

# 'The Vamp' Admits Film Sirens Now Are Sexier

## Nita Naldi, Who Made Valentino Swoon on Screen, Is Making a Comeback

By CAROL TAYLOR, Staff Writer

"The Vamp" of the silent screen is back. And, she predicted today, never again will the term vampire be revived to epitomize feminine allure.

Nita Naldi was contrasting sex then and now as she munched a shrimp salad in a small restaurant in the West 40s. She surveyed her beautifully curved but ample figure and intoned: "Thank God for Mae West, I say." She had just ducked in from the Cort Theater, where she is rehearsing in the new Uta Hagen comedy, "In Any Language," which will mark her Broadway comeback.

This temptress of the '20s, whose wiles reduced great lovers like John Barrymore and Rudolph Valentino to the boyish jitters, made a surprising remark:

**Marilyn More Sexy.**

"Girls like Marilyn Monroe are tremendously more sexy than I ever could be. They look like human beings. I looked like something buried for 2000 years and just dug up.

"It's the cute little slick trick that puts it over on a man—as she's been doing for 1000 years, darling."

Everything was visual in the old days, recalled Nita. That was the reason for those seductive costumes, and the exaggerated make-up, gestures and come-hither looks.

She says she's all for the trend today to stories glamorizing the happy home life of Broadway and Hollywood glamour girls.

"They never dared photograph me in a kitchen apron," she sighed, "I was always lying on a couch."

Nita Naldi today is a statuesque brunette with the sophisticated, fascinating face that has always been her trademark. But her earthy sense of humor, good nature, and frankness is strictly out of the character she's built up for herself.

**A Broken Blossom.**

She greeted a photographer with mock horror. He praised her "fine bone structure" and she cried out:

"Bone structure, my eyebrows. I look like Billy Rose's broken Broadway blossom."

As she posed, she explained her reference to Billy Rose. Back in 1941 she appeared in a "Silver Screen" production at his old Diamond Horseshoe. The show brought old-time film stars back for personal appearances. "My makeup was grotesque. I was practically a female impersonator of Boris Karloff."

The former Ziegfeld show girl is just short of six feet tall. "I'm



Nita as she appeared as star of "The Silver Screen" at Billy Rose's old Diamond Horseshoe in 1941.



Photo by Miller.

Nita Naldi as she looks today. The film temptress of the '20s is in town rehearsing for her Broadway comeback in the new comedy, "In Any Language."

a monster when I stand up and put my head up. It's cost me a lot of jobs."

She dismissed her slanting (aided by makeup) grayish-green eyes with a wave of her long, seductive hands. "They call me 'old snake eyes.'"

**Vamped Valentino.**

Nita made her Broadway debut in 1918 as a show girl in "The Passing Show" with Frank Fay, Charles Ruggles and Fred and Adele Astaire. She rose to fame in the silents a few years later, making her first movie, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," with Barrymore. She vamped Valentino in three of his great hits—"Blood and Sand," "The Sainted Devil" and "Cobra."

Although she "adored" Valentino, she said she thinks he'd lose out in a race for sexiness today with stalwart heroes like Gary

Cooper, Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster.

"Valentino was the romantic type and in those days they were all hot and bothered about the Latin lover. Poor Rudy, he could only play a Latin and his one ambition was to play an American."

"The only American role he could play was Hiawatha and he always had that in the back of his mind." She raised her long, black cigaret holder in a typical vaudeville gesture. "But I don't think I ever intended playing Minnehaha!" Touching her jet

black pompadour, she added: "Nip-tails for Naldi. Not even when I was very young."

**Prosaic Private Life.**

She referred to Valentino as "no panty-waist. He was a real he-man." She said that those half-closed, salubrious eyes that contributed so greatly to his appeal for the women were attributable to myopia. "The poor darling couldn't see five feet ahead. He's more batty-eyed than I am." (She wears thick glasses off stage.) "I want to vindicate him. He



Nita charms Rudolph Valentino, center photo, in a torrid love scene of the silent screen. Her slanted eyes with the come-hither look and her long, seductive hands, above right, won her fame as The Vamp of early movies.

was turned down on account of his eyesight for the Army but that was little known."

Nita's publicity in the old days had it that she was of Florentine origin and that her father was a dashing figure in the diplomatic service.

Actually, she said, she was born in Washington and invaded New York as a long-legged kid of 15. Despite her reputation as a femme fatale, her private love life was as prosaic as that of any wholesome small town girl.

The one love of her life and her husband was the late J. Searle Brubay, a prominent New York cabman. After she left Hollywood they lived abroad for many years

and she returned from France only after his death seven years ago.

"I'm a widow but not a merry one. Otherwise I wouldn't have had to go back to work."

**Has Delightful Role.**

She made some movies in France. "I thought I could get away from the vampire roles, but they said to me, 'My dear, you didn't cross the ocean to play Tess of the D'Ubervilles.'"

She's been on the comeback road for years. She's had parts in several shows that they came to town before. Her role in "In Any Language" is that of a Mrs. I have



Nita's film wiles reduced even John Barrymore, the Great Profile himself, to boyish jitters on the screen.

gigolo. That's fascinating. And I'm very happy they mention I'm

not young. I couldn't get away with that if I tried."

She modestly wags aside suggestions that she should return to the movies and cash in on her natural aptitude for comedy.

"Darling," she remarked, "nobody wants me. I'm too dated." Her main hobbies are going to the movies and curling up with a good book.

"I'm a lazy devil. I prefer reading to anything in the world. From detective stories to Flaubert and Dickens."

"I'm mad about psychological murders. Sort of a frustration, I suppose. I was a one woman crime wave on the screen."

Nita thinks today's extremely low-necked dresses are "revolting." "The obvious is always very unattractive," she frowned. "Heavens knows, I had to have a little around, but it was gracefully."