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MACAO, U.S.A., 1952

Certificate: A. Distributors: R.K.O.-Radio. Production Company: R.K.O.-Radio. Producer: Alex Gottlieb. Director: Joseph von Sternberg. Script: Bernard C. Schoenfeld and Stanley Rubin, from a story by Bob Williams. Photography: Harry J. Wild. Editors: Samuel E. Beetley, Robert Golden. Art Directors: Albert D'Agostino, Ralph Berger. Music: Anthony Collins. Leading Players: Robert Mitchum (Nick Cochran), Jane Russell (Julie Benson), William Bendix (Lawrence Trumble), Thomas Gomez (Lt. Sebastian), Gloria Grahame (Margie), Brad Dexter (Halloran), Edward Ashley (Martin Stewart), Vladimir Sokoloff (Kwan Sum Tang). 7,277 ft. 81 mins.

Headed for the Portuguese protectorate of Macao on a boat from Hong Kong are Trumble, a New York detective disguised as a commercial traveller, Julie, a sultry adventuress and nightclub singer, Nick Cochran, a wandering American who cannot go home because of a shooting charge. The detective is detailed to entrap Halloran, kingpin of Macao and owner of a gambling house, a known racketeer against whom no direct proof has yet been furnished. Various intrigues follow. Nick and Julie are attracted to each other; Julie gets a job as singer at Halloran's gambling house; Halloran believes that Nick and not Trumble is the disguised detective. A trail of violence, double cross and pursuit ends with the capture of Halloran, the death of Trumble and happiness for Julie and Nick—the latter cleared of the shooting charge for his help in rounding up Halloran.

These conventional ingredients for a Mitchum-Russell picture would not be worth noting at any length if *Macao* did not bear the name of Sternberg (who has not made a feature film since *The Shanghai Gesture* in 1941) as director on the credits. The film is rumoured to have been extensively re-shot by Nicholas Ray; and certainly, apart from one or two sequences—a dockside chase at night photographed through shimmering fishing nets, some stuffily exotic interiors, the gambling house scenes with the money being hauled up and down in cages and a female Chinese croupier who utters weird, threatening cries—there is little of Sternberg's decorative style about it. Macao itself is evoked mainly by stock exterior shots; the film has a rather hypnotically slow, actionless tempo more characteristic of Sternberg than other directors of Russell-Mitchum vehicles; but the whole rigmarole is made without conviction or even genuine extravagance. Jane sings "You Kill Me" and "One for my Baby" with verve. G.L.

Suitability: A,B.