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It is so seldom that an American film spends most of its footage considering the basic dignity of man (as did the Italian "Bicycle Thief" and the French "Diary of a Country Priest") that we have two-fold reason for welcoming "On the Waterfront." It is, in the first place, extraordinarily successful as a movie. Under the direction of Elia Kazan the action moves along at a fast pace in telling a story of violence and passion on the New York waterfront. Most of the picture was beautifully photographed in Hoboken, New Jersey, with the Hudson River, the New York skyline, the Hoboken piers, saloons, tenements and one Catholic church in particular as background, and it effectively uses these real scenes as part of the story, and the setting becomes almost as important as the actors.

"On the Waterfront" is an excellent example of cooperation in picture making; for that reason it is difficult to spotlight any one person in the credits. Sam

This may well be the greatest screen performance of all time—and one of the greatest pictures!



Speigel's excellent production with emphasis on quality all down the line; Budd Schulberg's well-written screenplay which stems from Malcolm Johnson's series of newspaper articles (which won a Pulitzer prize in 1949) and from interviews Schulberg had with various dock leaders and workers, especially Father John M. Corridan, assistant director of the Xavier Labor School; the musical score by Leonard Bernstein which highlights the action and mood and serves as an asset, never as a scene stealer; Director Elia Kazan's thoughtful handling of the unusual cast which includes professionals, non-professionals and some newcomers, all result in a total effect which brilliantly conveys the desperate situation on the waterfront.

Kazan should also get a hand for guiding Marlon Brando in the finest performance of his distinguished movie career. Brando plays an ex-prize fighter who is little more than an errand boy for the waterfront union's crooked boss (Lee J. Cobb). The young man is tolerated by this moneyed big shot only because his brother (Rod Steiger) is the boss' right hand. Brando knows that the boss' goon killed a young fellow who was going to break the waterfront code by testifying to the Crime Commission. Brando is almost indifferent to his very small part in the murder until the dead boy's sister and the parish priest work on him to tell what he knows. Schulberg has written the role with understanding and Brando plays it with equal understanding: there is a touch of the usual Brando toughness and every-man-for-himself attitude, but this is really a portrait of change, of regeneration, and Brando is magnificent in the scenes in which he becomes convinced by the girl and the priest—as well as by the act of extreme violence in which the mugs kill his brother—that the only way he can fight back and save his own integrity is by testifying in the courtroom.

Karl Malden's portrayal of the courageous priest is as outstanding as the author's characterization of the part. The selection of lovely Eva Marie Saint for the role of the convent-raised girl who sways Brando through her gentle loveliness as well as her principles was one of the wisest decisions of the film. The scenes between her and Brando have a haunting beauty.

But it is the picture's dignity you will remember longest: the portrait of a young man who struggles through a seemingly hopeless situation. "On the Waterfront" has weaknesses—particularly in the simplification of the waterfront mess and its inability to make clear the loyalty of men to an organization that allows their loved ones to be destroyed. But as a drama of man's victory and rise from low estate, "On the Waterfront" is a film to stand with the best. The final scenes have the quality of the making of a saint. In this man's triumph is visualized and felt the final victory of all men.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.