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State of the Union

Hollywood, March 20.

Metro release of Frank Capra (Liberty Films) production, directed by Capra. Stars Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Van Johnson, Angela Lansbury, Adolphe Menjou, Lewis Stone; features Howard Smith, Charles Dingle, Maudel Turner, Raymond Walburn. Screenplay, Anthony Veiller (also associate producer) and Myles Connolly; based on play by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; camera, George J. Folsey; score, Victor Young; editor, William Hornbeck. Tradeshow March 19, '48. Running time, 121 MINS.

Grant Matthews.....	Spencer Tracy
Mary Matthews.....	Katharine Hepburn
"Spike" MacManus.....	Van Johnson
Kay Thorndyke.....	Angela Lansbury
Jim Conover.....	Adolphe Menjou
Sam Thorndyke.....	Lewis Stone
Sam I. Parrish.....	Howard Smith
Bill Noland Harry.....	Charles Dingle
Lulubelle Alexander.....	Maudel Turner
Judge Alexander.....	Raymond Walburn
Norah.....	Margaret Hamilton
Leith, Radio Announcer.....	Art Baker
Senator Lanterback.....	Pierre Watkin
Grace Orval Draper.....	Florence Auer
Buck Swenson.....	Irving Bacon
Blink Moran.....	Charles Lane
Joyce Matthews.....	Patti Brady
Grant Matthews, Jr.....	George Nokes
Bellboy.....	Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer
Walter.....	Tom Fadden
Barber.....	Tom Pedi

"State of the Union" should be an election year natural. It's sock entertainment, full of humor and drama. At the same time it projects a timely social message. It calls its shots about the political scene in a manner that should prod the voter's conscience, but without using soapbox oratory. Message is adroitly cloaked in good story theatrics that cleverly ladle out drama and humor to make the political sales talk palatable.

Boxoffice-wise, "Union" is an important Frank Capra production that lends itself to the strongest kind of exploitation. It has star names for the marquees, timeliness of release and, above all, entertainment values that will hold the interest of a broad audience. It's not likely that such a parlay could miss.

The hit Broadway play by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse has been expanded somewhat in the screen adaptation by Anthony Veiller and Myles Connolly, a broadening that makes the best use of screen technique. Dialog has

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headline freshness, and a stinging bite when directed at politicians, the normal voter and the election scene. All the various power groups are soundly spanked as they pass through a writing wringer that has enough truth to hurt. It's satire with a sting, made stronger by serious, instead of slapstick treatment.

Cast is loaded with stalwarts who deliver in top form. The fact that it's pat casting only helps to insure the payoff. Spencer Tracy fits his personality to the role of the airplane manufacturer who becomes a presidential aspirant. It's a sock performance. Katharine Hepburn makes much of the role of Tracy's wife, giving it understanding and warmth that register big. Van Johnson shines as the columnist turned political press agent. It's one of his better performances.

Capra's direction punches over the pictorial expose of U. S. politics and candidate manufacturers, the indifference of the average voter, and the need for more expression of true public opinion at the polls. Plot deals with a power-mad femme newspaper publisher who picks up a selfmade plane magnate and shoves him towards the White House to satisfy her own interests. The candidate begins to lose his commonsense when the political malarkey soaks in and only is saved by his frank and honest wife.

Angela Lansbury, outside of frequently unintelligible speech, gives a topnotch account of herself as the publisher with ambitions to be the power behind the White House. Adolphe Menjou draws a typical portrait of the political conniver who is used by the newspaper chain. Lewis Stone appears only briefly in an opening scene establishing Miss Lansbury's character, but makes it remembered.

Film is dotted with strong bits by capable lesser lights. Among these standing out is Howard Smith's crass big business man; Charles Dingle's labor leader; Maudel Turner's and Raymond Walburn's southerners; Margaret Hamilton's maid; Pierre Watkin's opportunist senator; Irving Bacon's butler; and Tom Fadden's walter.

Capra and his associate producer, Anthony Veiller, have given the picture important production backing in all departments. The music score by Victor Young; George J. Folsey's lensing; special effects, art direction, settings and other contributors figuring expertly in measuring this one for the top market.

Brog.