NEVER LET GO (1960) Directed by John Guillerman; produced by Peter de Sarigny; Screenplay by Alan Palmer from a story by Guillerman and de Sarigny; Camera, Christopher Challis; Music composed and conducted by John Barry; "Never Let Go" lyric by Lionel Bart; 90 mins. US release by Continental in 1963, NY premiere, Guild Theatre.

With: Richard Todd (John Daniels); Peter Sellers (Lionel Meadows); Elizabeth Sellars (Anne Cummings); Adam Faith (Tommy Towers); Carol White (Jackie); Mervyn Johns (Alfie Barnes); Noel Willman (Imp. Thomas); David Lodge (Cliff); Peter Jones ( Alec Berger); John Bailey (Mackdonn); Nigel Stock (Regan); John Le Mesurier (Pennington).

Film Noir peaked in both America and Britain in 1947, though it continued on an interesting plateau for a number of years. By the mid-50's however, the visual and thematic stylistics were much more restrained, and the concentration was on people and plot rather than mood and near-expressionism. In Britain, the influence from pre-war French cinema remained, though it was less dominant. In its day "Never Let Go" was considered exceptionally tough for a British film, and for its brutality and more especially for its viciousness towards women, the elderly and the helpless, it was awarded the relatively new "X" certificate, limiting it to adults only. Earlier British crime films like "No Orchids for Miss Blandish" and "Brighton Rock" had been rougher in a purely physical sense, but the "X" didn't exist then to accommodate them. In a sense, though by no means officially, "Never Let Go" is a kind of updating of the Italian "The Bicycle Thief", though with a crime/revenge angle added. (Richard Todd is a salesman whose job is in jeopardy when his car is stolen). What weakens the film is the writing of (and unavoidably the playing of) the Todd character, who seems obstinate and wimpish as a man, and unattractive as a salesman. Clearly he should have been in a different job anyway. Peter Sellers, in a totally straight role as the sadistic villain, would seem to be overdoing it at times, and possibly, though his reputation as a comedian was obviously working against him. However, the kind of cheap Soho underworld crook that Sellers played often did behave just like that, a combination of imitation Hollywood gangster and British crime novel class-conscious villain. It isn't as wild a performance as it might seem - as witness similar villains in such British crime films as "They Made Me a Fugitive", played by non-comedians (in that particular film, Griffith Jones). Rough as the film is, it's still interesting and exciting, with some good supporting performances. Carol White, considered a major new discovery, never really made it - probably because she was too frequently cast in the victim role she plays here. Adam Faith was a pop singer trying to go dramatic; John Guillerman, with a long history of British crime programmers to his credit, quickly graduated to bigger films like this one, and Hollywood's "The Towering Inferno".

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

A PLACE TO GO (Excelsior-Bryanston, 1963) Directed by Basil Dearden; Produced by Michael Ralph; Screenplay by Ralph and Clive Exton from the novel "Bethal Green" by Michael Fisher; Camera, Reg Myer; Music composed by Charles Blackwell; songs by Blackwell and Mike Garre; 80 mins.

With: Richard Briers (Ciaro); Michael Wildman (Ricky Flint); Bernard Lee (Matt Flint); Doris Hare (Lil Flint); John Slater (Jack Elsaman); Barbara Ferris (Betty); David Andrews (Jim); William Marlowe (Charlie Batey); Roy Kinnear (Bunting); Michael Wynne (Pug); Jerry Vermon (Knobly Knowles).

Again quite unofficially, "A Place to Go" is a sort of follow-up (not sequel) to 1947's "It Always Rains on Sunday". Both films are based on novels by different authors, so there is no intended connection, but "A Place to Go" picks up life in Bethal Green some sixteen years later. There are no major changes, except that post-war austerity has lessened, a note of frustration has crept in, community spirit has deteriorated, and poor people are anxious to escape. (Although the ultimate escape offers only minimal improvement and there is a touching leaving-the-old-home scene that is clearly a hefty borrowing from "The Grapes of Wrath"). The presence of John Slater and one or two faces from the first film provides a sense of continuity, and Bernard Lee (so vigorous in "The Third Man" the previous decade, and just undertaking a long life as "M" in the Bond films) is so good as the ageing, dying father, that his familiar face too contributes a real sense of time passing. More of the film was shot on location than the more studio-bound 1947 film, which probably has a lot to do with the area seeming less attractive this time around.

It's an unusually sensitive film from a technically straightforward director. Like its co-feature, it has a pop singer (Mike Garre) trying to go straight, and actually combining acting and singing chores quite well. What a pity he had ambitions elsewhere, and went on to direct the appalling "Wyra Breakenridge!" Lacking star names and selling angles, the film was never released in the U.S., but did show up (infrequently) as part of a tv package. There's less charm than in "It Always Rains on Sundays" and probably less excitement, but it's an unpredictable film (partly due to off-beat casting of unfamiliar names) and on the whole an absorbing one. Certainly it deserves a little attention being drawn in its direction.

PROGRAM ENDS: 10:45 (Very brief discussion period) --- William K. Everson

PLEASE NOTE: I'll be away next week, so program will start promptly at 7:30 without intro. I'll be on hand for the 11th and final program of the season the following week. Summer Bulletins should be available in the lobby today with our Summer program listed.