

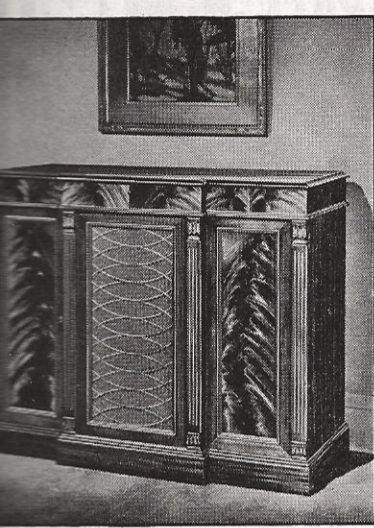
# WINDSOR

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San Diego Union  
... good will salesman

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# CINEMA

## Folies-Bergère

Mention of the word party brings to Ouida Bergère's baby brown eyes a weird, predeaceous glitter. Ouida Bergère (nee Ida Berger) is chubby, red-headed Mrs. Basil Rathbone. Once something of a scriptress, for seven years she was head of Paramount's scenario department. Now, with her tall, dark, talented, professionally sinister, personally amiable cinematographer husband she inhabits an overstuffed stronghold in Hollywood's fashionable Bel Air quarter. There she contrives her parties. They are said to begin as a fulmination of her blood, a bounding along the veins, which eventually detonates in something pyrotechnic, exotic, ingenious and rare. At their most grandiose, they combine the best elements of annual maneuvers, a meeting of the Soviet of Nationalities and the New World's Fair.

Of late a run of foul California weather has dashed Ouida Rathbone's efforts. It began with her Charity Ball last December. The project was sumptuous. *Pièce de résistance* was to have been an Alpine scene re-created with real snow in the subtropical palm gardens of the Beverly Hills Hotel. Afternoon of the party the rains came. What with this disappointment and that, by 7 in the evening Mrs. Rathbone was in a state of nervous collapse and could not take part in the festivities. But her guests had a high old time inside the big, rambling hotel where only the jollification was wet.

Everybody was just getting happily awash when the Beverly Hills police arrived to break up the crap game. The more prudish producers went home. By 2 o'clock only the drunks and the pretty girls were left. At 4 the fights began. By 6 the funkeys were mopping up and sweeping together the fragments. Next day people counted their hang-overs, declared it was one of the best Hollywood parties ever. There was some question whether the party made any money. After the 1938 party charity was reported to be only \$2,000 in the red.

Fortnight ago Ouida Rathbone was at it again. So was the weather. It poured. But that did not stop 54 guests, representing most of Hollywood's international elite, from streaming into the plush-conditioned Rathbone mansion. Occasion was a party in honor of Polish-born Pianist Artur Rubinstein. London-born Conductor Leopold Stokowski, and Poland.

Motley Hollywood society tends to split clannishly along party lines (the kind of parties they go to, not the kind they belong to). There is the right little tight little English huddle, typified by their *doyen*, C. Aubrey Smith. They drink tea, have garden parties and play cricket. There are the tumbler-tilting Celts of Jimmy Cagney, Pat O'Brien. There is the racy crowd around Bing Crosby, the young blades of whom Mickey Rooney and Jackie Cooper are gleaming Excaliburs.

And there are the big producers, who like to play poker and polo. Intrepid and hard-working Ouida Rathbone is leader of an amorphous salon of her own, and she managed to bag a specimen of nearly every Hollywood social genus for her party.

Catered by Dave Chasen, the dinner was served with pomp in the 60-foot Rathbone dining hall. *Lebensraum* was conquered by extending the dining-room floor out into the garden, covering and siding the extension with canvas to keep out the rain.

Result was somewhat like Ali Baba's cave, with "Dubonnet" the color note of



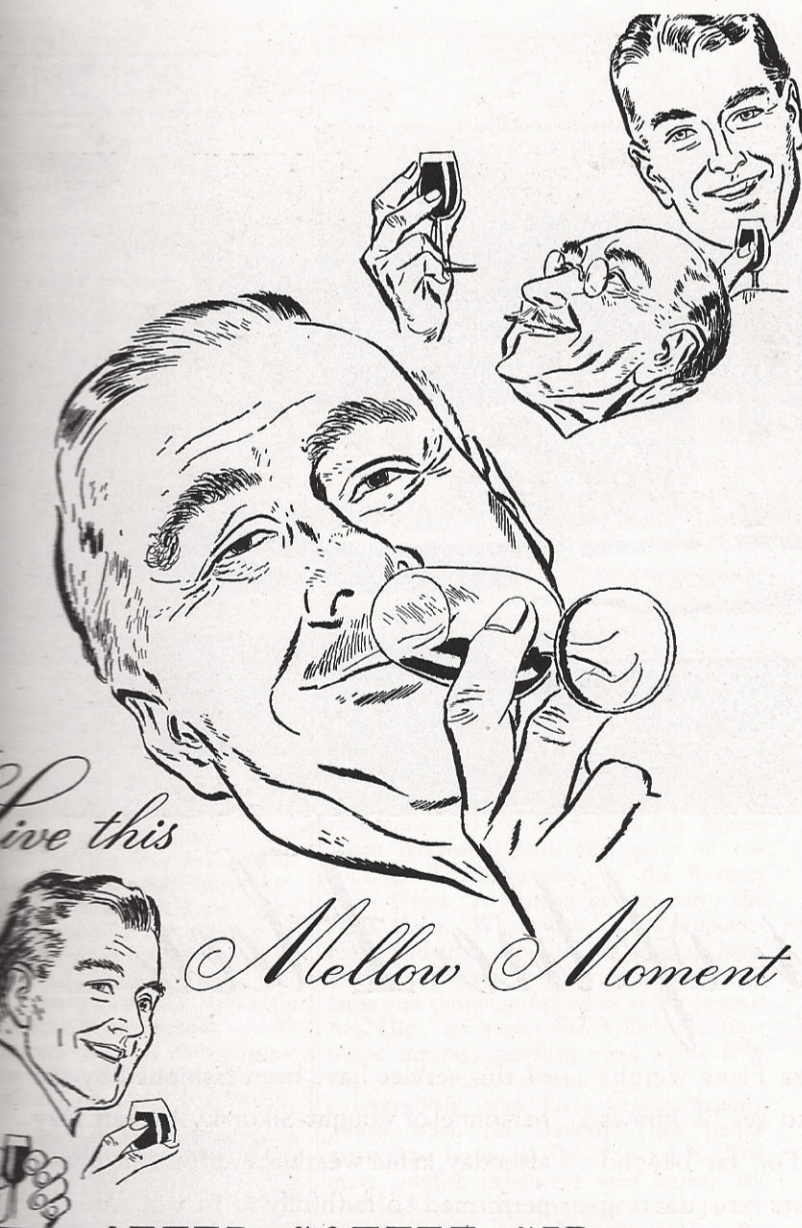
Wide World  
THE BASIL RATHBONES\*  
Outside, rain; inside, Dubonnet.

the occasion. A vast Dubonnet rug covered the floor from end to end. Silver lamé flashed on the walls. Just below the ceiling ran a three-foot-wide frieze of Cellophane scored with the black notes of Chopin's *Polonaise Militaire*, which the Warsaw radio used to play at hourly intervals during the siege of the doomed city. Over the fireplace flamed a red Cellophane banner inscribed with this sentiment: "The world of music knows no boundaries." The quotation was contributed by Actress Blanche Yurka, who did not know where it came from. Neither did anybody else.

In the centre of the mirror-topped table, around which sat the hosts and the 14 most notable guests, stood a grand piano of lucite, flanked by two lucite violins. From the piano stemmed lilies-of-the-valley, forget-me-nots. Scattered about were Dubonnet flowers. Place cards were one continuous scroll of silvery-grey material inscribed with the names in Dubonnet lettering. Between the names ran the score

\* On their eleventh wedding anniversary (1937) Basil and Ouida Rathbone, costumed as Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elizabeth of Austria, entertained some 250 guests at Beverly Hills' famed Victor Hugo Restaurant.

TIME, February 26, 1940



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of the *Polonaise*, also in Dubonnet. All the glassware was Dubonnet.

Lesser guests were clumped in groups of ten at four tables resplendent with silver tablecloths. On one was a miniature grand piano made of carnation petals. Vast mirrors at the hall's ends multiplied the happy scene.

Fanciest dish was *crêpes suzette* chafed on the spot for the hungry 54. Among those who ate them: Charles Boyer and his British wife, Pat Peterson; Errol Flynn and Lili Damita; George Raft and Norma Shearer (whose friendship has Hollywood currently agog); Marlene Dietrich and Novelist Erich Maria Remarque; Novelist Louis Bromfield (*The Rains Came*) and Kay Francis; David O. Selznick and wife; Olivia de Havilland; Shanghai Tycoon Sir Victor Sassoon; Columnists Ed Sullivan, Princess Conchita Pignatelli; *Vogue's* Edna Chase; Bette Davis; Hungarian-born Songstress Ilona Massey (who arrived alone, left with Conductor Stokowski). Absent: Conductor Stokowski's great friend, Greta Garbo.

Top note of the whole performance was Artur Rubinstein playing three numbers (including de Falla's *Fire Dance*) on the Rathbone piano while Charlie Chaplin sat on the floor at his feet (reverentially). Reginald Gardiner mimicked a symphony conductor (in a corner where Rubinstein could not see him).

Last words of the departing guests were almost as lavish as the trimmings.

Said Novelist Bromfield: "It was very much like a good Paris party, with such a cosmopolitan gathering. ... As a spectacle ... most impressive. ... I had a very good time."

Said Edna Chase: "Mrs. Rathbone gives a party with a great sense of organization. ... My first impression was that I was amazed to find myself tripping over movie stars every other minute. ..."

Said expensive Interior Decorator Harold Grieve, who decorated the dining room for Ouida Bergère: "You never saw so many actors not acting in your life."

Gushed Bette Davis: "It was the most beautiful party I have ever attended and Mrs. Rathbone is the most gracious hostess I have ever met."

The heavens were still gushing, too. But the downpour did no worse damage than baptize happy Hostess Ouida Bergère Rathbone with a new nickname: The Rain Maker.

## The New Pictures

*Pinocchio* (Disney-RKO) is the world's third full-length cartoon movie.\* It is Disney's second, and in every respect except its score his best. In craftsmanship and delicacy of drawing and coloring, in the articulation of its dozens of characters, in the greater variety and depth of its photographic effects, it tops the high standard *Snow White* set. The charm, humor and loving care with which it treats its inanimate characters puts it in a class by itself.

Since the Disney studio works as a collective enterprise (1,200 people worked \* No. 1, Disney's *Snow White*; No. 2, Max Fleischer's *Gulliver's Travels*.)

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