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Eisenstein Film New Feature on Europa's Screen

Much Discussed "Thunder Over Mexico" Makes Local Bow

THE peculiar history of "Thunder Over Mexico" is rather more interesting than the photoplay itself as it now emerges on the screen at the Europa Theatre. Gorgeous photography — among the best the screen has yet presented—it has indeed, but as both documentary film and straight melodramatic narrative it leaves much to be desired. It is a definite fragment, and as a fragment it remains on the screen.

How good the whole was, if it was really good, the world will probably never know, but "Thunder Over Mexico" remains at least a vallant effort to salvage one-thirty-fifth of the enormous amount of celluloid used in its making. That which is left makes Cameraman Tisse the definite hero of the production. Without the opportunity to cut the photoplay himself into the speedy pattern that characterizes all of his films, Director Sergi Eisenstein is just represented by a second-rate Soviet film in a Mexican setting. *Eve Ledger*

According to Upton Sinclair, sponsor of the film, Eisenstein set out for Mexico to make more or less a travelogue. Instead, he shot five feature films, correlated to the extent of marking Mexico's progress from the rankest kind of peonage to a true Russian spirit of independence. Two hundred thousand feet of film rolled back to Hollywood, but Eisenstein was stopped at the border by United States immigration authorities and was not allowed to cut the feature. That editing was done in Hollywood amid cries of "Sacrilege!" by various militant parties, who proclaimed that a work of art was being ruined and a dynamic, revolutionary idea was being throttled by Hollywood conventions. The truth of the issue is probably buried under a deep blanket of celluloid and cactus leaves, and I rather incline to the belief that "Thunder Over Mexico" is a sturdy attempt of Sinclair and Sol Lesser, whose company prepared the film, to salvage some of their investment. For bringing Tisse's beautiful photography, they are to be forgiven any violence to the original.

Obviously one of the five episodes, the film goes back to 1906 in the early days of the Diaz regime, when the owners were the lords of creation, and the peons less than the dust. A sturdy young peon brings his bride-to-be to his master's hacienda. There one of the haughty dons seizes the girl for himself and in the struggle that follows the peon and two of his friends meet the cruel "death of the horses"—a horrific episode in which the three, buried to their shoulders in the earth, are run down by the horseman of the master. The episode is advanced as one of the little links in the Mexican revolt—or series of revolts. The conclusion is a nebulous array of impressionistic shots—marching men with Russian fervor, leading on to scenes of new

Mexico and happy Mexican youths in football uniforms. The Russian machine complex is also illustrated by scenes of now smiling peons standing over vast cogs—which has always seemed to this reviewer to be the strangest manner in which to symbolize the spirit of freedom.

But as Tisse points his camera at expansive clouds and weaves it through the maze of century-plant leaves; as he traces stone Aztec profiles in living flesh, and as he glimpses ruins of one-time Mayan grandeur, one is left with a feeling of camera eloquence too infrequently invoked. In that quality is "Thunder Over Mexico's" claim to attention. *Hollie Wood* O. W.

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