Hollywood's Semi-Nudes

Actresses Show More, Hide Less

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — Costumes are scantier. The bikini has replaced the type of one-piece bathing suit Betty Grable wore in World War II's most popular pin-up photo.

Actresses such as Elizabeth Taylor, Carroll Baker, Stella Stevens and Mamie Van Doren — seminude or in transluscent negligees — get men's-magazine portrayal in living color.

Emphasis has shifted from legs to bosoms. "You never hear anybody say, 'Oh, what legs!' — except maybe about Cyd Charisse," says one close observer of the Hollywood scene

These are findings in a study of Hollywood cheesecake, or, more specifically, what changes have been wrought in this art form over the years.

The earliest cheesecake photo is said to be one of the silent screen's vampire, Theda Bara, in low-cut gown as the original celuloid Cleopatra in 1917.

Next came the Mack Sennett bathing beauties — in pleated dresses, bloomers, black stockings, rubber shoes and shower caps.

Other landmarks in the annals of cheesecake include:

—Miss Grable, back to camera in a white bathing suit, smiling over her shoulder in a pose treasured by troops from Normandy to Guadalcanal a generation ago.

—Chili Williams, model-starlet, slouching provocatively in a polka-dot bikini for a magazine photographer in the same era.

—Rita Hayworth in a black lace nightgown sitting on her knees in bed, leaning forward, with her body sideways — another fighting men's favorite.

—Marilyn Monroe in her famous 1952 calendar pose, lying nude on her side, seen from above, her red-gold hair streaming out behind. Miss Monroe said she posed for this one because she was out of work and needed money.

Experts say the Monroe photo blazed a trail among the prominent.

Says a veteran photo man: "The principal trend in cheesecake today is toward nudity and its general acceptance.

"It was always possible to get unknowns to pose this way. I think Marilyn was responsible for getting women of greater prominence to do it."

Seminude posing, says Mario Casilli, representative of a leading men's magazine (Playboy) is "pretty much the accepted thing compared to, say, five years ago. The public is becoming more sophisticated and aware of sex. The bathing suit is going to be no longer something that will interest anyone."

How lucrative is shedding for the lens?

Fees for actresses vary, he said, and usually are negotiated by their agents. "Sometimes you work with a producer who wants publicity for his film.

"It's a very businesslike endeavor. They come in, it's done, and they leave. It's not the nudity that makes them interesting," said Casilli. "They are very interesting people. After the first five minutes you're not aware of the nudity. The first thing is to get them comfortable. If they're not comfortable, it will show in the picture."

Photographer Peter Gowland estimates that two-thirds of his $63,000-a-year gross income comes from glamor photography. With Alice, his wife and coworker, he travels the world taking photos for leading magazines.

The Gowlands' 11-room studio-home in Santa Monica has, for backgrounds, a running stream, swimming pool and wooded areas and ocean nearby.

Gowland specializes in models and starlets but has photographed such stars as Yvette Mimeux, Arlene Dahl, Jayne Mansfield, Deborah Kerr.

The major change in cheesecake, Gowland says, is toward naturalness.

A studio still-photo chief agrees that the technique has changed. "We use more available lighting, simple backgrounds and simple props.

A veteran studio publicist claims current fashions make his job tougher. "The general public has beat the hell out of Hollywood when it comes to cheesecake. Skirts up to here. Dresses cut so low you can see practically everything."

BETTY GRABLE (1943)

SOPHIA LOREN (1966)

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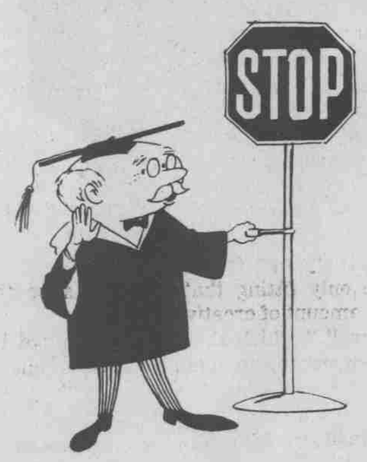

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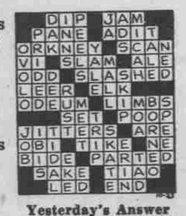
15. Gasp
16. Mother of Presidents state: abbr.
17. Current
18. Belt
19. Plead
20. Russian coin
22. Footed vases
23. Acute
25. Molt
27. Revise once more
30. Roman money
31. Bound
32. Mother: colloq.
33. Possessive pronoun
34. Body of water
35. Knave of clubs in loo
36. Affixing
38. Immense
39. Lift
40. Ten-cent pieces
41. Affirmative votes
42. Wine receptacles

DOWN
1. Cotton cloth
2. Winglike
3. A climbing plant
4. Compass point
5. Antelope of Africa
6. Of great extent
7. Superlative ending
8. Man's name
9. Talk
11. Rough projections
13. Restless longing
15. Agreement
18. Flex
19. Raised
21. Pastry desserts
22. Employed
24. Require
25. Island in the Philippines
26. Life's prime
28. Semblances
29. Domesticates
31. Harmonizes
34. "Leaning Tower" city
35. Cougar
37. Perish
38. Pronoun
40. Prosecutor: abbr.



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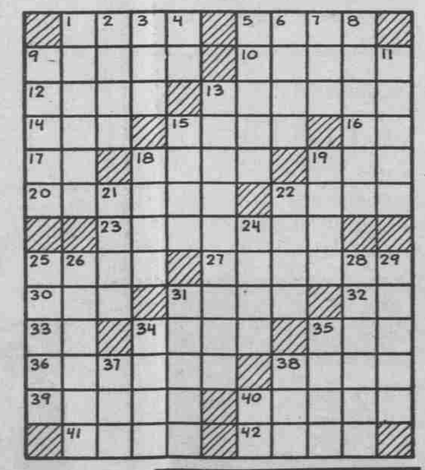
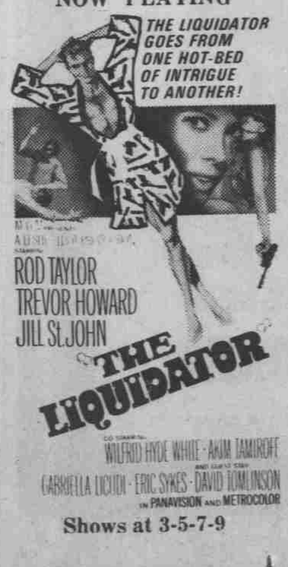


CAROLINA
NOW PLAYING



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