

'Crossfire' Hits Target

CROSSFIRE: An RKO Radio film produced by Dore Schary and Adrian Scott. Directed by Edward Dmytryk. Screen play by John Paxton. With Robert Ryan, Robert Mitchum, Sam Levene, Gloria Grahame, Paul Kelly, Steve Brodie. At the Rivoli Theatre.

By David Platt

Everyone should see *Crossfire*, Dore Schary's outspoken detective story against anti-Semitism. The thing to admire in the film is that it frankly links anti-Semitism with murder, brands the anti-Semite as a dangerous menace to society who must be stopped.

The plot concerns a race-hating ex-Sergeant named Montgomery (Robert Ryan) who, during a drunken brawl, "roughs up" and kills an acquaintance named Samuels (Sam Levene) for no other reason than that he is Jewish. He then tries to pin the crime on two other soldiers. Eventually, he is brought to justice by a wide-awake Irish detective (Robert Young) who discovers that anti-Semitism was the sole motive behind the killing.

NOT A MYSTERY

Crossfire is not a mystery story. The identity of the killer is known to the audience almost as soon as the crime is committed. It is made clear at the very beginning that Montgomery's sadistic streak stems from his pent-up hatred toward all foreigners. To him an ex-GI from Tennessee is a brainless 'hillbilly.' The Jews, says this disciple of Bilbo and Rankin, lived on the fat of the land while good men were fighting overseas. Samuels, who fought at Okinawa, before being honorably discharged for physical reasons, is characterized as a 'draft-dodger.' Sam Levene plays the part of the murdered Jew with dignity and intelligence. The hazy, drunken evening of the murder is effectively recreated in flashback by director Edward Dmytryk and his screenwriter John Paxton.

FIVE-MINUTE SPEECH

In the course of exposing the real criminal, detective Young makes a powerful five-minute speech against intolerance. He points out that race hatred can be as deadly as a loaded gun. "If you carry it around with you, it can go off and kill somebody."

The detective assails the various packages the business of hating Jews comes in—such as country clubs for Gentiles only, no Jewish tenants wanted, job discrimination. He emphasizes that our failure to fight against these evils produces a brutal specimen like Montgomery, who, like the Nazis, began by poking fun at all people with a foreign accent.

Young goes on to compare the anti-Semitism of today with the fear and hatred of Irish Catholics



Robert Montgomery (right) and Robert Ryan in a scene from the new RKO Radio film "Crossfire," a detective story in which the only clue is that the killer hates Jews.



SAM LEVENE



ROBERT MITCHUM

which at one time in America had "developed and spread like a terrible disease." He tells of his grandfather who was beaten to death with whiskey bottles because he was a Catholic. They called him a "dirty Irish Mick," a "priest lover," a "spy from Rome," a "foreigner trying to rob men of jobs."

"Hating is always the same, always senseless," the detective tells the audience. "One day it kills Irish Catholics, the next day Jews, the next day Protestants, the next day Quakers. It's hard to stop. It can end by killing men who wear striped jackets or people from Tennessee."

UNDER FIRE

This eloquent speech—the finest screen speech since Chaplin's six-minute appeal for a world where human rights are superior to property rights, is already being attacked in newspapers and magazines.

Hedda Hopper, the Hollywood gossip columnist, thought it was irrelevant to the film. *Life Magazine* called it a "five-minute sermon" which "repeats a message already made clear and talks down to the audience in phrases so patently

grammar-schoolish as to be almost insulting."

These attacks constitute another form of bigotry which deserves to be filmed some day.

The truth is that Young's speech is as relevant to *Crossfire* as Hamlet's soliloquies to Shakespeare's great play. Far from "talking down" to the audience, it is one of the few times that a Hollywood film has had the courage to speak up forthrightly on a subject of deep concern to all the people.

Crossfire—speeches and all—will outlast its puny detractors. And although it does no more than scratch the surface of the real problem of anti-Semitism—its economic roots and methods of stamping it out—it "highlights the disease within our democracy" and that, as one critic has observed, is good—very good.

Menotti Returns From West Coast

Gian-Carlo Menotti, composer-author-director of *The Medium* and *The Telephone* at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, has returned here after spending several days in Hollywood listening to picture offers from MGM, Columbia and 20th Century-Fox. Further negotiations will continue at this end leading to his signing with one of the major studios and a possible sale of *The Medium*.

For the present he will be occupied in completing the book and score of his new lyric drama, *The Consul*, and will also take over supervision of auditions being held for understudies and a second company of *The Medium* and *The Telephone*.

Anti-Fascist Concert At Juilliard Hall

The Student council of the Juilliard School of Music is sponsoring a concert of international anti-fascist songs this Thursday afternoon at the Juilliard Concert Hall, 120 Claremont Ave., N.Y.C., at 1:30. Theme of the program is the World Youth Festival in Prague. Featured artist is Pete Seeger of People's Songs.

1947 CRITICS PRIZE PLAY
"A really welcome event—calls for a celebration."
—Daily Worker

ALL MY SONS
by ARTHUR MILLER. Staged by ELIA KAZAN
BETH MERRILL—THOMAS CHALMERS
JOHN FORTYNE—ANN SHEPHERD
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—GARLAND, Journal-American.
"A superb musical comedy with a healthy progressive point of view."
—S. Sillen.

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'Man and Superman' G. B. Shaw Comedy To Be Revived

Maurice Evans will star in his own production of Bernard Shaw's comedy, *Man and Superman* this fall in New York. The noted actor-manager has booked the Alvin Theatre for a limited engagement of Shaw's comedy starting Oct. 8.

The part of John Tanner in *Man and Superman* will be Mr. Evans' first contemporary role in one of his own productions. Prior to appearing in his own Shakespearean presentations of *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, he was starred as Napoleon in *St. Helena* and played the Dauphin in Katharine Cornell's presentation of Shaw's *Saint Joan*. In England he appeared in numerous Shawian comedies before becoming an American star and citizen.

David Platt, "'Crossfire' Hits Target," Daily Worker, July 23, 1947.
Courtesy Adrian Scott Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming-Laramie.