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'Shadows' Improvised Seen at Embassy

By ALTON COOK.

"Shadows" springs to the Broadway Embassy (46th St.) screen from perhaps the strangest and most interesting auspices any movie ever had. The picture was made by the young actor John Cassavetes, largely with pupils from a Manhattan acting studio he was running at the time.

There was no written script, not even a very solid over-all story plan. The players simply discussed the scene and then went before the camera and improvised.

This haphazard method could hardly be expected to produce a closely knit, professionally polished movie. "Shadows" abounds in amateur fumbblings and clumsy repetitions.

Zeal Helps.

But it has zeal that overshadows the flaws and makes them minor. The young cast is infused with earnest dedication to express ideas and characters.

The players were dealing in topics and troubles with which they certainly must have been familiar even though they did not fully understand them. The picture has two basic themes: the tormented upheavals of the period of emergence from adolescence into maturity, and an explosive racial situation.

The first is studied in a series of parties into which the young aimlessly drift, sampling jazz, high flown debate, liquor and sex. Most of them are seeking a secure route to artistry via Bohemia.

The second subject is triggered when a girl who seems to be white introduces her lover to her obviously Negro brother.

No Real Stature.

The actors do not achieve real stature but the limitations never interfere with coherence or force. They have mastered



LELIA GOLDONI . . . in
"Shadows."

the thought they want to present and say it with remarkable economy of words, considering their impromptu preparation. Editing of what must have been a rambling maze of film is another solid achievement, credited to producer Maurice McEndree.

The most impressive of the actors is Ben Carruthers with an irritable, befuddled, angular style that suggests France's new wave idol, Jean-Paul Belmondo. The feminine lead, Lelia Goldoni, probably by now has managed to control a self-conscious twitch that distracts from her considerable emotional power.

"Shadows" may be a decisive stepping stone for quite a few of the people connected with it.

. . .

"Shadows," with Hugh Hurd, Lelia Goldoni, Ben Carruthers, Anthony Ray and Dennis Salas. Directed by John Cassavetes. At the Embassy. Running time: 87 minutes.