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Movies ^{BEVERLY HILLS CITIZEN} ^{★ 1-25-57} Drama

By HAZEL FLYNN

Acting, Script, Score Great!

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A re-enactment of an episode in the Korean conflict wherein a U.S. lieutenant tries to get a platoon of men out of a communist trap is the dramatic framework for "Men in War" at the Fox Wilshire, and there is enough action taking place in the small perimeter to which the men are assigned to make a startlingly realistic and appealing motion picture.

It is a sad movie . . . full of heroism and sacrifice and, considering the present state of world affairs, it may not send you out of the theatre in an optimistic mood. But it will send you out hating war and all it stands for more bitterly. It will also prove to you (as though you already didn't

know) that combat today is far worse than that practiced by savages and cannibals, and that the instinctive fighters and the trained veterans are the only ones with a chance of survival, God willing.

A magnificent musical score composed and conducted by Elmer Bernstein points up the action and suspense, and will deserve Academy consideration next year when Oscar time rolls 'round.

"Men in War" is based on a novel by Van Van Praag. Screen play is by Philip Yordan. Sidney Harmon produced, and Anthony Mann directed. United Artists is releasing.

The small group of men find themselves surrounded by the commies who slink in the brush

camouflaged as bushes and constantly harass them, stabbing any stragglers in the back, and sniping at the line of march continually from treetops.

The encounter a jeep containing a tough sergeant and a shell shocked colonel, and Bob Ryan, the lieutenant, commandeers the vehicle to carry the supplies and ammunition so that they can move faster out of the trap and not be annihilated.

At first Ryan has no liking for the sergeant (Aldo Ray), and the latter in turn objects loudly and strenuously to the commandeering, but the officer soon learns that the tough guy is a great fighter by instinct as well as experience, and that he can almost smell out the enemy. Mutual admiration if not actual liking thus finally springs up between the two.

There are many exciting and pathetic moments as the jeep proceeds on its way. The death of James Edwards is one of them. This fine young colored actor plays a kindly non-com who sits down for a few moments to rest his feet and pick a steel helmet full of daisies. Of course the enemy get him, but the irony of the soldier's childish delight at seeing flow-

ers in bloom on the battlefield may inspire a salty tear or two.

Bob Ryan does some great screen work as the lieutenant, and Aldo emerges as a dramatic actor of real depth here as the tough killer who was nevertheless tender as a woman with his sick commanding officer, even sheltering him with his own body during repeated shelling.

Robert Keith is the colonel, and he too does a masterful job, for he speaks not a word during the entire film, and has to portray all emotions with his face and eyes.

Philip Pine is a corporal who "gets lost" but finally turns up as one of the pathetically few survivors after the storming of a ridge during which the colonel comes out of it and dies a hero's death, and flame-throwers are used . . . surely the most horrible sight ever known to civilized man except possibly an atomic explosion.

One of the other frightening sequences in "Men in War" is when the poor harassed G.I.'s find the path over which they must travel treacherously mined. In this episode Nehemiah Persoff, a newcomer to the screen, handles a bit with great credibility.

There's no use going into further detail. "Men in War" is simply a well produced, and excellently written, directed, and acted tragedy . . . a human document of American heroism lest we forget. But haven't we almost forgotten already?