Bizarre Bizarre


New York's lack of enthusiasm for this new French import has forced the high-minded Filmarte Theatre to close its doors until it can find a more popular feature. Bizarre Bizarre is no Grand Illusion, but it is a masterpiece of Gallic fun. Its plot is too fantastic to record here, yet words must be written for a superb series of satiric moments played by France's most able farceurs. If you like an irrepressible exercise in wit then this is your treat. If you don't see it, ask for it.

STAGE—

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LENAUER INTERNATIONAL FILMS, Inc.

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"Bizarre Bizarre" Is Wicked
Satire on Hawkshaw School


By David Platt

Bizarre-Bizarre is a happy combination of fine acting by Louis Jouvet, Francoise Rosay, Michel Simon, Alocove and Jean-Louis Barrault and grand satire on British and American detective-story films.

It is consistently humorous and clever and covers practically every angle of the average movie-thriller with withering satire; Scotland Yard, the killer, the writer of detective fiction, the victims, the victim's friends, the police, the hideout, the suspects, the plot, the public. No one is spared.

Michel Simon is marvelous as the detective-story writer Felix Chapel. Felix is a sort of mock Jekyll and Hyde. By day he is known and respected as Irwin Molyneux, eccentric botanist, the author of the classic, "The Mimosa of the Mimosa." At night he is Felix Chapel, dead author of "The Model Crime" and other detective fiction. By day he catches flies and feeds them to his insect-eating flowers. His jiggerbug mimosa's are doused with whisky and gin three times daily. He is quite a fellow. At night he writes stories that bring in the shekels sufficient to satisfy the social ambitions of his frustrated wife (Francoise Rosay).

Genuinely Humorous

His cousin is Archibald Soper, Vicar of Bedford, beautifully played by Louis Jouvet, tongue in cheek. The Vicar is convinced that detective story readers are future murderers. Archibald has a particular hatred for Felix Chapel. (He does not suspect that Felix is actually Irwin Molyneux, his cousin). On the platform the Vicar is a model of purity. At home he is the loving father of eleven sons and a seemingly good husband to his wife. Off hours he corresponds with a friend named Daisy. Jouvet, to be sure, makes the most of the possibilities inherent in the part.

Equally positive that Felix Chapel is a menace to humanity is William Kramps (Jean Louis Barrault) the terror of the stockyards, the butcher of butchers. Kramps love animals. Wouldn't hurt a fly. But Butchers slay animals. Hence Kramps butchering Butchers. Simple isn't it. Kramps blames Chapel for turning him into a killer of killers. They finally meet—the butcher and the writer. Two equal foes. A battle to the death. But poor, shy Chapel is frightened out of his wit. Kramps on the other hand waxes poetic: Life is strange. When I meet someone he is alive. When I leave he is dead.

Out of this promising material Director Marcel Carne has woven a genuinely humorous film which involves a bizarre crime. "Bizarre Bizarre," a bizarre reporter who solves the crime in his sleep, a bizarre girl who was named Daisy by the Salvation Army because the music was sad and always the same; a bizarre milkman who loves Eva more than his milk; a bizarre Scotland Yard sleuth and a bizarre-bizarre fellow who goes into mourning whenever anyone is murdered.

The piece has something of the quality of "Alice in Wonderland." Every one in it is utterly mad. To mention a few, there are the man and wife suspect respectively of being murderers and victim, who go into hiding so that no one will learn that their servants had left them. (Presumably a scandal of that sort would have crushed them socially.) You will meet a sybaritic vicar who goes on a stealing mission disguised as a killed Highlander. There is a milkman who wears a top-hat, a Jack-the-Ripper on a bicycle, a girl who left the Salvation Army because the music was sad, a journalist who got his best ideas in a state of trance and a lynch-mob in London.

FRANK S. NUGENT
NEW YORK TIMES

The Funniest Comedy Since "Carnival in Flanders"

BIZARRE BIZARRE (Lenauer)—A Gallic dish of humor. Considerable satire aimed at the English underlines the proceedings. Louis Jouvet, Francoise Rosay, Marcel Carne directed.

BOXOFFICE

Jean Louis Barrault in "Bizarre Bizarre," opening tomorrow night at the Filmarite.
French Film Ranks High In Comedy

"Bizarre Bizarre," a Cornélius Melies film in French with English dialogue titles, directed by Marcel Lanne, adapted from "His First Affair," is shown at the Criterion, released by Lenarrn Internationa Films. The cast: Louis Jourvet, Françoise Rosay, Michel Simon, Jean Louis Barrault, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Nadine Vogel, Alcifer, Guibal, Jeanne Lory and M. Dahemel. Presented at The FilmMart.

Don't be taken off your guard on reading a quaint line in the Filmarte's ads "with tongue in cheek, we present." That is not only a gross understatement but, let this be fair warning, they've got a feather for your ribs, gaggle soup for your innards and a strait-jacket if you get out of hand while viewing "Bizarre Bizarre." And you're apt to.

Here's a madcap farce in which the French poke fun at their English cousins and their customs of the late '90s.

The story has to do with an aged horticulturist who, in his Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde existence, writes cheap detective novels. He is accused of murdering his wife. There are a rock-bound vicar, a butcher's butcher, that is, a swag who specializes in victims of the abattoir calling only a light-headed milkman and his light o' love; various specimens of the French versions of Scotland Yard Keystone cops, and sleeping reporters who are troubled with insomnia.

A perfectly wacky cast goes through maniacal paces under the directorial guidance of Marcel Lanne, who must be a man of the umpth degree to provide so much delight.

The Filmarte has a nightmare in "Bizarre Bizarre" that should make any dreamer mighty proud of the machinations of his subconscious.

So This Is Broadway

By GEORGE ROSS

The Filmarte was advertising "Bizarre Bizarre, sans Simone Simon" and many a moviegoer who didn't read carefully has irately inquired at the box office why Simone isn't in the picture. . . . That lucky (simba underground) who is to do an imitation of Ginger Rogers in the Varsity Show, "Fall Enough," at the Astor, is Gordon Kent, son of Rockwell Kent, the artist.

Fritz Kuhn was almost Mickey-finished at the Stork last Thursday night. . . . One reason so few new shows are being put on the air is because under the new FRA stipulations for rehearsal salaries, costs are greatly increased for assembling shows for audition purposes. We saw a private preview of Simone Simon's latest French.

It's excellent. Which reminds us, that in announcing the premiere of its current offering, the Filmarte sent out notices reading: "WITH TONGUE IN CHECK, WE PRESENT BIZARRE BIZARRE (SANS SIMONE SIMON)." . . .

Newark last week. He's scheduled to play Hamlet during Holy Week - no less - Cleveland - where the management is confident he'll up business. After the successful premiere of "The Hot Mikado," starring Bill Robinson, sidewalk wags were cracking that very likely we'll soon see Maurice Schwartz in "The Hot Kizotski Mikado!"

By MICHAEL STEELE

Those French! Comme ils sont charmants! Come ils s'amusent! First they sent Simone Simon, now we have a picture called "Bizarre Bizarre," which, according to the translators, means "Bizarre Bizarre" in English. Whatever you call it, it's bizarre. It's also the grandest, funniest farce that New York has seen since Orson Welles was tearing scenery apart for the Federal Theater in "Horse Eats Hat."

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Bizarre Bizarre

Family Farce 84M.


As far as box-office is concerned, you might say this is the French version of the latest W. C. Fields opus. "Bizarre Bizarre" is definitely not a "critics' picture," but it has the audience appeal to indicate it will fare nicely where French products can be shown. Billed as a "burlesque on the British," it is just that - a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan, without the music.

Because an every day audience sometimes drowned out the dialogue with incessant laughter at the sneer antics of the screen characters, this might prove to be a nice dual support in houses which ordinarily do not play Gallic films. It's the tale of detective-story-author Michel Simon who is accused of murdering his wife (Francoise Rosay) although she is very much alive. She ran away because her servants left her. Vicar Louis Jourvet, a wolf in cleric's clothing, brought about the charge, is eventually accused of the murder also. Rosay shows up towards the end, then Simon has to play dead to get his family back, but not mixed up in a scandal. The three leads are played excellently, with a grand comedy characterization tossed in by versatile Jean-Louis Barrault. Frankly, this isn't an important film, but it's lots of fun in the slapstick manner.

ESTIMATE: Rib-tickler for French fans.
"BIZARRE BIZARRE"

("BIZARRE BIZARRE")

with
FRANCOISE ROSAY
LOUIS JOUVET
MICHEL SIMON

COMEDY ON THE SCREEN

In reaching its majority the film has passed beyond many stages, leaving in its wake fond memories of silent days bygone—of tears that wrung the heart and laughter that shook the anatomy—when D. W. Griffith was acknowledged a genius and Mack Sennett an institution. The Keystone tradition, established by Sennett, has been changed considerably by comedians like the Marx Bros., the Three Stooges and the Marx Brothers. Still it lives today and its most recent exponent is Marcel Carné who directed "Bizarre Bizarre." Originally Carné was assistant director to Jacques Feyder, who was strongly influenced by his countryman, René Clair; the Frenchman in turn was a disciple of Chaplin, the little Englishman, who was a discovery of the American Mack Sennett; while Sennett, the master comedian, shaped his technique to the Commedia dell'Arte. Unconsciously Sennett, the erstwhile burlesque artist, fused the methods employed by this ancient and venerable school, which flourished in Italy before the Renaissance.

A Sennett comedy grew like Topsy. It was written on the cuff, the plot developing with the action. Vice versa, the climax winding up a series of preposterous episodes in a walloping finish. In spite of being hodge-podge these early slapstick epics were spontaneous and effective. They contained all the elements of good clean fun and had no purpose other than to assault the spectator into laughter. The anatonic response to them is proof of their virtues, their faults notwithstanding.

But Sennett, the discoverer of Gloria Swanson, Wallace Beery, Harold Lloyd, Ben Turpin, Louise Fazenda, and a host of others never received the kudos bestowed upon Chaplin, his most illustrious pupil whom he signed to a contract for the large sum of $125.00 per week, when the "classic hobo" of our time was an unknown from the English music halls. In attempting to analyze Chaplin there has always been something indefinable about the pathetic figure he cut, which until the rise of the dictator he may soon setrize, penetrated national boundaries and made people the world over sub sympathetically and laugh hystericly. Chaplin blended comedy and tragedy so shrewdly that in this respect some scholars considered him akin to Shakespeare. Still Louis Delluc, the eminent French critic, found Chaplin a Gallic disposition. "With all his Cockney pantomime," wrote Delluc, "he gives us the charm, almost retrospective and classic, of the early French painters." An argument in support of this theory might be the enthusiasm with which the French heralded the genius of "Chariot" long before he was recognized either in the country of his adoption or in the country of his birth. Moreover, "Chariot" is still the most popular star in France today; his comedies are constantly being revived. And while Chaplin has had no successor, his predecessor avowedly was the little French comedian, Max Linder, who worked for the Lumière Brothers when motion pictures were still a novelty, and whose trade-mark—the dented derby, moustache and cane—Chaplin himself adopted.

Just as this Frenchman aroused the adulation of Chaplin, the tragi-comedian proved the source of inspiration to another Frenchman. He was Rene Clair. Less emotional, less subjective and less instinctive than his master, Clair let his rich imagination carry him away. More often than not he acted on impulse, his remarkable ingenuity always saving a situation. Sennett taught him to rely on technical devices, and Chaplin revealed to him the wide scope of the screen as a canvas for portraying human emotions and reactions. Clair himself possessed amazing originality and was endowed with an infectious sense of humor that spread like a rash once his performers were let loose. But however slapstick in conception, his farces were often social in theme. Many critics considered his films, "La Million," "L'Italian Straw Hat," "Le Dernier Milliardaire" and "A Nous La Liberté," satires. In short, Clair applied intelligence to whimsy.

It was Harry Alan Potamkin who defined comedy as (1) the humor of situation (2) the humor of character (3) the humor of society. Sennett embodied the first, Chaplin the second and Clair the third. And it is these ingredients which Marcel Carné has attempted to sift in his "Bizarre Bizarre." Convinced that the sight of a man slipping on a banana peel is just as funny now as it was then, Carné has deliberately reverted to the old custard pie formula, propounded by the Keystone school, whose graduates, magna cum laude, included Ben Turpin, Buster Keaton, Chester Conklin, Fatty Arbuckle, Harry Langdon, Harold Lloyd and Lloyd Hamilton. He has tried not to sully the name of slapstick by making it sophisticated, after the Hollywood fashion, viz the recent mad cycle. It is only since the screen has become articulate that the cinema's own commedia dell'Arte has gradually dwindled. The unpretentious and robust comedies of yesterday have been superseded by the romantic spectacles of today. And more's the pity that in this decade of gentility only Walt Disney gives us the opportunity to chuckle at grotesque caricatures of ourselves.

—LIillian NADEL