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Heat's on Hitchcock

BY SAM LESNER

A VACATIONING movie reviewer has his work cut out for him upon returning to his desk. This is especially true since he started his holiday on a high note of controversy and in a period of marked increase in motion picture attendance.

In fact, an all-time high motion picture gross may be attained for the year 1960, according to Sindlinger & Co., market analysts.

The controversial note was sounded over "Psycho," Alfred Hitchcock's monstrous melodrama which swept the Chicago area's screens with a saturation booking two weeks ago and is now playing its final engagements, I hope.

THE TEMPTATION to start fresh and forget "Psycho" was great, what with the temperature soaring to a record Wednesday.

But the accumulated mail contained many letters from movie patrons who said they had never before been "stirred up enough to write a letter to a newspaper."

Mrs. Robert Nottke of Itasca wrote: "My husband and I are both 21 years of age and have in the past enjoyed Alfred Hitchcock's movies.

"However, we both believe that the cruel, sadistic murder scenes were a blunt portrayal of butchery. I experienced nausea and disgust while viewing the murder scenes. I am at liberty to say that over 99 per cent of our acquaintances feel the same way."

MRS. A. W. SCHROEDER of Glen Ellyn, concerned with "some of the trash produced these days," expressed

the wish that Hitchcock would read "The Image Industries," by William Lynch, a book dealing with the influences of "bad pictures and books."

She added: "I realize your sincere efforts in judging responsibility as a critic."

Mrs. Ralph Linder Jr. of Evanston wrote: "Apparently, the twist in the plot of 'Psycho' has been replaced by a twist in Mr. Hitchcock's mind."

Mrs. Linder in a letter burned the ears of the manager of the Teatro del Lago for exhibiting "Psycho" and particularly for permitting hundreds of teen-agers to view it.

The Evanstonian added: "I agree with your verdict on 'Psycho.' It's monstrous."

MISS BETTY N. PAPE of E. Goethe wrote: "I would like to thank you for the article which you wrote on Hitchcock's 'Psycho.' It is good to know that the movie viewers were made aware of the sadistic qualities of this movie."

Miss Joan Massoth of Harvey, Ill., a freshman at Thornton Junior College, wrote:

"Not only was 'Psycho' terrifying and morbid, but it was so exaggerated and distorted that even an adult, such as I, found it hard to appreciate and enjoy."

The student expressed dismay that so many movies today play up mental illness and sexual crimes.

ON THE OTHER HAND, Robert A. Bergfeld of S. Campbell complained that my views on "Psycho" were unjustified.

Bergfeld said he was transfixed, but not sickened, by the film and suggested that I see it again and "this time take some tranquilizers."

He saw it at the Beverly.

"All I could hear as I walked out of the theater were words of praise and admiration for this fine film," he concluded.

ADDING TO the heat of the first day back at the office were letters from Peggy Taylor, French literature major at Oberlin College who was extremely disappointed with my adverse

review of Ingmar Bergman's "Three Strange Loves," which I found to be a bore, and from Morton Moskov of N. Sheridan rd. who was "amazed to see such fine work as 'Ikiru' maligned in the columns of a large metropolitan newspaper."

I had written that "Ikiru," a Japanese film drama of present-day Japan, was an incredible bore.

But I salute every movie patron who takes the time to express his views.

It's great to be back.