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FILM REVIEWS

"WELCOME MR. MARSHALL"

CURZON. SPANISH. 6,750 FT. APPROX. "U." REL.: NOT FIXED. DIRECTOR :
 STARS : Jose Isbert, Manolo Moran, Luis G. Berlanga.
 Alberto Romea, Luis Perez de Leon,
 Lolita Sevilla.

Comedy. Straightforward tale of village that prepares to welcome and impress Marshall Plan administrators touring Spain; how the village is disguised to look like olde Seville, only to see the Americans' limousines whisk through the main street and disappear for ever—a disappointment that seems to disconcert the inhabitants little. Highly amusing incident, characterisation, dialogue, and commentary. Good sub-titles, though at times calling for speedy reading. This Cannes Festival prize-winner is a good example of the type for which Continental studios are noted. Likely to amuse any audience and an obvious one for specialist halls.

PRODUCTION : A quiet Spanish village is excited one day by a visit from the Governor. He tells the Mayor that a Marshall Plan commission has the village on its itinerary, and the village must welcome and impress the Americans. A frantic meeting of the local big-wigs has an amusing but useless session, and they turn to the cafe-singer's agent. He organises the welcome. To give the Americans what they'd expect, the Castile village is to look like olde Seville: phoney fronts to the garlanded streets, the villagers all in hired costumes. After a successful rehearsal, when each person puts down his request for the one thing he wants and hopes to get out of the delegation's visit, they have some very odd dreams. The priest, for instance, is tried by the Ku-Klux-Klan, plus jazz; the Mayor is a sheriff in a Wild West bar, with a free-for-all fight. Next day the village waits expectantly for the commission. The Americans' cars just drive through quickly without pausing. The philosophic villagers take down the unnecessary "props," all contributing what they can to the cost of the fiasco. The rain has started, it will bring a good harvest, and they carry on cheerfully as ever.

TREATMENT : This simple story of an unusual event in the life of a sleepy village unfolds agreeably. There are good scenes of the whole population's doings, with some fine presentations of the main characters in the exploits; in particular the deaf Mayor, the artist's agent, slick talking, who "knows America," the priest who thinks the Americans ungodly, the old aristo to whom they mean Redskins. Dialogue, situations, and a fair amount of commentary all have a nice sense of humour.

ACTING : Jose Isbert's is a clever portrayal of the deaf, somewhat incompetent Mayor with an eye for a leg. Manolo Moran is a slick, small-time "impresario," Alberto Romea a backward-looking "squire," thinking of his ancestors. Luis Perez de Leon is the village priest, Lolita Sevilla the cafe singer.

BOX-OFFICE APPEAL : Diverting comedy of village antics; simple story; interesting setting; good acting.

W. P.

The 'International Critics' Prize