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'Contempt'--An 'Epic' Film

Life on A Set In Italy

1965
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By Paine Knickerbocker

In "Contempt," now at the Larkin, the contempt of Jack Palance for the dignity of mankind, and of Fritz Lang for himself, are far more interesting than the vapid indifference Brigitte Bardot expresses for her husband.

Directed by Jean-Luc Godard, this is the story of an arrogant phoney who is an American producer of motion pictures, whose director is played by Lang himself, and of the new writer hired to re-write scenes in the epic "Ulysses" which he is making in Italy.

The writer, played by Michel Piccoli, is married to Miss Bardot. At first their marriage appears secure, but when she sees how easily her husband is bulldozed by Palance, and how willing he is to risk her in the bargain, her love fades fast.

When Palance and Lang are on screen, the film possesses an enviable vitality. Palance's bogus authority, the cruelty which is always lurking behind his smile, and his panther-like mien are most impressive. Lang (whose "M" introduced Peter Lorre to American audiences) is excellent as the jaded director. Oppose Palance he will not. He knows his best days are through, and with a quietly humorous shrug, he admits his defeat.

In the early parts of "Contempt," the dialogue, in both English and French, is bright and knowing. "B.B." is referred to once, but it develops it is Bertold Brecht who is so designated. Piccoli wears his hat all the time, "like Martin in 'Some Came Running'" he explains.

After a promising begin-



BRIGITTE BARDOT AND JACK PALANCE
Her husband risks it

ning, "Contempt" suddenly drifts into an interminable spat between Miss Bardot and Piccoli. Her buttocks are as provocative as ever, but the pout, which has persisted through so many years, now grows tiresome. Not only is the scene repetitious, but the conversation is translated for the American by Georgia Moll as Palance's secretary and one gets it both in English subtitles and her lines. It makes matters move very slowly, and the parallel with Ulysses is never sufficiently deft to be effective.

Much of Godard's direction is deft, however. His editing,



FRITZ LANG
Plays director

While nothing like that in "Breathless," still brings a certain gloss to the conflict, and especially the villa in Capri where much of the action takes place is a fascinating setting; spectacular, photogenic, and precisely right.

Piccoli's role is that of a whiner, which he does well, but he is not given the opportunity to bat in the same league as Palance and Lang. Miss Moll is properly appealing.

Also on the bill is "Only One New York," made by a Frenchman, Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau, who with his camera explores various ethnic groups in the city: those from foreign lands, Negroes, and the Indians who work constructing skyscrapers. The narration is pretty pompous, but much of the film is interesting, although one feels Gaisseau didn't quit when he was ahead.