

SCREEN
 'Around the World in 80 Days'

By Herbert Kupferberg

RIVOLI THEATER

A screen play by S. J. Perelman, based on the Jules Verne novel, directed by Michael Anderson, photographed in Todd-AO process in Technicolor. A Michael Todd Production with the following cast:

Phileas Fogg David Niven
 Passepartout Cantinflas
 Mr. Fix Robert Newton
 Aouda Shirley MacLaine

CAMEO PLAYERS Charles Boyer, Joe E. Brown, Martine Carol, John Carradine, Charles Coburn, Ronald Colman, Melville Cooper, Noel Coward, Eulay Currie, Reginald Denny, Andy Devine, Marlene Dietrich, Luis Miguel Dominguin, Fernandel, Sir John Gielgud, Hermione Givgold, Jose Greco, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Trevor Howard, Glynnis Johns, Buster Keaton, Evelyn Keyes, Beatrice Lillie, Peter Lorre, Edmund Lowe, Victor McLaglen, Col. Tim McCoy, A. E. Matthews, Mike Mazurki, John Mills, Alan Mowbray, Robert Morley, Edward R. Murrow, Jack Oakie, George Raft, Gilbert Roland, Cesar Romero, Frank Sinatra, Red Skelton, Ronald Squires, Basil Sydney and Harcourt Williams.

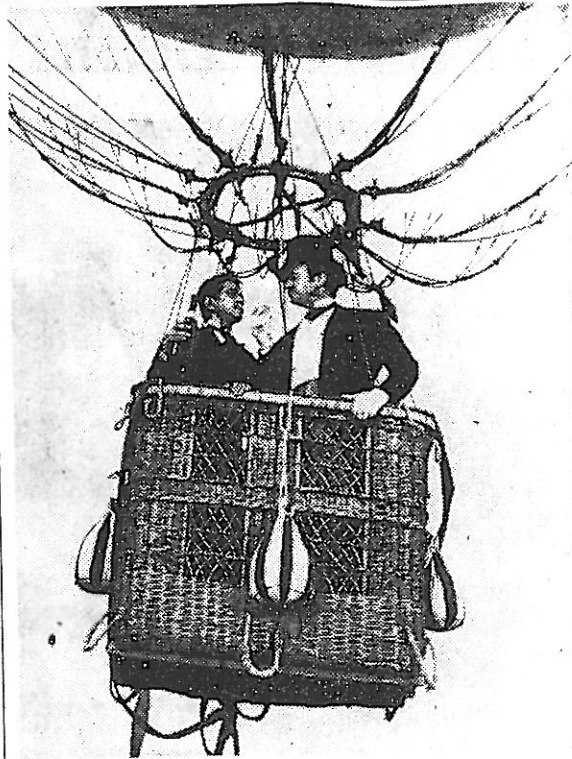
Phileas Fogg, Michael Todd—the names somehow seem to go together. Phileas was the intrepid hero of Jules Verne's novel "Around the World in 80 Days," a very proper Englishman who did some rather improper things to circumvent the globe just to win a bet back in 1872. Michael Todd may be neither proper nor English, but he shares Phileas' intrepidity and purposefulness. He has made a movie version of "Around the World in 80 Days" which in its fantasy, freshness and fun leaves poor old Jules Verne far behind in the nineteenth century. It opened last night at the Rivoli and may very well be there for the rest of our lives.

Mr. Todd has expressed the view that "Around the World in 80 Days" should be thought of in terms of show business rather than as a movie. Rivoli audiences are even being supplied with an edition of "The Playbill" printed in theatrical style. Why he should be so insistent on the point is hard to see. For "Around the World in 80 Days" is sheer cinema, the sort of far-ranging, imaginative, fanciful entertainment that only the

movies can offer and which, alas, they achieve far too seldom.

Charles Boyer, in the guise of a suave Gallic travel agent, remarks at one point in the picture: "What a crime you have only eighty days!" It's easy to share his sentiments. For Mr. Todd's magnificent farrago, which employs the services of almost every entertainment personage of the last thirty years from Jack Oakie to Sir John Gielgud, and which races in its background settings literally around the globe, seems almost too short despite its nearly three hours of running time. With its eye-filling Todd-AO color cameras and its munificent, ear-filling sound, it suddenly seems to give a new meaning to all of those recent stunning technological processes that have hitherto enhanced the screen visually and acoustically without adding materially to its prime purpose, sheer entertainment.

Remarkably enough, it has done this without for an instant losing the period flavor and adventurous enchantment of the Jules Verne novel. Observe, if you will, this Mr. Phileas Fogg. He is an Englishman—no doubt about it. His sole pastime—we have the authority of M. Verne—is playing whist at the Reform Club of London. He wagers, with the seriousness that only an Englishman can put into a wager, that he can travel round the world in a mere eighty days. (This is 1872, remember.) With a carpetbag full of banknotes and his French servant Passepartout—in the movie given a rather Spanish countenance by the Mexican comedian Cantinflas—he undertakes the arduous journey. He travels by balloon



David Niven and Cantinflas drinking champagne as they cross the Alps in a scene from "Around the World in 80 Days" which opened last night at the Rivoli Theater.

over the Alps, by ship to Bombay, by elephant to Alahabad, by ostrich to Hong Kong, by Chinese junk to Yokohama, by ship again to San Francisco, by sailmobile to Omaha, by a decrepit paddlewheeler to England and, finally, by accident and sheer luck to the Reform Club to win his bet.

To help depict his weird and whimsical adventures along the way, Mr. Todd has assembled a collection of entertainment greats who out-Hollywood Hollywood. You want their names? Well, some of them are Marlene Dietrich, Beatrice Lillie, Joe E. Brown, Ronald Colman, Noel Coward, Fernandel, Jose Greco, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Buster Keaton, Victor McLaglen, George Raft, Frank Sinatra, Red Skelton. They are listed officially as "cameo" stars, but you wouldn't be wrong if you called them character actors or even, Heaven forbid, bit players. The remarkable thing is that so few of them are really important as themselves, so perfectly do they lend color, vitality and authenticity to Mr. Todd's mighty spectacle.

To create a mood and a context for "Around the World in 80 Days," Mr. Todd prefaces it with a showing of "A Trip to the Moon," a French fantasy picture of 1899, followed quickly by shots taken from a rocket set off in the New Mexico desert in 1956. Both are narrated by Edward R. Murrow and each has something to say, but neither is as much fun as Phileas Fogg's balloon ascension from Paris on the first step of his round-the-world trip. He soars above the Seine, past the gargoyles of Notre-Dame, over the lovely French chateau country, finally, over the Alps, where the faithful servant Passepartout thoughtfully leans out of the basket to scoop up a handful of snow to cool the champagne. And that is only the first leg of a trip that takes them through the perils of a Spanish bullfight, an Asiatic jungle, a San Francisco saloon

at election time, a Sioux Indian attack and a trans-Atlantic crossing on a ship that has to be stripped of all its wooden superstructure to provide fuel in the frenzied race against time.

Through it all, David Niven is serenely imperturbable as the top-hatted Phileas Fogg, the epitome of a Frenchman's concept of a Britisher. Cantinflas, the baggy-pants Mexican comedian who is equally at home fighting bulls and chasing girls, is thoroughly winning as Passepartout, despite a little difficulty in articulating English. Shirley MacLaine is charming as Aouda, the Indian maharanees who accompanies Phileas on his journey after he has rescued her from a suttee funeral pyre. Robert Newton is both cunning and comical as Mr. Fix, the mutton-chop whiskered Scotland Yard man who trails Phileas Fogg around the world under the mistaken impression that he has robbed the Bank of England of 55,000 pounds while an unsuspecting cashier was registering a deposit of three shillings sixpence.

The background for these goings-on is as fabulous as the adventure itself. The curve in the Todd-AO screen takes a little getting used to, but it scarcely impedes one's enjoyment of the breathtaking views of London, Paris, Toledo (Spain, not Ohio), Cairo, Yokohama and the Rocky Mountains, where Mr. Todd and his director, Michael Anderson, have staged a railroad ride through Indian country that both relives and spoofs those old Saturday-matinee serials.

S. J. Perelman has written a scenario full of wit and life, and Victor Young's music, based largely on impudent variations of "Rule, Britannia," offers a delightfully wicked commentary on the action. If M. Verne, who foretold so many marvels, could see what has happened to his book, he could only say, "C'est formidable." Which in English means, don't miss it—it's wonderful.