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A Streetcar Named Desire

Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando starred in sock pic version of Pulitzer Prize play. Word-of-mouth should build it.

Warner Bros. release of Charles K. Feldman production. Stars Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando; features Kim Hunter, Karl Malden. Directed by Elia Kazan. Screenplay, Tennessee Williams; adapted from Williams stage play by Oscar Saul. camera, Harry Stradling; music, Alex North; editor, David Weisbart; music direction, Ray Heindorf. Tradedown in N. Y., June 13, '51. Running time, 125 MINS.

Blanche.....	Vivien Leigh
Stanley.....	Marlon Brando
Stella.....	Kim Hunter
Mitch.....	Karl Malden
Steve.....	Rudy Bond
Pablo.....	Nick Dennis
Eunice.....	Peg Hillias
A Collector.....	Wright King
A Doctor.....	Richard Garrick
The Matron.....	Ann Dere
Mexican Women.....	Edna Thomas

Tennessee Williams' exciting Broadway stage play—winner of the Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critics award during the 1947-48 season—has been screenplayed into an even more absorbing drama of frustration and stark tragedy. With Marlon Brando essaying the part he created for the Broadway stage, and Vivien Leigh as the morally disintegrated Blanche DuBois (originated on Broadway by Jessica Tandy), "A Streetcar Named Desire" is thoroughly adult drama, excellently produced and imparting a keen insight into a drama whose scope was, of necessity, limited by its stage setting.

The camera has done greater justice to the Williams play, catching the nuances and reflected tragedy with an intimacy that is so vital in a story of this type. It is a film whose theme militates against general boxoffice interest, but word-of-mouth and critical acclaim should find it building strongly.

"Streetcar" is decidedly adult drama because of its theme—it tells the story of the slow moral collapse of a southern schoolteacher. It is an escape from escapism in every sense of the word, but never does its brutal realism and trenchant prose permit audience interest to lag despite its enormous length. The film runs two hours and five minutes, but there is no wasted footage in a picture that might find some criticism only from the more cautious because of the projection of the nymphomania theme. Though it deals with a sex problem that is dangerous story-telling for films, "Streetcar" has not for a moment sacrificed good taste for the sake of realism. It propels the basic story with sensitivity, shading and poignancy.

Pic is a faithful adaptation from the original play as it was produced by Irene Mayer Selznick. It is the story of Blanche DuBois, a faded Mississippi teacher, who is forced from her job by her moral transgressions. She seeks refuge with a sister in the old French Quarter of New Orleans, her predilection for "meetings with strangers" being unknown to the sister and the latter's husband. Because her presence intrudes on the husband-wife relationship, the husband, a crude brutal young Polish-American, immediately becomes hostile to the visitor. He also suspects she's lying about her past. It is this hostility that motivates the story's basic elements. Stanley Kowalski (Brando), the husband, embarks on a plan to force his sister-in-law from his home. He subsequently achieves this by making a point of probing and learning of her unrevealed past, thus shattering Blanche's one chance at happiness with one of Stanley's poker-playing friends.

Vivien Leigh gives a compelling performance in telling the tragedy of Blanche DeBois. She has several scenes of great pathos, and no less of these is the final one in which she is seen being escorted to an asylum for the insane as the climax to her life of frustration. Marlon Brando at times captures strongly the brutality of the young Pole but occasionally he performs unevenly in a portrayal marked by frequent garbling of his dialog. It is to be granted that, as a common laborer, he wasn't expected to project with an Oxonian accent; yet, Brando overdoes it somewhat. Kim Hunter and Karl Malden are the other principals, in parts they played in the Broadway version. They are excellent. Miss Hunter as Blanche's sister, torn between love for her sister and her husband, and Malden, as Blanche's frantic suitor. Malden has two especially good scenes with Miss Leigh that strengthen his future film chances. The other players all lend strong support.

Charles K. Feldman's production has been garnished with all the facets of Grade A film-making, and Elia Kazan has directed with a keen perspective of story and character values, a job that he also handled for the play. The photography is excellent; so are all the other technical credits.

Kahn.