

John Barrymore's Performance a Tremendous Drama in Itself Alone

John Barrymore in
"DR JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE"

Paramount—Artcraft

DIRECTOR.....John S. Robertson
AUTHOR.....Robert Louis Stevenson
SCENARIO BY.....Clara S. Beranger
CAMERAMAN.....Roy Overbaugh
AS A WHOLE.....All action centers on masterly, powerful and gripping characterization rendered by star.
STORY.....Very skillful adaptation works up steadily to dramatic climax.
DIRECTION.....Provided production full of convincing atmosphere; has centered all action on star with success.
PHOTOGRAPHY.....Very good
LIGHTINGS.....A few over-lighted scenes at start but most of work is excellent.
CAMERA WORK.....Dissolves used in scenes where star changes character could have been more even.
STAR.....Gives characterization of tremendous power that is a whole drama in itself.
SUPPORT.....Highly commendable
EXTERIORS.....London street sets have great atmosphere.
INTERIORS.....Excellent
DETAIL.....No faults
CHARACTER OF STORY.....Triumph of a man's evil self over his good self.
LENGTH OF PRODUCTION.....6,355 feet

Here is a case where everything has been thrown to the star. Whole sequences he performs alone without assistance from any of his support. Then again some of them are used, but just enough to score a plot point effectively but quietly, and then the star sweeps on developing in his characterization alone an entire drama. Such is the remarkable power of John Barrymore's performance in the unusual dual role of Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

A Box Office Attraction Par Excellence

Box Office Analysis for the Exhibitor

"Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is one of the screen's masterpieces and the house that shows it is in for increased prestige. Of its drawing power there is not the slightest doubt. The Barrymore name and the title of the world famous work from which the picture is adapted will bring it to the attention of every one. You will probably find among your swelled audiences people who have previously stayed away from pictures. Star and title certainly create a drawing combination that will show in extra dollars and cents at the box office.

It is the star's picture from the very outset, and it is the star that makes it. Perhaps, just for this once, are picture patrons to be glad that there is this concentration on an individual player. It has been the breaking of so many pictures. It is the making of this. Barrymore's performance is a thing of fine shadings and of violent emotions. In his last moments as Hyde, when the depravity in the man has smothered all other senses, his entire body, from top to toe, is an ugly picture of unrestrained passions. Terrifying facial expressions are supplemented by expressions of the whole body. So different is this to the aesthetic demeanor and delicate actions of the young Dr. Jekyll in the opening scenes. Barrymore makes the man good to the point of being godly. Then comes his temptation by the wholly physical feminine and his subsequent discovery of a chemical mixture that will banish his finer senses and unleash the base passions. This change is portrayed in Dr. Jekyll by Barrymore's marvelous use of makeup and his summing and use of all the expression at his command.

Forceful as this scene is, the intensity becomes doubled and trebled as the story further unfolds until Dr. Jekyll makes the horrible discovery that his other self, Mr. Hyde, is constantly with him. Base passions triumph. The drama of the man concludes in a whirl of emotions. As Hyde he kills the father of the girl he loves as Jekyll. She comes to see him and, lest she see him and feel the effects of his ugliness, he takes poison. The girl is told that Dr. Jekyll was murdered by Mr. Hyde.

The production furnished the picture approaches a state of perfection so closely that it is quite irrelevant to quibble over a few minor technical details. The cast that supports Barrymore, always ready when called upon, includes Martha Mansfield, Brandon Hurst, Charles Lane, J. Malcolm Dunn, Cecil Clovelly, Nita Naldi, George Stevens and Louis Wolheim.

Despite the classic from which it is adapted, its moral effect which is tremendous though never obviously obvious, there will probably be some, including a few petty state censor boards, that will object to the low pitches of depravity to which the star, in his masterly characterization, descends. But to one such objection there will be a thousand praises offered. And a picture would fall short of greatness if it didn't stir up criticism among these objectionally super-sensitive and professional reformers.