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Erich Maria Remarque Happily Returns To Film Capital – New ›Old Bailey‹

By Thomas M. Pryor

Hollywood.

Erich Maria Remarque is writing the screen version of one of his novels for the first time and regards it as a »delightful new adventure.« Also, for the first time in almost thirty years, he is working in an office, reporting every morning at 9 o'clock and ending his day's work between 3 and 6 P. M.

Turned under his arms as he leaves his air-conditioned bungalow office at the Universal-International studios is a hulging black leather portfolio containing pages of dialogue and descriptive narrative titled »Also Time to Love.« which had its genesis in his novel, »A Time to Love and a Time to Die.« (There's a superstition about death in a movie title, you know).

Mr. Remarque, who can remember meeting newspaper deadlines in Germany, racing one now for the first time since he became a novelist. »The picture script has to be ready in four to five weeks,« he said. »That's not a long time. A novel takes me two or three years, but this screen play is not so difficult. Dialogue moves fast, and it's interesting for me because I'm writing in English, which I never do with a novel.«

Mr. Remarque's literary reputation was firmly established in 1929 with »All Quiet on the Western Front.« That was made into a classic movie by a company appropriately named Universal. Did that influence him to accept the studio's offer to adapt »A Time to Love and a Time to Die«? »To tell you the truth,« he replied, »the heat was so unbearable in New York last month that I just could not refuse the invitation to come to California.« Mr. Remarque has lived in a two-and-a-half room apartment in East Fifty-seventh Street for several years and is an admirer of Father Knickerbocker's preserve.

Credo

However, there apparently were more compelling considerations. »As a writer get older,« he said, admitting to 60. »I feel he should look for new experiences. There's always something to learn. You know there is an old saying that a novel never gets completed, it's just abandoned by the author. I never wanted to adapt any of my books because I was too close to them. But I was away from ›A Time to Love and a Time to Die‹ long enough not to feel a part of it any more. It was published in 1954, so I could come back to it with a fresh approach.

»It is very interesting writing for the movies. The difference between writing a novel and a movie is like driving a truck and a sports car. In the movie the story must move fast. Keep it going and it will come out all right. You have a good term in English – storyteller. That's what you have to be in the movies.«

Mr. Remarque has a formidable batting average. Six of his eight novels have been turned into films. These were »All Quiet,« »The Road Back,« »Three Comrades,« »So Ends Our Night« (formerly »Flotsam«), »Arch of Triumph« and now »A Time to Love and a Time to Die.« He missed only with »Spark of Life« (a novel about concentrations camps) and is confident that his latest book, »The Black Obelisk,« will be bought next.

Startling Replica

A friend who has visited London's famous Old Bailey could hardly ... [über andere Themen]