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'4 Horsemen' Should Be Scratched

By Ben Kubasik

Newsday Entertainment Editor

In an updated version of Spanish novelist Vicente Blasco-Ibanez' "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," World War II is fought in Parisian settings so Hollywood-plus you couldn't hear a bomb drop. Worse, the story, color, music and much of the acting that accompany those surroundings on a vastly oversized screen are calculated to arouse only the most synthetic emotions.

For the film has Glenn Ford using his apparently incurable boyish charms in the role of an unlikely Argentine playboy who remains neutral while the rest of the world burns. The movie never makes it clear why he should take sides since the world's chaotic condition is shown only sporadically in multihued montages depicting bombings, submarine torpedoings, the Biblical four horsemen—War, Pestilence, Death and Conquest—roaming the skies, and such. Ford's Paris—French or Nazi-occupied—is his to roam as he pleases. Besides, he has Swedish star Ingrid Thulin, whose French husband has gone off to fight their war, miscast as his mistress.

Throughout the movie, there is some family squabbling that is more irritating than dramatic. Seems Ford's uncle—Paul Lukas—years before had made Nazis out of himself and his family and has shown up as a big-deal general in Paris where he alternately aids and embarrasses Ford. Ford's father, Charles Boyer, who never wanted to be bothered by such things as war or Lukas' actions, finally urges Ford to do something about fighting the Nazis after Ford's sister, Yvette Mimieux, is killed aiding the French resistance movement. But Ford

already has joined the French underground, whom he serves as some sort of messenger boy, a job for which Ford seems eminently suited. With all this as a preface, Ford's not particularly exciting heroic histrionics at the film's end seem altogether misplaced.

The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer release, which was directed by Vincente Minnelli, opens today on Long Island, where audiences who go to see it will discover how long its two-and-a-half hour running time can be.