



Films

Unlike many films that are preceded by a sound and fury of publicity, **La Dolce Vita** turns out to be as magnificent and exciting and, no doubt to many filmgoers, as shocking as it was said to be. The main character is a youngish journalist who has given up serious writing to cover the day-to-day doings—and misdoings—of Roman society. We see him involved in the wide-screen roisterings of the film set; coolly watching a horde of miracle-mongers; cynically tagging along with a band of down-at-heel patricians. At the same time his private life turns sour on him, and the one friend whose intelligence and way of life he respects commits suicide in an access of despair. After this the journalist loses his head, and at one particularly inane and vulgar party, composed mainly of perverts, he savagely slates each in turn. It is too late, however, for this lightweight leopard to change his spots, and the last scene shows him joining the bizarre crew of revellers trooping across the sands in the melancholy dawn, unable to hear the call of any other way of life. The handling of this theme is masterly: savagery is balanced with a sudden beauty, contempt gives way to charity. It is a wonderful film; in comparison, most of the 'films of the year' shrink to insignificance. The huge cast, acting magnificently, includes Anita Ekberg, Anouk Aimée, Marcello Mastroianni and Alain Cuny, but the mind and the heart of this haunting, harrowing film are those of the director—Federico Fellini.

Based on the novel by Howard Fast, **Spartacus** is concerned with the abortive slave revolt that took place in the last century of the Roman Republic. For once, an 'epic' on the hugest scale is all but completely successful. The immense canvas of Super Technirama 70 is used to thrilling effect for vast scenes of landscape and battle, yet against this tremendous background the individual characters appear as real human beings, heroic, cruel or ridiculous. Stanley Kubrick (only 32 years old) directs with mastery, and persuades his distinguished cast (Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Jean Simmons, Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov, Tony Curtis) to act with astonishing cohesion and unity, stripped of idiosyncrasies and mannerisms. There are some disappointments, and banality is not everywhere avoided; but in his just sense of period and in the violence and humanity of these wretched men and women, Kubrick has proved that this kind of film *can* be made. It will have you sweating with excitement, will make you laugh, and may very well move you to tears.

Hard on the heels of their *Inherit the Wind*, United Artists are back in the 'Bible belt' of America in **Elmer Gantry**. In the name part Burt Lancaster gives the performance of his life as the ranting, roaring chunk of salesman turned Revivalist who joins forces with Sister Sharon's touring Gospellers. With the added attraction of his sales technique—and his sex appeal—the troupe get as far as the big city of Zenith, but there a series of disasters awaits them, starting with a blackmailing prostitute from Gantry's early days, and ending with a holocaust at the Waters of the Jordan Tabernacle. Lancaster is ably partnered by Jean

Simmons, and Shirley Jones and Arthur Kennedy give outstanding performances. Sinclair Lewis's story stands up well to the all-star Eastmancolour treatment, and emerges as a big, brash, compelling film.

The 3 Worlds of Gulliver, apart from one nasty passage with a monster crocodile, is fine for the children—and not at all bad for un pompous adults, either. It is filmed in a process called Super Dynamation, which brings off the effects of Lilliput and Brobdingnag very successfully, after a rather shaky start. Kerwin Mathews makes an amiable, serious-minded young hero. The film has a lot of charm and a dash of bite.

Under Ten Flags tells the true story of the German raider *Atlantis*, which, by disguising herself as various real merchantmen, sank a vast amount of Allied shipping in the last war before she was finally sent to the bottom by a British cruiser. Van Heflin makes a sympathetic character of the German commander who struggles to fight a 'clean' war and to save as many of his victims' survivors as he can. Charles Laughton, as the British admiral in London, is really rather grotesque. Mylene Demongeot prances prettily in her scanties, neither adding anything to the action, nor seriously impeding it. There is a fine, tense sequence of espionage in Paris, and the film as a whole is convincing.

Butterfield 8 is the story of a disillusioned husband and a no-good model, who, given a chance (says the husband), could "become respectable". Gloria Wandrous (Elizabeth Taylor) and Weston Liggett (Laurence Harvey) try to cut loose and solve their problems together, but fate steps in with a muddle with a mink, and Gloria hurtles to her doom. Amidst the farrago, cool, restrained performances from Eddie Fisher as the childhood friend, and Mildred Dunnock.

It is not until **The Plunderers**—four young, broke and weary strangers—ride into the small, dying prairie town, that its few remaining inhabitants really care about the town's future. The strangers find that as soon as they impose on the local folk they are up against tough opposition, particularly when they decide to take over the town. Led by rancher Jeff Chandler the townsfolk ably defend their homes, and only one of the quartet rides out alive.

Kirk Douglas as Spartacus (Photograph: Universal-International)

