

'The Time Of Your Life' Is A Cagney Family Film

The screen adaptation of William Saroyen's Pulitzer prize-winning play "The Time of Your Life" is a Cagney family affair. James Cagney stars in it, sister Jeanne has a leading role, and brother William produced it.

THE film is one of the United Artists' 30th Anniversary releases, and at present is showing at the Lyceum Theatre, Melbourne.

It is a story without any plot in the ordinary sense; rather it is a comedy of characters moods, tempo, and arresting incidents rising into a crescendo which marks the climax. Each sequence is a cameo in itself, yet all combine as a commentary on life in our time.

The entire action takes place on the San Francisco waterfront—in Nick's Pacific Street Restaurant, Saloon, and Entertainment Palace. The narrator is Joe—mystic philosopher known by everybody and yet really known by no one. He is almost always at Nick's place, and only once in the whole time does he leave his seat at the table.

Now A Philosopher

James Cagney, who plays Joe, has evolved from gangster to philosopher in 43 movies. Nearly 20 years and countless film cycles have passed since he shocked moviegoers and revolutionised the industry by hitting actress Mae Clarke in the face with a grapefruit. He has come a long, laborious way to emerge as a whimsical and benevolent philosopher who dispenses help and counsel to everyone who comes within his orbit.

Cagney fans may be disappointed in his metamorphosis, for despite his Academy Award in 1942 for his portrayal of the late George M. Cohan in "Yankee Doodle Dandy," he is

still regarded by filmgoers primarily as a cinema gangster and "tough guy." Nevertheless, he has been "agin the law" in less than a third of his rising 50 pictures.

Producer Cagney paid 150,000 dollars for the screen rights of "The Time of Your Life," which, as well as gaining the Pulitzer Prize, won the Critics Circle award as the best play of the season of 1939-40. Saroyen could have sold the rights to another major studio for 225,000 dollars, but he wanted James Cagney in the role of Joe for the movie version.

Bill Cagney's aim from the outset was to translate not only the Saroyen script to the screen, but also its essence and its mood. After seeing the film, the playwright wrote to him, "I was too busy enjoying it to care who wrote it. I think you have made one of the most original and entertaining movies I have ever seen. Congratulations and profound thanks."

With his casting director (Irving Kumin) and director (H. C. Potter), Cagney spent two months interviewing, reviewing, testing and re-testing members of the cast. Finally 23 players were chosen, 19 of them with backgrounds of stage training ranging from six months to 45 years.

Two members of the original cast of the play were included. William Bendix was promoted from the role of Krupp, the unhappy cop, to the more important part of Nick, and Reginald Beane assumed his original part of Wesley, the hungry negro pianist.

FILM ABOUT A FAMOUS HORSE

The Santa Anita racetrack in Southern California opened early this year for two days only—just for the filming there of the Warner Bros.' production "The Story of Seabiscuit."

SEABISCUIT was a famous American racehorse and at one time the highest stake-winner in the world.

Starring roles in the film are shared by Shirley Temple, Barry Fitzgerald and a couple of Seabiscuit's sons.

When Shirley reported to the make-up department on the first morning of the picture, she was surprised to find on her chair a box labelled "Special Horse Make-Up." Upon investigation she discovered that one of Seabiscuit's sons, scheduled to play the part of his famous sire as a yearling, has a star on his forehead, which the great Seabiscuit didn't have—and it has to be painted out for scenes in the film.

William Cartledge, a top jockey at the Agua Caliente racetrack in Mexico, is acting as stand-in for Lon McCallister, who is featured in the film as Seabiscuit's regular rider (he'll appear as the late jockey George ("The Iceman Woolfe"). For his role McCallister underwent four solid weeks of riding tuition, six hours a day.

★ Young Actor Branches Out

Seventeen-years old Tony Newley — Artful Dodger of "Oliver Twist" fame — has formed his own film company, called "Progressive Photo Plays."

Tony's main ambition is to eventually become a feature film director, and he will direct the productions himself. A young cabaret artist, Ian Dallas, will be the producer.

Apart from a professional photographer, most of the members of Tony's company are young amateur actors and actresses looking for a chance to make good on the screen. If their first effort, which will be filmed out of doors from an original script written by one of the unit, is a success, they hope to persuade someone to distribute their productions as short feature films.

Tony recently finished roles in "Golden Salamander" and "Madeleine" for the J. Arthur Rank Organisation.

★ 'ARMOR UNDIES' FOR POWELL

Studio technicians at Universal-International created a suit of armored underwear for William Powell to wear in "Take One False Step," in which he stars with Shelley Winters.

The suit was built to stop the teeth of a big police dog with which Powell wrestles in one scene. The torso of the garb was a flak suit of the type worn by Army fliers in the war. To this were added sleeves and legs of horsehide to which were attached hundreds of spring steel overlapping discs, wafer-thin but extremely tough.

The dog's owner and trainer insisted that the animal had been trained to the point where he wouldn't bite hard enough to hurt, but the studio was taking no chances.

"Take One False Step" marks the return of William Powell to the type of comedy-melodrama that distinguished his "Thin Man" series.

★ Welcome Return

Madame Maria Ouspenskaya, one of Hollywood's oldest and most renowned character actresses, will be seen on the screen again in Warner Bros.' forthcoming comedy farce, "A Kiss in the Dark," which stars Jane Wyman and David Niven. Madame Maria retired about a year ago to teach the "P's and Q's" of acting to a group of ex-servicemen at the American Repertory Company's School in Hollywood.

DUAL HONOR FOR MICHAEL WILDING

Michael Wilding has been named Great Britain's number one screen star of 1948 by two leading publications.

"KINE WEEKLY," an English trade paper, selected him as the most popular male star — British or American — in the Empire.

"The Sketch," London, awarded him its coveted trophy for the most outstanding work by an English actor or actress on the screen in 1948. For this honor his closest competitors were Sir Laurence Olivier in "Hamlet," Moira Shearer in "The Red Shoes," Alex Guinness in "Oliver Twist," and Sir Ralph Richardson in "The Fallen Idol."

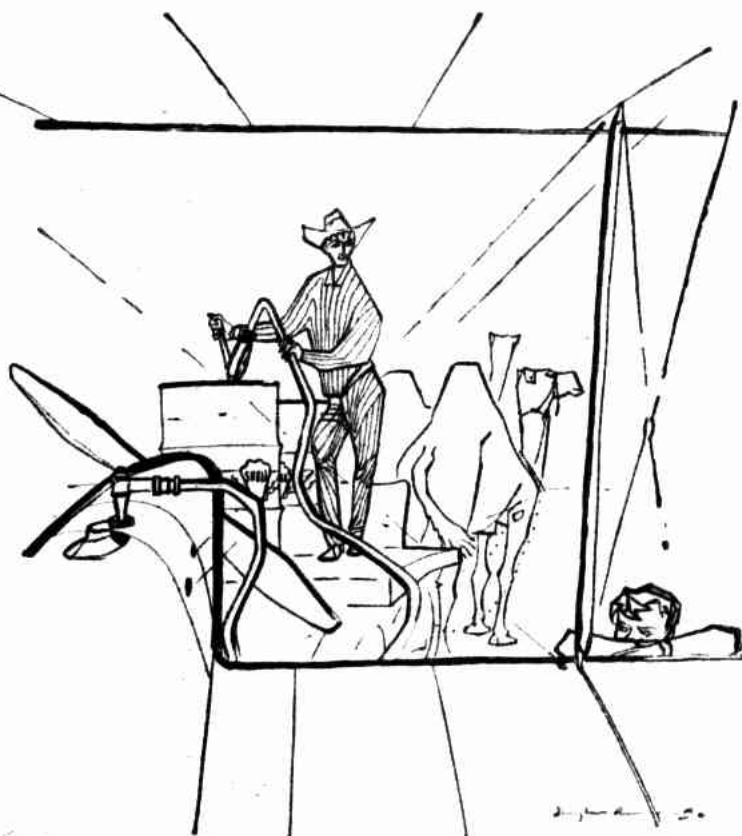
Wilding's latest film is "Under Capricorn," in which he co-

stars with Ingrid Bergman and Joseph Cotten. It has been directed by Alfred Hitchcock for Trans-Atlantic pictures, and will be distributed by Warner Bros.

Veteran 'Cop'

James Gleason handles his 100th detective role in Universal-International's "Take One False Step," starring William Powell and Shelley Winters. Veteran actor and writer, Gleason is an honorary member of the Los Angeles Police Homicide Squad.

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