'Porgy and Bess' Is Better Than Expected

By FRANK VAN ORDEN and KATHY RUSE

Samuel Goldwyn's production of "Porgy and Bess" turns out to be one of the better flicks of the season. The adaptation of DuBose and Dorothy Heyward's stage production has managed to come through Hollywood's soap mill amazingly unscathed. Only a few additions have been made, with no detectable deletions, which accounts for most of its merits.

Superb Musical Score
The rest of the appeal of the movie consists of the superb musical score. The orchestration of Gershwin's works leaves little to be desired. Even the cast can sing, and Pearl Bailey and Sammy Davis, Jr. are quite adequate in this respect.

In fact, the movie is well worth seeing if only for Davis' renditions of "It Ain't Necessarily So" and "New York." A dark horse who comes on big is Anne Winter, whose amazing voice is shown to a good advantage in her "Summertime."

Movie Or Stage!
Unfortunately, director Preminger seems to have been unable to decide whether he preferred a movie or a stage production, the indecision resulting in a disconcerting inconsistency between the lighting, which is straight out of Broadway, and sets, which are at times reminiscent of a Walt Disney travelogue of the Everglades. However, this can be overlooked in favor of the sets of Catfish Row, where most of the action takes place.

Sidney Portier and Dorothy Dandridge, with few exceptions, manage an outstanding portrayal of the lead roles of porgy and Bess, with the perennial Pearl Bailey a winner in the supporting role of Maria.

Almost Three Hours
The action takes place smoothly, and few of the drag characteristic of musicals are to be found in the two-hour and forty-five minute (including intermission) marathon. While some of the battle scenes are not too convincing, the hurricane scene is quite effective, with orchids to the special effects crew for their magnificent wind, rain, and "voices of the gods."

The appeal of the production is enhanced by the fact that the rest rooms of the theater actually have soap. But the winning point is the close proximity of the "Thousand and three" (just around the corner), said plug being worth gross amounts of brew to the reviewers in the aforementioned establishment.

Highly Recommended
All things considered, the production is highly recommended for a pleasant holiday diversion.