

THE SCREEN IN REVIEW

'The Wizard of Oz,' Produced by the Wizards of Hollywood, Works Its Magic on the Capitol's Screen—March of Time Features New York

THE WIZARD OF OZ, screen play by Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf; adapted from the book by L. Frank Baum; musical adaptation by Herbert Stothart; lyrics by E. Y. Harburg and music by Harold Arlen; special effects by Arnold Gillespie; directed by Victor Fleming; produced by Mervyn LeRoy for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. At the Capitol.

Dorothy Judy Garland
 Professor Marvel (the Wizard), Frank Morgan
 Hunk (the Scarecrow)..... Ray Bolger
 Zeke (the Cowardly Lion)..... Bert Lahr
 Hickory (Tin Woodman)..... Jack Haley
 Glinda (the Good Witch)..... Billie Burke
 Miss Gulch (the Wicked Witch), Margaret Hamilton
 Uncle Henry Charles Grapewin
 Auntie Em Clara Blandick
 Nikko Pat Walshe
 With the Singer Midgets as the Munchkins.

By FRANK S. NUGENT

By courtesy of the wizards of Hollywood, "The Wizard of Oz" reached the Capitol's screen yesterday as a delightful piece of wonder-working which had the youngsters' eyes shining and brought a quietly amused gleam to the wiser ones of the oldsters. Not since Disney's "Snow White" has anything quite so fantastic succeeded half so well. A fairybook tale has been told in the fairybook style, with witches, goblins, pixies and other wondrous things drawn in the brightest colors and set cavorting to a merry little score. It is all so well-intentioned, so genial and so gay that any reviewer who would look down his nose at the fun-making should be spanked and sent off, supperless, to bed.

Having too stout an appetite to chance so dire a punishment, we shall merely mention, and not dwell upon, the circumstance that even such great wizards as those who lurk in the concrete caverns of California are often tripped in their flights of fancy by trailing vines of piano wire and outcroppings of putty noses. With the best of will and ingenuity, they cannot make a Munchkin or a Flying Monkey that will not still suggest, however vaguely, a Singer's midget in a Jack Dawn masquerade. Nor can they, without a few betraying jolts and split-screen overlappings, bring down from the sky the great soap bubble in which the Good Witch rides and roll it smoothly into place. But then, of course, how can any one tell what a Munchkin, a Flying Monkey or a witch-bearing bubble would be like and how comport themselves under such remarkable circumstances?

And the circumstances of Dorothy's trip to Oz are so remarkable, indeed, that reason cannot deal with them at all. It blinks, and it must wink, too, at the cyclone that lifted Dorothy and her little dog, Toto, right out of Kansas and deposited them, not too gently, on the conical cap of the Wicked Witch of the East who had been holding Oz's Munchkins in thrall.



Judy Garland

Dorothy was quite a heroine, but she did want to get back to Kansas and her Aunt Em; and her only hope of that, said Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, was to see the Wizard of Oz who, as every one knows, was a whiz of a Wiz if ever a Wiz there was. So Dorothy sets off for the Emerald City, hexed by the broomstick-riding sister of the late Wicked Witch and accompanied, in due time, by three of Frank Baum's most enchanting creations, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion.

Judy Garland's Dorothy is a pert and fresh-faced miss with the wonder-lit eyes of a believer in fairy tales, but the Baum fantasy is at its best when the Scarecrow, the Woodman and the Lion are on the move. The Scarecrow, with the elastic, dancing legs of Ray Bolger, joins the pilgrimage in search of brains; the Woodman, an armor-plated Jack Haley, wants a heart; the Cowardly Lion, comicallest of all, is Bert Lahr with an artistically curled mane, a thrashing tail and a timid heart. As he mourns in one of his ballads, his Lion hasn't the prowess of a mow-ess; he can't sleep for brooding; he can't even count sheep because he's scared of sheep. And what he wants

is courage to make him king of the forest so that even being afraid of a rhinoceros would be imposurus. Mr. Lahr's lion is fion.

There, in a few paragraphs, are most of the elements of the fantasy. We haven't time for the rest, but we must mention the talking trees that pelt the travelers with apples, the witch's sky-written warning to the Wizard, the enchanted poppy field, the magnificent humbuggerly of Frank Morgan's whiz of a Wiz and the marvel of the chameleonlike "horse of another color." They are entertaining conceits all of them, presented with a naive relish for their absurdity and out of an obvious—and thoroughly natural—desire on the part of their fabricators to show what they could do. It is clear enough that Mr. Dawn, the make-up wizard, Victor Fleming, the director-wizard, Arnold Gillespie, the special effects wizard, and Mervyn LeRoy, the producing wizard, were pleased as Punches with the tricks they played. They have every reason to be.

At the Music Hall

The current March of Time, which was placed on view at the Radio City Music Hall yesterday to supplement the feature picture, "In Name Only," which is being held for a third week, is a pictorial paean to the City of New York, and incidentally to the La Guardia administration, entitled "Metropolis—1939." The factual-editorial approach, for which this series is noted, seems peculiarly adapted to a recitation of the achievements in bridges, express highways, and police efficiency since the Fusionists took over, with an enthusiasm characteristic of lovers of good government. As a documentary cross-section of the nation's greatest city, the film should also interest the provinces, although it stoically abstains from romanticizing its subject. B. R. C.

At the Palace

WAY DOWN SOUTH, story and screen play by Clarence Muse and Langston Hughes; directed by Bernard Vorhaus; produced by Sol Lesser for lease by RKO Radio.

Things take a decided turn for the worse down on the old Bayou Lovelle Plantation after its beneficent master (Ralph Morgan) is trampled on by a pair of spirited carriage horses at the end of the first reel in "Way Down South," the new Bobby Breen opus at the Palace. The executor appointed to administer the sugar plantation until Master Breen comes of age rules the slaves with all the cruelty and meanness of Simon Legree. And when old Uncle Caton (Clarence Muse) feebly protests that Bobby's father never mistreated the slaves, the executor orders the white-haired butler to be sold. But Bobby, who has inherited his father's humanitarian ideals, thinks otherwise and undertakes to save Uncle Caton and the other slaves.

It's a sad tale indeed, and equally mournful is the Hall Johnson Choir's chanting of such Negro spirituals as "Nobody Knows de Trouble I See," "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" and "Lord If You Can't Come, Send One Angel Down." Bobby, of course sings some of the spirituals, too, but we're afraid he's no match for the Johnson choristers.

T. M. P.