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# Film Preview

## Aaron Slick From Punkin Crick

*(Drama - Songs - Technicolor)*

PARAMOUNT RELEASE of Perlberg-Seaton production. Producers, William Perlberg and George Seaton; direction and screenplay, Claude Binyon; based on play by Walter Benjamin Hare; camera, Charles B. Lang, Jr.; art direction, Hal Pereira and Henry Bumstead; film editor, Archie Marshak; assistant to producers, Arthur Jacobson; musical direction, Robert Emmett Dolan; vocal arrangements, Joseph J. Lilley; musical numbers staged by Charles O'Curran; music and lyrics, Jay Livingston and Ray Evans.

CAST—Stars Alan Young, Dinah Shore, Robert Merrill. Features Adele Jergens, Minerva Urecal, Martha Stewart. Supporting cast: Fritz Feld, Veda Ann Borg, Chick Chandler.

TRADESHOWN at Warners Wilmette Theatre, Los Angeles, Feb. 15, 1952. Running time, 95 mins.

"Aaron Slick From Punkin Crick" is a Technicolor musical version of Walter Benjamin Hare's backwoods drama which has played more than 50,000 performances down through the years—majority by rural school and amateur drama groups. An out-moded piece for professional presentation at this late date, it is only mildly amusing fare. Picture will have to lean heavily on the teevee and radio following of cast toppers Alan Young, Dinah Shore and Robert Merrill to garner more than nominal biz in the regular runs.

"Slick's" success as an hinterland amateur presentation probably stems from the fact it can be staged as a one-setter and with a small cast, with the native talent getting it across because of local interest. For films, however, the story is too old-fashioned and obvious to catch more than moderate audience interest, chiefly through its toplined names.

The decidedly familiar story introduces Young as "Aaron," the rural farmer who bashfully pays court to the attentions of Miss Shore, who owns the adjoining farm. But she wants a fling at the big city of Chicago, and achieves this when she sells the farm to city slicker Merrill and his girl friend for a big price when the pair hide out in Punkin Crick to cool off a shady real estate deal in Chi, and think there's oil on the farm.

Young follows the girl to the metropolis, and finally out-wits Merrill who's trying to get his coin back. Then the pair happily return to the Crick.

Picture unfolds at a leisurely pace, being slowed down at times with the inclusion of an overload of 10 songs by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans. Most are keyed to the plot, and on only for brief footage. Best are "Still Waters," a semi-spiritual sung by Miss Shore and Merrill; "My Beloved," ballad baritone by Merrill in a tent show setting; and the comedy tune, "I'd Like To Baby You," socked over by Martha Stewart with Young as her foil. Miss Shore sings a total of four numbers along the way, Merrill a pair. A Calypso song was briefly staged in a simulation of a College Inn, Chicago, setting; and there is a barbershop quartet on for one turn. None of the songs seem destined for the top rungs of any hit lists.

Radio-TV vet Young handles himself well in portraying a characterization familiar to his teevee audiences. He plays straight throughout, and never strains to get laughs with his humorous antics, letting each fall into the proper groove for attention.

Robert Merrill, in his first film role, does well in the role of the heavy, giving it a convincing tone without overdoing it. He indicates he can hold his own in the picture field even without his Metopera voice.

Miss Jergens catches attention as Merrill's sidekick, Minerva Urecal delivers her usual fine performance as the housekeeper; and Veda Ann Borg clicks in one fast comedy sequence with Young. Miss Stewart, Fritz Feld and Chick Chandler are good in supporting slots.

Screenplay by Claude Binyon extracts the best possible from the antiquated basic story line, but Binyon's direction never hits a zestful pace and picture's 95 minutes is overlength. Technicolor photography by Charles B. Lang, Jr., and musical direction by Robert Emmett Dolan are topgrade.

Producers William Perlberg and George Seaton missed in the judgment of transposing the old play to modern film requirements, but can be complimented for introducing Merrill to pix. Singer should click strongly in future film commitments.

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