

# 'STAR GAZING'

with Urie Megahan

WHEN BOB BURNS' "I'm From Missouri" went before cameras recently at Paramount studios, there sat beside the set a chunky little man of a serious mien, with his short legs dangling from the seat of a high stool. He is Bobby Vernon. Once the comedy star of old-time Christie two-reelers, Bobby well remembers the time when Gloria Swanson was his leading lady, Wallace Beery his heavy.

A star in his own right, Bobby had the succession of leading ladies that were his right. One, a golden-haired youngster with a pert nose and a figure to conjure with, was Judith Barrett, making her debut in pictures opposite the comedic Mister Vernon.

Today, justly hailed as "the Venus from Venus, Texas," Judith is playing the romantic lead in the new Burns flicker, sharing top femme billing with Gladys George. And Bobby Vernon, who sits beside the set, and dangles his feet from a high stool, is the picture's regularly assigned comedy constructionist. That's what they call gag men now.

THE FORMATION of Fairbanks International, new producing unit of United Artists, brings to the fore again Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., as the head of the new concern.

Fairbanks will devote himself to the production plans of the new organization, the initial capital of which will be some \$2,500,000. Studio facilities in Culver City, California, Denham or Pinewood, England, or even continental Europe will be used.

Three productions are planned for 1939. The first is "The Californian," which will be filmed in Culver City and for which Fairbanks wants Raoul Walsh as director. The second will be "The Tenth Woman," based on the life of Lord Byron, to be done in Technicolor. The third picture will be "The Three Musketeers," also to be done in Technicolor.

THE MATTER of directorial "touch" has been pretty much discussed to date. Nowadays, experts claim they can pick out the Capra touch, the Lubitsch touch, the John Ford touch, or the touch of almost any top-flight director of a film. Of course, if they know in advance who directed the film, that always helps. But anyhow, one never seems to claim to recognize a producer's touch, although his touch extends to every phase of a picture.

Probably one of the best known for his touch is 20th Century's Darryl Zanuck. Just what his touch is can hardly be explained in mere words, but it can be clearly illustrated. His current "Thanks For Everything" affords one example. It exhibits his timeliness.

The script writers had turned out a story about the career of Mrs. Average Man, which job they thought fairly well of. They were well satisfied with their efforts — all except the ending, which they admitted lacked the element of umph or wow. All this was some months ago, as was the conference at which Mr. Zanuck decided that the proper way of ending up with all his major characters in strait-jackets was to have

them participate in a hoax war scare on the radio.

It was some months ago, shortly before the release of "Thanks For Everything," that Orson Welles and his Merry Martians precipitated the Great American Run. This incident might justly be ascribed to pure luck, but the Zanuck touch lay in his recognizing in The Average Man the potentialities that Welles brought out so swiftly.

Then, too, remember that Zanuck's "Lloyds of London" was ready for release just at the time that Lloyds was in the headlines during the war scare. Remember that just as "Five of a Kind" had reached the nation's screens, the particular five involved, the Dionne Quints, were going to have their tonsils out. Similarly Congress just got around to clearing the name of Dr. Mudd a short time before "The Prisoner of Shark Island" was released.

Zanuck, of course, cannot produce a feature picture in a week or two in order to rush some timely topic on the screen. So his touch seems to lay in his accuracy in forecasting public taste or events. And his pictures make money.

ONCE AGAIN the Marx Brothers are about to lose their dressing room in the M-G-M star building, due to the protests of their fellow artists.

The situation came to a head when a steam calliope was parked outside Nelson Eddy's and Clark Gable's windows, labeled "Harpo Marx." During the past few weeks, Harpo has been practicing on the clarinet, saxophone and mandolin and other instruments have been arriving daily for Groucho and Chico, for the brothers intend to show more musical versatility than ever before in their latest picture, "A Day At the Circus."

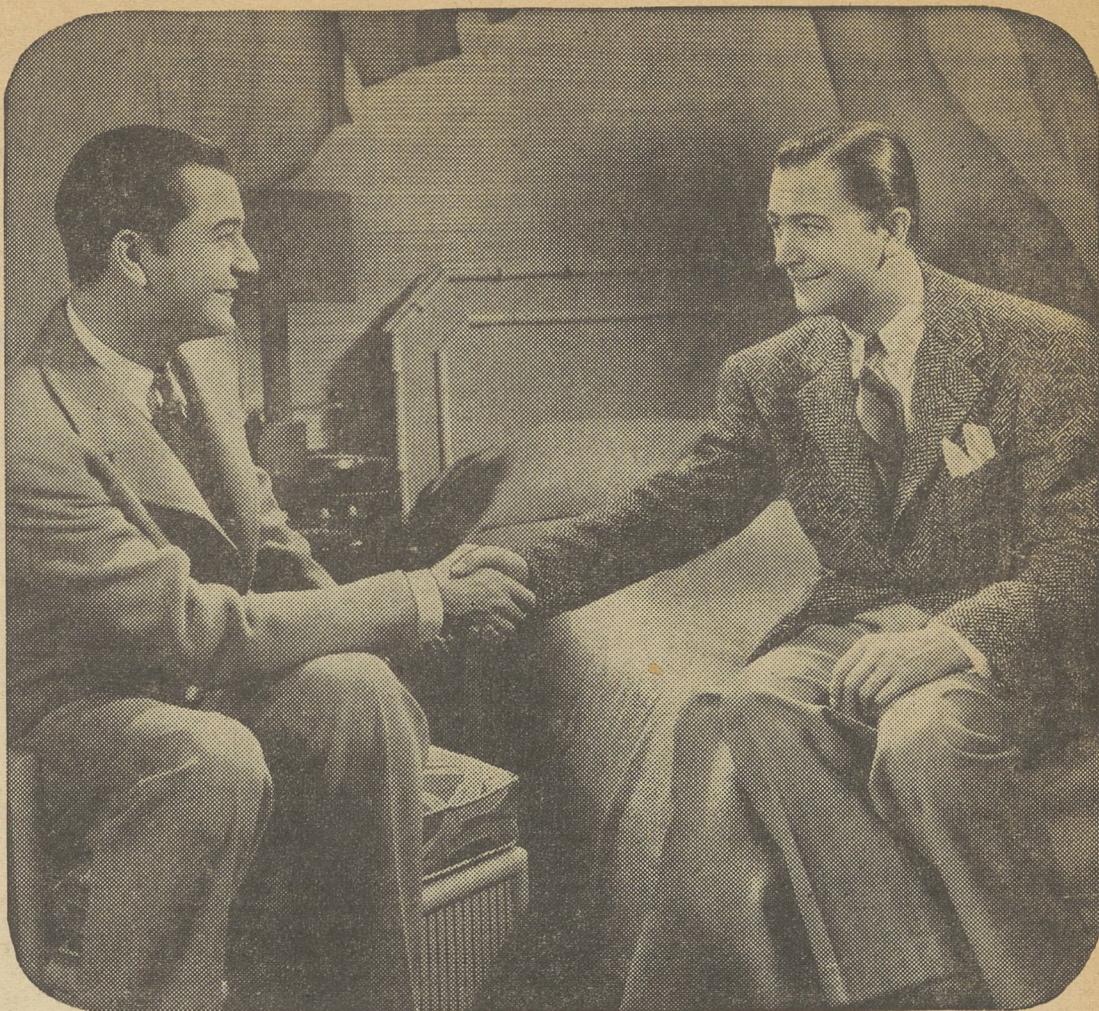
Gable, Eddy, Spencer Tracy and Robert Taylor, all figure they can outvote them and have the studio provide a rehearsal hall for them. The former office-dressing room - rehearsal hall which they occupied is now a portrait studio.

TO HER TWO Academy statuettes Luise Rainer will soon be able to add a third award to be given her as the most-traveled actress air passenger of 1938.

Her latest trip to New York to rejoin her husband, Clifford Odets, marked her fortieth transcontinental trip of the year. Two years ago, the champion air traveler was Kay Francis, and last year the honors went to Lily Pons.

AT LAST a star who isn't bothered by autograph hunters and who doesn't mind not being bothered. Don't forget that while it may seem to be an awful thing for a star to be continually hounded by these hunters, they'll all tell you that it would be a lot more awful if they weren't.

This unusual star is Walter Brennan, who won the Academy Award in 1936 for his work in "Come and Get It." Although the amount of his fan mail would make you think that he'd be mobbed every time he stuck his nose outdoors, no one has ever come up to him for his autograph.



## YOUNG SHAKES HAND WITH HIMSELF

This bit of trick photography was accomplished in Metro's "Honolulu" to be released soon. The picture, a musical dance comedy, stars Robert Young in a dual role and Eleanor Powell.

The fact is that no one recognizes Brennan as the smart young man of forty who walks briskly, talks clearly and is clean-shaven. They're all used to seeing him in the role of some creaky old gent with a Civil War background. His latest role was in "Kentucky," in which he played a colonel of some eighty years. Up to this time he's had lots of practice in being an old man; he started at the age of seventeen when he went into vaudeville. Then came the war and after two years of service—nine months of it at the front—Brennan had really aged to the point where his teeth were store bought and his voice roughened as the result of a gas attack. However, he never had had aspirations to be a leading man, fortunately. He returned to home and his stage career where he had left off, and eventually wound up in Hollywood. This was in 1929 and he's been there ever since—playing the moth-eaten, antique reprobate in any number of shows. That's why nobody knows him on the street after he shaves and sheds some thirty or forty years.

SOME YEARS AGO a young man was being considered by Director Rouben Mamoulian for a part in a Theater Guild show. The young man was not found suitable. He turned to play writing, and his first play attracted wide attention. He kept on writing and the most successful of his plays, "Golden Boy," was purchased by Columbia Pictures.

The young man is Clifford Odets.

And Rouben Mamoulian will direct the picturization of his successful Broadway play.

Recently in New York, Mamoulian met Odets, and although he had turned him down as an actor, invited him to help search for an actor to play the title role in the film. "Don't be afraid to turn them down," Odets advised the

director with a smile. "You did me a good turn."

"You mean," the director replied, "that perhaps I may get a few more great playwrights started."

PARAMOUNT will shortly release a short entitled "Unusual Occupations" which will star Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd. The film discloses how Bergen

conceived the idea of Charlie, the first drawings made of him, and how artists and sculptors work from Bergen designs.

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