

# Ah! For the Life of a Movie Critic!

By BETTY PAYSNER

How would you like to be paid to see half a dozen movies a week, meet visiting screen personalities, and attend special world premieres? Intrigued by this inquiry, we arranged to visit Detroit's movie critics at work (?)

The day began at 10:30 a. m. on an ideal time to begin the working day, we felt. I throbbed into the private screening room in the mutual building; we met movie critic Helen Bower of the Detroit Free Press and Al Weitschat of the Detroit News who graciously offered us a cigarette. (No rules against smoking here.)

"Take your choice of seats," Miss Bower said. "I'm usually in the back row because the room is so small."

"I sit almost in the projection room," informed Al Weitschat as he seated himself behind the last row.

LOOKING around the small,

chat noticed. "They certainly must have been a cosmopolitan crew."

"Where are we?" Miss Bower asked reflecting our own confusion as battle scenes followed each other endlessly. "At least they're being economical—that's the third time the same battleground set has been used in the movie," she observed.

AFTER justice finally triumphed, we accompanied the critics to lunch. As famous film names were mentioned, we learned that a delightful duty of the movie critics is to lunch with motion picture people in town on personal appearance tours.

Reminiscing about a recent press trip to New York for the premiere of the new Cinema production, Miss Bower enthusiastically exclaimed: "Remember the exotic cocktail containers at one of the banquets?" "So wore the Hawaiian hostesses," the two male critics added.

"How often do these special premieres occur?" we asked, impressed by the description of them.



Movie critics Al Weitschat, Arnold Hirsch and Helen Bower (left to right) unknowingly display their favorite movie-watching poses as the infra-red camera catches them in the dark at a screening session.

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the film opens in a Detroit theatre. This means there are times when we preview more than six movies a week. Most of the time we're not this rushed.

"Our daily routine depends on the rate of movie production and release. Ideally reviews appear in the papers on the same day that was our next query."

"We don't use a set formula," they all agreed, "and we don't take notes while watching a film. Reviews are based on the impact of the movie upon critic. Of course the movie's effect on the critic depends on his sensitivity, knowledge of the film industry, acquaintance with other art fields, and familiarity with history for judging authenticity."

"HISTORY is important for newspaper people," Miss Bower stated. "You never know when a fact will come in handy. I say this from quite a bit of experience. This

will slay you, my dear, but I have been a newspaperwoman for 44 years."

Anyone who has seen Miss Bower's zest and youthful appearance will find this statement hard to believe.

"I can almost match you, Helen," began as a 14 year old copy boy. That was 42 years ago," Al Weitschat related.

"My biography is slightly shorter," commented Arnold Hirsch. "After graduating from Wayne university as a journalism major five years ago, I spent a couple of years with a small town Michigan paper and then joined the Times."

"Since going to the movies is one of the most popular ways of escaping from the workaday world, what do the three of you do for entertainment?" he wondered.

"MOVIE-GOING social life occasionally presents me with an unusual dating problem—I see the movies in advance," said 26-year-old Arnold Hirsch, who became a critic a year ago. "Photography is a hobby of mine, and occasionally I haul out my alto saxophone. Besides the movie column, I also write bi-weekly night club reviews. This keeps me in touch with the current music scene."

"I read and love to take automobile trips in (y free time, Miss Bower stated. And after 10 years as a movie critic, I still enjoy an occasional evening at the movies to see the rare film I've missed."

At Weitschat, movie critic for 25 years replied, "I still enjoy movies, also, but on week-ends I head for my Fort Huron country place where I fish, swim, garden, play with my grandchildren—and step on the gas as I pass the nearby movie theatres!"

Intermission ended with dessert. Then back to the screening room for the second film.

At the end of the afternoon movie, the critics left for their offices, probably thinking of the reviews they would write. We left for our newspaper office, too, but our thoughts were centered on convincing The Birmingham Evening-News editor he should make us a movie critic!

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