

RKO-Keith's Has Three-Ply Christmas Bill

'March of Time' And Disney Augment The Feature Film

"LISTEN, DARLING." Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picturization of a story by Katherine Brush, adapted to the screen by Elaine Ryan and Anne Morrison Chapin, costarring Judy Garland and Freddie Bartholomew, with Mary Astor, Walter Pidgeon, Alan Hale, Scotty Beckett, Barnett Parker, Gene Lockhart and Charley Grapewin. Songs by Al Hoffman, Al Lewis and Murray Mencher; by Joseph McCarthy and Milton Ager and by James F. Hanley. Directed by Edwin L. Marin. Reviewed Friday afternoon by Sally Stroud. At RKO-Keith's Theater.

For those who like weeping when their stars say they should weep, the feature at RKO-Keith's is the dish ordered. For the rest of the folk, Disney's newest fantasy, "Mother Goose Goes to Hollywood" and the latest "March of Time" will be adequate.

From its first flash, the Disney opus hands an "Ertsnay to Ouyay" to the audience, with Donald Duck making a noise like the MGM lion. Katherine Hepburn is Bo-peep, who has lost her sheep and "cawn't reahilly" tell where to find them.

The Marx Bros. are King Cole's fiddlers three, Laurel and Hardy are Simple Simon and the pieman, Garbo see-saws and Fats Waller, Hugh Herbert, Joe Penner and other celebrities cavil at nothing in this dream farce. It's a toss-up whether they should sue or pay Disney. We want more.

A Vital Document

Pertinent as tomorrow's headline is the "March of Time," handling with grave deftness the world problem of today's and tomorrow's refugees. In the wake of aggressor Japan, bent on conquest and expansion, are plunder, looting, desolation and thousands of refugees. Spain's by-products of battle huddle in breadlines, scurry over national boundaries when the chance comes. And Germany, writing the blackest chapter of all, with her intolerance and persecution, adds thousands to the lost of those who have no welcome mat, no door to open on a welcome mat.

Attempting to refute the belief that Jews cannot be an agricultural people, the fertile fields of Palestine are shown under cultivation by Germany's outcasts. This English-mandated country, with its Nazi-inspired Arab riots for furtherance of nationalism against Jewish expansion, might be the Promised Land. But what of the new refugees being thrust out daily, in other lands falling under the shadow of the swastika? Neither we nor the "March of Time" can answer that.

Children Imposed Upon

Judy Garland, in the feature, "Listen Darling," should say just that to her producers. They don't give the child a chance. She has a lush and gentle charm which we personally prefer to Deanna Durbin's, who is the only Hollywoodian comparable with her. In this newest film of hers, she and mother Mary Astor weep gallons of tears, all because dear daddy is dead and carried no insurance, and when chum Freddie Bartholomew kidnaps mother and carts her off in a trailer and finds a possible new daddy in Walter Pidgeon, they still weep. It is desolating. Because they are all elegant people, given a chance. Pidgeon, Alan Hale, Gene Lockhart, Charles Grapewin, et al., are smothered by the antiquity and lack of zip in the plot. There is no motivation, no suspense, no smart dialogue, nothing but tears.

Lest we seem unduly jaundiced, let it be noted that this will probably be eagerly greeted by holiday crowds as being on the nature of the Andy Hardy type of story, distinctly for family consumption. We resented the thrusting of children into the solution of purely adult problems and having them discuss them in a ridiculous fashion. But the crowds will still like it. Mostly because Judy Garland deserves garlands for being a charming child.

You can't afford to miss the new Disney, anyhow.