

Hollywood Hocus Pocus—Free for Soldiers



FEATS of magic that leave them pop-eyed are being served up free to servicemen and their girl friends in a big circus tent on a Hollywood boulevard, tricked up with flamboyant carnival art, in which Actor Orson Welles is holding forth with his "Mercury Wonder Show." He has about 20 helpers, mostly pretty girls in abbreviated costumes, and several Hollywood stars who take some of the spotlight from Orson. One of them is Joseph Cotten, who is seen above going through one of his acts with appropriate background. The girls are, left to right, Mary Rowland, Mary Battle, Linda Brent and Elenor Counts.

Popping into the Wonder Show here is Rita Hayworth—from a trunk in which her presence defies all logic after Welles had roped her securely somewhere else. At another point in the performance Rita suffers no pain or permanent damage from being "sawed in two."



Linda Brent lifts the lid for another out-popping from the mystic trunk. This time it's full of Cotten, magically transplanted there after Welles had trussed him up somewhere else in all that rope.



The inevitable rabbit is produced from the startled soldier's pants by Prof. Welles, whose every gesture as master of hocus pocus deepens the eerie atmosphere of legerdemain and prestidigitation.



Stars in the audience add to the lure of the show for service men. Here a sailor and soldier seize their big chance for autographs from Greer Garson—and get them. Civilians can see the show, too—at a price.



Vanished rings from the audience reappear in the strangest places. Here a soldier finds his on the quarter of one of Welles' lovely assistants. Looking on in his conjurer's robe, Welles a moment before had "ground up" the ring with mortar and pestle.



Martha Raye (left) is the worried victim of the ring trick unfolding here. She registers agonized suspense as her jewelry disappears under Welles' magic touch. A moment later Martha was delighted to have the ring turn up again inside a freshly-baked loaf of bread.

Wide World Photos.