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"Novyi Vavilon" (1929)

THE NEW BABYLON

(RUSSIAN MADE)
(Synchronized)

Produced by Sovkino and releasing through Amkino. Directed by G. M. Kozintsov and L. Z. Trauberg. American titles by Shelley Hamilton. A. N. Moskvina, cameraman. Synchronized on disk. At the Cameo, N. Y., beginning Nov. 30. Running time, 119 mins.

Soldier Jean.....Peter Sobolevski
The Goubrette.....Sofie Magarill
Store Owner.....D. Gutman
Sales Girl.....Elena Kusmina
Head Clerk.....A. Kostriehkin
Deputy.....A. Arnold
Journalist.....Sergei Gerassimov
Shoemaker.....S. Gusev
Laundress.....A. Glushkova

A teetotaler will be doubtful of his own sobriety after sitting through "The New Babylon." Its opportunities for dramatic register are fast and fleeting. The whole thing is a whirl of close-ups and triple exposures. No foreign production can compare with it for flagrant excess of trick photography. It leaves an audience dizzy; not from the strain of suspense, but from eyes.

So restless is the direction that this film has only the vestige of continuity. Faces, feet, mud, singers, soldiers, guns. Projected time and again. Babylon is described in the subtitles as the name of a department store. The owner, one D. Gutman, is allowed plenty of footage in which to sip liquor monotonously or adjust his top hat. Then the barrage of miscellaneous things are suddenly flung back at the audi-

ence as though the director suddenly realized there ought to be something done.

Nearest line to the story is an extemporaneous romance suddenly springing up between the soldier Jean and a sales girl. Between the triple exposures the couple are brought together. The soldier usually looks straight into the camera with one of those far-away expressions. At the crucial period Jean is with the Nationals who, licked by the Prussians, are now dealing with the Commune, the political faction within. Chances for the latter battle possessing the big dramatic punch that it could, with the characters given some opportunity for individualism, are also sacrificed by a burlesque touch. This is provided by flash-backs to what is described as a nearby hill on which the store keeper and others are shown taking in the butchery as Americans would a football game. At the end Jean and the store girl are again brought together. He is her grave digger and she is one of the targets for the firing squad.

Picture claims it follows episodically events in the Franco-Prussian war and Commune activities in 1871. It doesn't matter. Can't blame it on the cutting room this time. Doubtful if anything could help it.

Waly.

Dec. 4, '29