Motion Picture service, and a similar system maintained by the navy.

Through a commercial arrangement with motion picture distributors made 20 years ago, both the army and the navy rent for their own use 35-mm. prints of motion pictures which play the commercial movie houses. These films, obtained at low rental, are now shown on a nonprofit basis by the army in all training camp theaters in this country, and at established army post theaters in all territorial posses-



Army men in the South Pacific watch a movie in an open air theater. Their faces reflect varied reactions. Soldiers often see three or more pictures a week.

sions. The average admission is 14 cents, and any profit derived therefrom goes toward expanding the service.

Ever since the declaration of war, as a special favor to servicemen, pictures playing the army circuit have, as a rule, preceded showings in commercial theaters except where these showings conflicted with exhibition contracts of movie theaters near the camps. Servicemen unfamiliar with required trade practices, complain at times because they see pictures in these commercial theaters before the camp movie houses show them.

The navy does not experience this difficulty because, generally speaking, its pictures are shown free on shipboard or, in some instances, for a small admission at naval stations, the profits going toward improving and expanding the service.

Old Films Shown at First.

When the conflict broke suddenly after Pearl Harbor, we were just as unprepared for maintaining a worldwide entertainment program as we were for global combat. The first expeditionary forces that left for the South Pacific took along 1,000 old 16-mm. pictures purchased in the open market, which were the only films of that size available at the time. Later, when the African expedition sailed, a similar war department purchase was made. And further complications were added through the indiscriminate buying of old films and portable equipment by embarking troop units as large as battalions, all striving to meet an entertainment emergency.

Although the army has been able to recall all but 300 of these old films, those still in circulation despite efforts to recover them, combined with the unauthorized 16-mm. films remaining overseas, add up to a sizeable headache. Servicemen who still sit through these old programs complain loudly.

Another source of complaint lies in the wartime dislocation abroad of the commercial motion picture industry. In such battle-blasted areas as Sicily, films as ancient as Rintin-Tin are often featured in local theaters for outrageous admission prices. But this is not strange, considering that Mussolini barred American films in Italy in 1938. No new pictures have been shipped into Italian territory since, excepting those supplied through the motion picture industry's gift service. The 16-mm. gift films, however, are now going overseas at the rate of 159 prints of three new programs each week. New combat zone circuits are being added rapidly and projection facilities are improving and increasing. This means that film shows in all theaters of war, barring the inevitable disruptions and annoyances occasioned by battle action, are bound to achieve a state of diminishing complaints and rising perfection.

In a report to Lieut. Gen. Brehon Somervell, commanding general of the army service forces, covering a

30,000-mile tour of the Pacific theater, Maj. Gen. Frederick H. Osborn, U. S. army, director of the morale services division, army service forces, said that motion pictures have proved an effective antidote to the tension and physical strain of battle, and that they are particularly welcome to men just returned from the front.

His tour, which included "the largest motion picture circuit in history" maintained by the overseas motion picture service of army service forces in the Pacific, proved to him, he said, that "the Pacific soldier is the most avid movie-goer in the world."

The distribution of first-run films to the various fronts by air is on a par with any similar commercial operation, the general pointed out, and came about "because combat officers want their men to relax after they come out of the lines. The movie has proved to be the solution.



A screen against a jungle backdrop brings the soldier close to home again.

The army service forces has arranged to distribute films in rotation to the combat areas of the Pacific, after which they are routed to supporting units farther to the rear. In this way, troops in actual combat are the first to be shown the latest of Hollywood's screen offerings. Also given high priority for early showings are the wounded in hospitals.

Movies Take Him Home.

"The soldier wants to see pictorial views of streets that remind him of his home town, of people he might meet on those streets; of women to remind him of his mother, his wife; his sweetheart; of ordinary happenings in which he will again participate.

"This tremendous movie chain's value as a good will factor is beyond computation. In New Guinea, for example, where Australian and American soldiers fight side by side, they sit down to see an American film side by side. Our troops visit Australian camps where the screen fare is predominantly American."

Newsreels, comedies, and musical pictures are high on the G.I. hit list. "Soldiers dislike war pictures with glorified heroes," General Osborn said. "They like to see informational films, those that explain war strategy and show real battle scenes. The soldier is anxious to see what his weapons can do. The army's 'Why We Fight' series has immeasurably bettered his understanding of issues at stake. 'Snafu,' the cinema comic of the Army-Navy Screen Magazine, is a Pacific favorite."

General Osborn included Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, New Georgia, Bougainville, and Fiji in his 30,000-mile itinerary of the Pacific theater.

"I have seen tropical theaters seating 3,000 soldiers on wooden benches, and 1,000 sitting on crates and logs and oil tins in an outdoor excavation," he said. "Soldiers frequently sit in tropical downpours for one and two hours before showtime to enjoy a run-off-the-mill film made 'silent' when the sound track breaks down, and then return the next night to see it again. "During alarms the men quietly leave the theater and as quietly resume their seats afterward to see the rest of the movie. While excavations were under way on a New Guinea base, a bulldozer was assigned the priority detail of hollowing out the ground for an open-air amphitheater.

"I have seen men watch a picture from such a distance that the screen was the size of a postage stamp, and I have heard men gripe at a poor show but sit through it to the end. With several pictures playing on various bases on an island, men were known to walk nightly many miles around the entire island until they had seen all the pictures."

See More Pictures

Entertainment reels from 19 army overseas film exchanges are transported by plane, boat, jeep, or hand-carried to the camp sites. Mobile special services companies with portable equipment and camera crews tour remote areas playing one-night stands.

"Today some soldier in a water-logged foxhole, sitting atop a gas-line drum to keep his feet dry, is seeing a picture perhaps just premiered by you in the plush seats of Radio City, New York," General Osborn commented.



Hedda Hopper: Looking at HOLLYWOOD

MAKING fun of such a gruesome business as murder has made a fortune for Boris Karloff.

Four years ago Karloff suddenly realized that his homicidal hobbies weren't paying off as lucratively or as fast as he would like. After that spine-chilling Frankenstein monster, as a mummy, a ghoul, Bluebeard, and other fiendish characters, he found himself demoted to lesser monstrosities in double-billed horror pictures.

Then along came an offer to appear in a New York play. He had never done one on the Broadway stage, and he, the terror of countless film fans, found the thought frightened him. Besides, it was a play that kidded insanity and murder—a very touchy subject. But after settling for a nice, juicy piece of the play, plus a goodly salary, he lost his fear and took off.

Today, after three years of "Arsenic and Old Lace"—which is still packing them in New York and on the road—Karloff is back for more pictures.

He's sharing starring honors with Susanna Foster and Turhan Bey in Universal's technicolor musical drama "The Climax," which George Wagner is producing and directing.

"Launching a stage play is a big gamble," says Karloff. "But after reading the 'Arsenic' script it struck me as one of the finest plays written in recent years."

Karloff put \$6,000 in the play and got that investment back in three weeks. He's still collecting fat dividends. Bankers should be so lucky these days.

Anything for Irene

Irene Dunne's cooing like a dove, and well she might, since Metro paid \$200,000 for

A. J. Cronin's latest, "The Green Years," from the galley sheets. Nothing is too good for Irene since "A Guy Named Joe" and "The White Cliffs" ... Jennifer Jones, and not Gene Tierney, is going to play the lead in "Laura." That's the one Clifton Webb is wanted for, but whether he'll be able to do it nobody knows

Margaret Sullivan leaves "Voice of the Turtle" June 24, but beginning June 19, she, Elliott Nugent, and Audrey Christy will give their services. The play will be shown free for a whole week to all men in uniform. That's a precedent I hope other producers will follow.

A Smile Maybe; Maybe Not

Ernst Lubitsch told me the following: While preparing "The Czarina" for the screen, he decided to get some authentic Russian names. He took a history book home with him. As he read he jotted down about 30 names from it such as Prince Roffsky, Prince Petchskoff, and Count Borschky—then laid the paper on his bed-side table. The following morning his man, who has been with him 15 years, came in, looked at the paper and said: "Mr. Lubitsch, if you expect to have that many people to dinner Saturday night, you'd better let me know right quick so I can round up food for 'em."

Bing's a Great Guy

Bing Crosby's just signed a new contract with Paramount—one of the most important deals ever put over in this town. It's for 10 years straight. 52 weeks a year, for 23 pictures, with permission to do one outside picture a year for another company—Bing to have final say over story, director, leading lady, songs and publisher of songs. There are few men in our town who could get a deal like this. It isn't everybody who would play fair. Bing bends over backwards to give as much as he gets. For instance, in "Road to Utopia," which I'm told is the funniest of all the "Road" pictures, it was Bing who gave Paramount a new director — Hal Walker. Until "Utopia" he had been an assistant. During the picture he had an accident, directed the last half of it from a wheel chair. In "Going My Way," produced and directed by Leo McCarey, Curley Linden, assistant cameraman up to then, was made a full-fledged one. It's the same with leading ladies. Through Bing, Marjorie Reynolds got her chance. He never has been afraid to boost the other fellow.

What a Lusty Gal!

Gypsy Rose Lee and Florence Bates make a wonderful team in "Belle of the Yukon." Gypsy, as a chorus girl in dancing skirt and butterflies embroidered on her stockings, was dancing when Charley Winninger cracked: "Ah, me, spring is here." Said Gypsy: "Save your silly syrupy sentimentality for waffles you'll guzzle in the morning. These butterflies remind me of my lean booking days when the only butterflies I knew were in my tum-bly."



By VIRGINIA VALE
Released by Western Newspaper Union.

DANNY KAYE, who is such a sensational success in his first film, Samuel Goldwyn's "Up in Arms," began his career in the group of summer camps near New York known as the "Borscht Circuit." He did everything, from waiting on tables to entertaining the guests. Then he toured the Orient as part of a troupe—says he perfected his pantomime then, since no one hearing him understood English. Next came night clubs, and such success that he was engaged for the stage production of "Lady in the Dark," which established him in the theater. A big factor in his success is his wife, Sylvia Fine, who writes his songs. Now here's "Up in Arms," which lands him at the top in films.

Charlie McCarthy would like everybody to know that 14-year-old Jane Powell is his one and only protegee. Ever since he and Edgar Bergen worked in "Song of the Open Road," when Jane was made the star of the picture, Charlie's been



JANE POWELL

swamped by letters from teen-age girls who want him to sponsor them. Jane's done so well in her first picture that another story, "Cinderella Goes to Town," has been bought for her.

Though Adolphe Menjou returned last November from his seven-month tour of England, Algeria and Sicily, to entertain the armed forces, he is only now returning to the screen. It took him three months to regain the 28 pounds he lost on the trip.

Vincent Lopez ("Luncheon With Lopez," three times a week), believes that American audiences not only know good music from bad, but good orchestrations from bad ones. He proved long ago that he knows what the public wants, not only in music, but in stars; Betty and Marion Hutton are two of those whom he discovered and trained. Karole Singer and Bruce Hayes, now appearing with him, are two more.

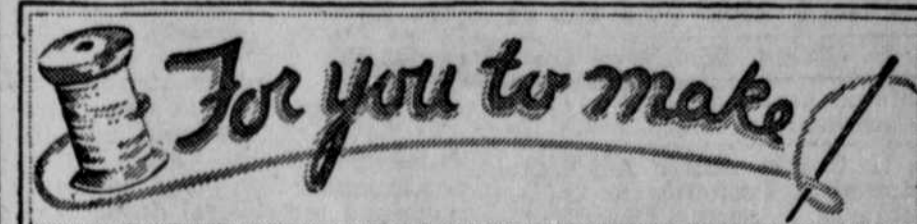
Ronald Colman's been swamped by mail as a result of his NBC show, "Everything for the Boys." From Montana came a letter from a mother, saying "Won't you put my son and your namesake, Ronald Colman Dunn, on your program?" But it's the army that chooses the overseas fighters who talk to Colman.

Evidently the acting bug is catching. Now the real-life wife of "Dagwood" (Arthur Lake) of "Blondie" of screen and radio fame, is taking to the screen. She is Patricia Van Cleve Lake, and will appear in the new Republic production, "New Faces."

Jack Benny has signed a new contract with Warner Bros.; he recently completed "The Horn Blows at Midnight." But he doesn't expect to start a new film until next July—wants to make another trip overseas first, to entertain the armed forces.

A program full of youngsters without a single cracked voice in the collection—that's a unique feature of the "Archie Andrews" program, heard weekdays over Mutual. The show's producers feel that growing pains should not also inflict pain on the listeners, so base the humor of the series on believable situations.

Something new in radio—a member of the Metropolitan Opera company has been cast in a regular role in a daytime serial drama. The singer is Edith Herlick, mezzo-soprano, who also sings popular music Sunday nights for television. The serial is "The Goldbergs."



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Olympic Records

Of the 46 existing field, track and swimming records made at Olympic games, 19 are held by the United States, 7 by Japan, 6 by Germany, 4 each by Finland and the Netherlands, 2 by Great Britain and 1 each by Canada, Italy, Poland and New Zealand.



Olivia de HAVILLAND

star of the Warner Bros. picture, "Strawberry Blonde," recommends CALOX TOOTH POWDER that shine.

Naval Salvage

Since 1941, the U. S. navy has salvaged, exclusive of the Normandie, naval and merchant ships and cargoes having a total salvage value of \$500,000,000, or 125 times as much as the cost of saving them.

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