

BLOOD AND SAND

"Jesse L. Lasky presents Rodolph Valentino," the billing reads. "In a Fred Niblo production." Lila Lee and Nita Naldi head the supporting company. The picture is adapted by June Mathis from the novel by Blasco Ibanez and the play by Tom Cuchlan. At the New York Rivoli Aug. 6.

Juan Gallardo.....	Rodolph Valentino
Jarmen	Lila Lee
Dona Sol.....	Nita Naldi
El Nacional.....	George Field
Plumitas	Walter Long
Senora Augustas.....	Rose Rosanova
Antonio	Leo White
Don Josellito.....	Charles Belcher
Potaje	Jack Winn
El Carnacione.....	Marle Marstini
Jarabata	Gilbert Clayton
El Pontelliro.....	Harry Lamont
Marquise de Guevera.....	George Perislat
Dr. Ruiz.....	Shirley De Gray
Don Jesse.....	Fred Becker
Senora Nacional.....	Dorcas Mathews
Fuentes	William E. Lawrence

The picture started Sunday at the Rivoli with every evidence of public interest. The house front was profusely decorated with Spanish and American flags and the house attaches flaunted bull ring costumes of gay colors. Sunday afternoon the house sold out from mid-afternoon until the final show.

The attendance made it look like an extraordinary winner, but the behavior of the crowd in the theatre was peculiar. Along toward the middle of the screening they showed a disposition to scoff at the play. Some of the serious scenes, particularly those "vamping" episodes involving Juan the bull fighter (Valentino) and Dona Sol, the vampire widow (Nita Naldi) touched their sense of humor.

Joshing a matinee idol like Valentino is fatal. It's only a short step from public worship to public ridicule. The character called for more delicate treatment than Valentino could give. Ibanez matador needs deft handling. He is a creature of light and shades. Valentino was far from the mark. His bull fighter was just a movie hero. It was far from a satisfying performance, but the fans unquestionably were drawn to the theatre. Even at the "supper show" the lobby was nearly filled with waiting crowds Sunday and by 7 o'clock the press spilled over the lobby into Broadway. It was the same story up to Wednesday.

The picture has several effective passages. The scenes in the bull ring have a lot of thrill and the pageantry and parade won a spontaneous bursts of applause. The closing episode, the death of the matador in the chapel of the stadium also earned the hushed attention of the house. It was the struggles of the hero to resist the temptation of the siren widow that made them chuckle. The spectacle of the cratwhile sheik holding a beautiful woman at arm's length was too much.

Valentino's performance of Mrs. Hutchinson's "Shiek" fixed his status among the fans as a super-heated love maker and the sudden switch to a St. Anthony type comes as a shock. The essential moral conflict of the man never got to the surface. He was just a bewildered simpleton who made his gaudy clothes ridiculous. You can't make a character ridiculous and sympathetic at the same time. If you treat him seriously the audience provides its own burlesque, as it did at the Rivoli. The only way to defeat this tendency would be to give the hero himself a sense of humor and the screen treatment does not do this. It's all deadly serious, even to the moral reflections of the philosophical old party who acts a sort of Greek chorus to the story and occasionally breaks out into sub-titles such, "Passion is the devil's invention," which evoked a guffaw during the vamping episode. Straight theatrical heroing is Valentino's forte and he staggers when they take him out of the wild and unrestrained love-making environment.

The story has many picturesque elements but it is episodic and scattered. It seems to have no pattern. It starts with the theme of a humble shoe maker raised to eminence as a

national hero of the bull ring and an idol of the people. Presently the problem is changed to the proposition, "What will be the fate of a man who lives by blood and cruelty?" Presently the conflict is the moral struggle between choice of the wife and the other woman and at the end the purpose appears to be an attack on the institution of the bull fight. "Poor matador; poor beast," says the benign philosopher, "But the real bull is out there (the crowd around the arena). There is the beast with ten thousand heads."

The production is confusing. The characters sometimes do not dominate the scenes because of the over elaboration of the settings. The wedding scene is a confused jumble of restless minor people. Always the principal people are befogged by their surroundings so you can't see the trees for the forest. And there is more confusion in the multiplicity of characters of whom there are 16 listed in the cast.

Rush.