

terrifying further perspective, which set the proportion of everything that had gone before; just as the music here does. This fall the rope ladder has been cut. Instead there is some creeping around

on a ramp, which can't look other than stupid and is completely ineffective. The substitution is an act of vandalism. Whoever is responsible for it, should be watched; he is dangerous.

ON THE FILM FRONT

By JOHN LATOUCHE

FOR MANY years now, experimental films have been demonstrating how closely the medium is related to fantasy. But Hollywood, with its own fixed ideas of what the public wants, has released production after production relentlessly molded to box-office categories. Recently, however, something other than run-of-the mill has come out of the industry. The last-month success of *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, due chiefly to its antic dialogue and Robert Montgomery's magnificent performance, rather than its fantastic subject, has obviated the cater-cornered approach of the critics to films suggesting *avant-garde* technic. And now *All That Money Can Buy* sweeps like a fresh wind from static Hollywood. Based on Stephen Vincent Benét's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, this production transcends the slightly folksy mysticism of the short story original and elevates it into a stirring and evocative theme. The plot unfolded as a kind of reverse-English *Faust*, with the Devil as a supernatural fifth-columnist sabotaging the calm existence of a New Hampshire community. To this, William Dieterle has added new and exciting elements: a surrealist Georgian house springing up in the bleak landscape; fox-hunting along the rocky roads; a romantic dance of the dead

that underlines the supernatural quality of the story; a Woman from the Other Side of the Mountains, who appears out of light and smoke . . . all these injected into the Benét tale achieve convincing and majestic authority.

The cast is disciplined. Simone Simon as the homespun Lilith, surprisingly contrives to be sinister through her network of lisps and dimples. Edward Arnold as Daniel Webster is fine. The leads, Anne Shirley and James Craig, recruited from the murky borders of B pictures, contribute B-1 performances. But it is Walter Huston as the Devil who bags the laurels. He growls, smirks, hisses, scampers, beams, and pirouettes through one of the most captivating roles the camera has recorded these many years.

Bernard Herrmann, as usual, employs a strangely variegated orchestra and the result is excellent. His score weaving in and out of the action is the catalyst that works the final trick for this movie. One effect I found particularly fascinating, a macabre vibration of sound emerging from the Jury of the Damned as Daniel Webster addresses them. Dieterle said, when I inquired, that Herrmann had experimented with every kind of instrument, but each noise had sounded forced, until they tried muffling enormous ca-

thedral chimes, which almost gave the effect. What they finally recorded was the *echo* of the bells, cutting the impact of the clang out of the sound-track and leaving only the hollow reverberation. This is a sample of the tone-sorcery possible to film-music, if and when the industry wakes up to the need for experiment.

Of course there are bad spots, mo-

ments of banality and overstriving for effect. The film after all has been designed for mass consumption. But what is accomplished as a whole remains important. This is the first of a series Dieterle is making independently, in which he plans to use young, unrecognized artistic forces, musical, literary, and dramatic. Let's hope that the rest of the productions attain the level of this one.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

ALTHOUGH we are now all presumably absorbed in meeting the problems of national destiny, I still don't see why the big networks can't show some stiff competition in exploiting our native music. In fact, and in view of the emergency, that's just what they should be doing. Yet competition of this kind is what we are not getting, or apparently very likely to get. An overwhelming lead with American works has been taken by C. B. S. who seem to have clinched it for the winter. Though the Columbia hook-up merits its well-earned orchids, it would be more fun if N.B.C. and M.B.C. were in the arena too and fighting for place.

WABC now has a set of weekly series partially or entirely devoted to American music - "Columbia's American Music Festival" and also the "Milestones in American Music." Not all the programs contain distinctive, important or vitally entertaining compositions, and no one can really demand that much. But they mark a step forward, healthy and necessary. A refreshing composition heard on the

American Festival series was David Diamond's *Elegy in Memory of Ravel*, a piece free of strict stylistic confinements and an expression of ingenuous feeling and great simplicity. This piece, revised from an earlier score for strings and percussion, is orchestrated originally and effectively. From the standpoint of radio it was particularly interesting in sonority and timbre, and surely more grateful than the first version for brass, harps, and percussion, although that was much more exciting.

The harmonic textures in this music are disarmingly persuasive and entertaining. They have great richness, and are neither soggy nor fat. There are also strong unity of color, severe economy, and no dull moments. The form is clear in design, though some may find a bit curious the frequent dynamic indentations. The mood is convincing, even if a little too dreary and grey. The greyness may be due perhaps to a great emphasis on melancholy subjectivity, appropriate enough for elegiac effect. As a whole the composition is highly successful; the