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Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jun 18, 1955; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1983); pg. A6

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BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

What may happen in the summery, sultry East when a wife goes away on a vacation with the offspring, leaving the husband in town attending to business as usual—or so she thinks—is at times very amusingly told in "The Seven Year Itch," starring Marilyn Monroe (not as the wife) and Tom Ewell in his original stage role as the husband.

And right off, to keep the record straight, it might be noted that for those who know the footlight comedy by George Axelrod, the film version will constitute something of a miss, notwithstanding the author himself collaborated with the director, Billy Wilder, on the screenplay.

However, any counts leveled against "The Seven Year Itch," now at the Chinese Theater, will not prevent it from being big box office. It starts with a primary attraction, namely Miss Monroe in a sexily seductive assignment, registering 100% of her native personal cuteness in her portrayal.

Thoroughly Capable

Ewell will also be recognized as a chap who evidences great capability in a variety of ways in fulfilling his interpretation of the married man who suddenly goes on the loose.

This picture is nothing for the moralists, though it may not quite satisfy the immoral-

ists either, whoever they are. The film neatly avoids the climaxing romantic situation of the stage show, for it blames the desire of The Girl, played by Miss Monroe, to invade the gentleman's apartment for slumber on torrid New York weather. This torridness, it seems, is happily offset by the air-conditioning he has installed.

This gimmick is undoubtedly what got "The Seven Year Itch" past the Code Administration, whose activities are so much spotlighted one way and another nowadays.

Sexy Trimmings

The gimmick does not interfere with an abundance of very sexy trimmings in "The Seven Year Itch." Some of the situations in which Ewell as Richard Sherman imagines himself early in the production are almost obnoxious, in spite of being ludicrous. The philosophy broached by Miss Monroe that it is better to be in love with a married man than a single man because you don't have to become serious about that kind of romance will also rouse unfavorable attention from certain groups. There is a basic stress on the lecherous pertaining to most of the men figuring in the action, even including the Indians in the prologue. However, that can probably be okayed for comedy.

The whole question is whether the picture will bring that broad general enjoyment which is the

main justification for a feature designed for humor. There is so much soliloquizing by the primary male character and so much moralizing that gets nowhere that one somewhat doubts the intrinsic appeal of "The Seven Year Itch."

To be sure, it had a big success on Broadway, but there it was light and fleet in its unfoldment by comparison with the picture, into which a certain clumsiness frequently intrudes.

Profitable Outlook

With the spotlight focused on Miss Monroe and with Ewell's good work, the entertainment will still probably get by most profitably. Evelyn Keyes as the wife, Robert Strauss as the very comical janitor, Sonny Tufts, who has some excellent moments as the wife's suspected boy friend, and Marguerite Chap-

man as the secretary are effectively to the fore.

Others to be commended for what they do are efficient Oscar Homolka, practically lost as the psychiatrist; Victor Moore, very briefly seen as a plumber, and Carolyn Jones (the screaming nymphomaniac nurse) and Roxanne as Sherman's imaginary loves.

Charles K. Feldman Group made this picture for 20th Century-Fox release, and the credits in the title are introduced in an exceptionally interesting manner. The night audience was huge, and afternoon larger than usual.