

The Shadow Stage

A reliable guide to recent pictures. One check means good; two checks, very good; three checks, outstanding



Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed in film of heart-warming and hilarious moods

✓✓✓ It's a Wonderful Life (Liberty-RKO)

IN this picture of many moods, it's driven home that it isn't worldly goods which enrich a man, but the friends he makes in life. It's another heaven-and-earth affair that has a little of everything: Romance, comedy, tragedy, fantasy, satire. For earnest and impulsive James Stewart life is a mixture of all these things.

Eager to leave his home town for far-off places, Jimmy's carefully laid plans go awry repeatedly. He finally tears up his travel folders and resigns himself to running the building and loan company on which so many of the townfolk depend; otherwise, it would fall into the grasping hands of banker Lionel Barrymore whom everyone despises. His consolation prize is pretty Donna Reed who skimps along on next to nothing, turns a drafty old barn into a livable home and brings four—count 'em!—fine youngsters into the world, remaining sweet and sunny through it all.

The climax comes when Jimmy's befuddled uncle, Thomas Mitchell, misplaces the company funds. With disgrace in the offing and Barrymore at his throat, Jimmy goes to pieces. It's then that a heavenly messenger is sent to straighten out his tangled affairs and prove how wrong he is in wishing he'd never been born. As Clarence, the Angel, S.C. (second class until he earns his wings), Henry Travers is hilariously funny. Barrymore is as black-hearted a knave as the screen has seen in years. On a par with those previous Capra-Stewart pictures: "You Can't Take It With You" and "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," this leaves a good taste in the mouth!

Your Reviewer Says: Welcome back, Jimmy.