

THE PASSING SHOW

'The Hunter' Haunted By Over-Direction

By JAY CARMODY

Davis Grubb's remorselessly terrifying "Night of the Hunter" has reached the screen under the auspices of Paul Gregory and Charles Laughton as producer and director respectively.

Unfortunately it has arrived—at the Ontario Theater—dramatically diminished, shorn of the horror that made it such a brilliant contribution to contemporary fiction.

Mr. Laughton, in his first effort as director, decided to embroider. In an effort apparently to be dazzlingly different, he has achieved artiness, pretentiousness and other evidences of disrespect for a piece of writing whose simplicity was its greatest virtue. Here and there in the symbolic flotsam of the production, the nightmare essence of two children at the mercy of a madman, rises to the surface. Much too fugitively, however, to do the original justice.

The dismay that this should be is the more intense for its contrast to such brilliant Gregory-Laughton works as "Dog Juan in Hell" and "John Brown's Body." These were great because they were starkly simple. "Night of the Hunter" is fatally ornate.

In spite of its objectionable treatment, however, "Night of the Hunter" is off-beat fiction of the kind the screen sorely needs.

Mr. Grubb catapulted it into best-seller distinction by showing what a writer of vision could find of drama in an unpromising corner of life. His setting is a dour landscape in West Virginia dominated by a demented traveling parson. This creature, played by Robert Mitchum with LOVE and HATE tattooed on the fingers of his right and left hands, respectively, has an eerie sense of calling.

In its simplest terms, the ones on which he operates, women should be destroyed as temptresses and a religious man should be allowed to gather money by whatever method is expedient, including murder.

Mitchum's most promising source of funds turns out to be two children. These are the offspring of a homicidal bank bandit who goes to his execution while Mitchum is his cellmate at the State penitentiary. When his own brief term is ended, the passionate parson sets out to find the children, wring from them the secret of where the \$10,000 bank haul is cached, and then dispose of them as he has his less rewarding victims.

A more exciting and dramatically unequal duel would be hard to conceive. The production, nevertheless, manages to find ways to drain it of its excitement and to substitute therefore large dashes of cinematic allegory.

Because the filmed "Night of the Hunter" does follow the original in outline, flashes of its macabre quality are apparent. They are evident in the pastor's deception of the simple-minded villagers and especially of the morose widowed mother of the children. This mentally blurred blond, played by Shelley Winters, is lured into a marriage with the parson which she barely survives long enough to regret.

It is after their mother's murder and the two youngsters' desperate flight that the original narrative reached its shattering peak. In the film, Mr. Laughton chooses to ornament the horrifying incident of this stalking pursuit with a multitude of camera tricks that are different only in that they have been discarded by other directors.

If Laughton is over-embellished, however, of clarifying Good and Evil, he is his admirably effective self in inspiring

"NIGHT OF THE HUNTER" is a United Artists release of a Paul Gregory production, directed by Charles Laughton, screenplay by James Agee based on Davis Grubb's novel of the same title, with a musical score by Walter Schumann. At the Ontario Theater.

The Cast
Preacher Harry Powell Robert Mitchum
Willie Harper Shelley Winters
Rachel Lillian Gish
Joe Harper Evelyn Varden
Ben Harper Peter Graves
John Pearl Billy Chapin
Pearl Sally Jane Bruce
Birdie James Gleason
Walt Don Hedden
Ruby Gloria Castillo
Clay Mary Ellen Coleman
Mary Cheryl Callaway

a number of outstanding performances in "Night of the Hunter."

He has been most singularly successful in the case of young Billy Chapin as the 10-year-old boy from whom no threat or terror can wring the secret of the hidden money. It is a remarkable summing up of the cruel loneliness of childhood and its ability to endure that young Chapin gives, assisted by Sally Jane Bruce as his small, younger sister.

Mitchum makes a terrifying character of his lunatic parson, at least on such occasions as he escapes sheer subjection to Laughton's camera. Miss Winters is quite usefully employed as the sex-spoiled widow and Lillian Gish more so as a kindly farm woman who loves God too much to be afraid of a religious madman.

AND SALLY LINGERS ON

Or, to be precise, Julie Harris who plays the wanton Miss Bowles in "I Am a Camera." The film, based on Christopher Isherwood's "Berlin Story," is in its third popular week at the Trans-Lux. Laurence Harvey is Miss Harris' co-star, playing Isherwood by the way.

HOLLYWOOD

By SHEILAH GRAHAM

Joe and Marilyn Dating

Joe DiMaggio, dating Marilyn Monroe again, loaded her down with perfumes and lingerie which he brought back from Paris for her. Cameron Mitchell admits he's on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He's a nice person and I wish he'd take a long rest.

Freddie Bartholomew, now a television director in New York, is wanted here to direct two series of two different TV producers. Barbara Whiting and Norm Aldon are in love. And George Nader has eyes only for Dani Crayne, Universal-International's new European import. Robert Mitchum, back in town, says, "It's good to eat beans and steak again. You can keep all that high-class French cooking." Dick Powell on alimony: "It's like cashing a check after the bounce." And from Tony Quinn: "A woman's charm diminishes in direct proportion to the amount she drinks." Grace Kelly originally had third billing in "Dial M for Murder," below Ray Milland and Robert Cummings. But with the release, Grace is billed above the movie's title.

Fernando Lamas is accomplishing the impossible—turning Arlene Dahl into an outdoor girl, teaching her tennis, golf and horseback riding. Leo Durocher will net \$100,000 this year.

front: Mario Lanza volunteered to work overtime when rain and Mexican holidays slowed production. And Mario has promised to set up a trust fund for his children, wife Betty, mother and father, from the money he makes out of "Serenade"—after paying his debts, of course.

Eva Gabor has a decision to make. Tyrone Power, who admires her—and very much reciprocated—would like her to move to Hollywood permanently. But Eva has a home in New York City and to date has preferred to be close to the stage and the live TV dramas. It'll take a year for Ty's divorce to be final from Linda Christian. And anything can happen meanwhile.

Producer David Rose flew in from London to catch Kathryn Grayson's night-club opening and to tell her they start her movie, "Port Afrique," as soon as she arrives in England. Kathy leaves the day after she closes in Vegas.

Jeff Morrow costars with Leigh Snowden in "The Creature Walks Among Us." When Jeff was first introduced to Leigh and watched her swivel-hip across the stage, he asked: "Who's going to watch the creature walk among us when this girl is?"

While Gale Storm was in the East plugging her new hit record, "I Hear You Knocking," an offer came through for Gale to star in a musical on Broadway. Husband Lee Bonnell and her three sons held a meeting and decided against it. They don't want her to be away from them for six months.

Pay Wray has been deluged with letters of sympathy since the death of her husband, brilliant screenwriter Robert Riskin. These are nice, but offers of jobs would be more practical. Bob's long illness was very costly.

Machiko Kyo, star of the fine Japanese film, "Gate of Hell," saw her father for the first time in 27 years when he flew in from Sao Paulo where he's a dress-maker.

Bulletin from the "Serenade"

WHERE AND WHEN

Current Theater Attractions and Time of Showing

Stage
National — "Anastasia": 8:30 p.m.
Shubert — "Deadfall": 8:30 p.m.
Screen
Ambassador — "Blood Alley": 1:25, 3:40, 5:55, 8:10 and 10:30 p.m.
Capitol — "The Tall Men": 10:45 a.m., 12:55, 3:05, 5:20, 7:30 and 9:50 p.m.
Colony — "The Green Scarf": 6:15, 8:05 and 9:50 p.m.
Columbia — "Trial": 11 a.m., 1:05, 3:15, 5:25, 7:40 and 9:50 p.m.
Dupont — "The Sheep Has Five Legs": 1:25, 3:30, 5:35, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m.
Keith's — "To Hell and Back": 11:55 a.m., 1:55, 3:55, 5:55, 7:55 and 9:55 p.m.
Little — "On the Waterfront": 6, 7:55 and 9:50 p.m.
McArthur — "The Divided Heart": 6:15, 8 and 9:55 p.m.
Metropolitan — "Blood Alley": 11:30 a.m., 2:05, 4:35, 7:10 and 9:45 p.m.
Ontario — "Night of the Hunter": 1:40, 3:45, 5:45, 7:45 and 9:50 p.m.
Palace — "Gentlemen Marry Brunettes": 11:30 a.m., 1:40, 3:50, 5:55, 8:05 and 10:15 p.m.
Playhouse — "The Man Who Loved Redheads": 11:10 a.m., 12:55, 2:40, 4:30, 6:15, 8:05 and 9:55 p.m.
Pisan — "Female on the Beach": 12, 1:40, 3:25, 5:15, 7, 8:50 and 10:40 p.m.
Trans-Lux — "I Am a Camera": 11 a.m., 12:50, 2:40, 5:35, 6:25, 8:20 and 10:05 p.m.
Warner — "Cinerama Holiday": 3 and 8:30 p.m.

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