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ALBERT SCHWEITZER (Hill & Anderson) (Eastman Color)

Producer and Director: Jerome Hill. Photography: Erica Anderson. Music: Leon Barzin. Source: Written by Albert Schweitzer. Narrated by: Fredric March. 80 min.
ESTIMATES AGREE:

Five years went into the filming of this unadorned cinema-biography of the man — musician, theologian, physician, and humanitarian — whom many consider the greatest human being alive today. Attempting to capture the essence of one whose motivating force is best summed up in his own phrase "reverence for life", this film takes us from his childhood and young manhood in Alsace to his present dedication in the Lambarene hospital in French West Africa. Some dramatization and photographs from the family album catalogue Schweitzer's earlier years; this portion of the film must naturally seem pedestrian and somewhat uninspired in comparison to the latter half which gives an absorbing account of his activities today. On the spot photography shows the 81-year-old Schweitzer tending to the physical and spiritual needs of his patients during a typical day in his little hospital village. Doctor, minister, carpenter, student, and friend even to the animals which flock around his door, Schweitzer is shown as the source of all comfort and inspiration to his people. In a continuous commentary Fredric March represents the off-screen voice of Dr. Schweitzer himself, and the connecting narration is supplied by Burgess Meredith. We can overlook uneven photography in Eastman Color, because the story that unfolds upon the screen is so much more important than the way in which it is told. The film pioneers a new type of biography in which the subject is still living and plays his real-life rôle. It is a tribute to Dr. Schweitzer rather than a reflection on the technique to say that the man transcends the film.

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