

# 'Call Me Bwana' Needs A Little Touch of Bing

## "CALL ME BWANA"

ASTOR, KIP'S BAY AND PREMIERE SHOWCASE THEATERS.

A screen play by Nate Monaster and Johanna Harwood, directed by Gordon Douglas, produced in color by Albert R. Broccoli, and Eon Production released through United Artists. Running time: One Hour and 43 minutes. With the following cast: Matt Merriwether.....Bob Hope Luba.....Anita Ekberg Frederica Larsen.....Edie Adams Ezra Mungo.....Lionel Jeffries Arnold Palmer.....Arnold Palmer First Henchman.....Percy Herbert Col. Spencer.....Paul Carpenter Uta.....Bari Janson Chief of Ekele Tribe.....Orlando Martins Second Henchman.....Al Mulock

## The New Movies

By Judith Crist

Well, fans, were almost off and running down that old "Road" comedy level again with "Call Me Bwana"—almost, and that's not bad nowadays.

This new Bob Hope comedy does, in fact, get off to a running start with the kind of situation that sets the old nostalgia aquiver and cries for Crosby to enter the picture. (He doesn't, not even for a fleeting sight gag, more's the pity.) Nate Monaster and Johanna Harwood have cooked up a bit of hokum that has Hope as a world-famous African explorer who's actually a fraud but gets sent on a top level CIA mission to the interior; Anita Ekberg as the Soviet Union's top anthropologist and lady spy who's sent to beat him to it; Edie Adams as a CIA agent sent along to safeguard Hope, and Lionel Jeffries, that haunted civil servant of Peter Sellers comedies, as a Soviet agent posing as a medical mis-

sionary whose goal it is to liquidate rather than frustrate Hope.

And the way the plot gets organized at the outset one begins to wonder who could ask for anything more. An American moon probe capsule with vital data goes off course on its return, landing in Ekele territory. President Kennedy himself decides that Matthew Merriwether, the only man to have survived life with the Ekeles, is the man to reclaim the capsule for the U. S. A. Khrushchev himself decides that the lovely anthropologist, Luba, is to be Merriwether's match.

As Merriwether, who's actually been cribbing material from a long-dead uncle's diaries, Hope is in his element. He is the fatuous, wise-cracking, egomaniac, lecherous coward we know and love. His New York menage is too delicious to be described here and his being equipped by the CIA with an all-contingency suicide kit is a fine interlude. And since in our contemporary sex fetishes the mammary glands have long replaced the sarong, Miss Ekberg is a perfectly satisfactory bit of cheesecake for Hope to leap at, nibble at

and ultimately enjoy to the full—in the moon capsule, no less, on a world-wide television circuit.

But the good start we're off to is not sustained, despite Hope's buffoonery and better-than-average patter, Jeffries' wonderful way with a sinister plot and a veneer of godliness and Miss Ekberg's literally marvelous equipment. The story meanders as much as the safari does under Hope's guidance; there's a gratuitous and unfunny golf match with Arnold Palmer, tired gags with elephants and nothing for Miss Adams to do. Now if she were Bing Crosby—

But there are a few bright moments and bright lines scattered along the route; there's a nice bit where a lion stands in for Miss Ekberg in a romantic moment with Hope and then stands in for Hope in a mawkish moment with

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Bob Hope advises his valet to "Call Me Bwana."

Jeffries. And when the quartet finally arrive at the Ekele village things perk up, particularly with a chief who, speaking of torturing his victims, explains apologetically, "It's nothing personal or cultural—just the way of our culture." The rescue of the capsule involves a bang-

blast-off finale—spoiled by a particularly tasteless end sight gag that aspires to the "Road" tradition.

Perhaps the tradition makes us perfectionists—or "Call Me Bwana," the comedy, intermittent though it is, is vin-

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