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Letter from Los Angeles

MOVIE FASHIONS TRAVEL THE WORLD

Although it is true that a half a dozen designers set the yearly trends for fashionable women everywhere, world-wide ways of dressing are unquestionably influenced by the Hollywood designers whose work is seen in the far corners of the earth. Perhaps the most illustrious of this group is Charles LeMaire, executive designer of the Twentieth-Century Fox Studios, one of the two largest cinema studios in existence.

LeMaire, handsome, debonair, sophisticated and clearly a man who denies himself no luxury, is the son of a vivacious French Canadian mother and a restless Alsatian father. The family roamed across America in search of the proverbial pot of gold and Maman took in

boarders to keep her family fed. Poverty and strange people filled LeMaire's childhood but he learned to live close to nature and to be sensitive and with one of these strangers in his family's home he launched his career, age 15, in the theater. He formed a singing team with one of his mother's boarders (age 18), and from there his path led to New York with hard work, heartaches and near starvation in-between.

While still in his twenties Charles LeMaire reached the top of his profession as a designer for Florenz Ziegfeld, impresario of the famous «Follies». He then designed costumes for all the George White «Scandals», the Earl Carroll «Vanities» and scores of other Broadway shows

Dress worn by Jean Simmons in «Hilda Crane».



Glazed cotton jumper with sheer cotton blouse, worn by Jennifer Jones in «The Man in the grey flannel suit».



and extravaganzas of the 20's and 30's. One of his unusual assignments was the re-styling of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus. During this period of his great productivity in the New York theatre, LeMaire also opened his own couture house for his friends in café society, produced 10 models a season for 12 different dress manufacturing firms and had a jolly good time besides. This is the man who can sing, who can dance, who can play piano professionally and paint seriously and well enough to have his work exhibited publicly.

When war came, LeMaire was quickly ushered into the Special Services division of the Army so that his talents might be employed where they were most helpful: in entertaining soldiers and building morale. He was a buck private extraordinaire with power and privileges many an officer envied. When this era was ended he was called to Hollywood by Twentieth Century Fox Studios.

As executive designer he oversees everything that comes out of a studio wardrobe department. It was,

incidentally, one of his designers, Helen Rose, who recently created the trousseau for the Princess of Monaco. And one of his former designers, the well-known Swiss René Hubert, will design the costumes for the cinema version of the play *Anastasia*.

It will no doubt interest our readers to know how movie designing differs greatly from other types of fashion designing. For one thing, although movie creations are not produced according to seasons, they must, in a general way, follow current fashion trends. But they must do so without sharp exaggeration of any kind since movie-viewers are not so interested in seeing a fashion show as they are in seeing a beautiful girl appropriately dressed. The dress must be the unobtrusive flatterer rather than an outstanding work of art, for the designer, who carefully reads the script, must just as carefully create a personality.

Extraordinary care must also be exercised lest a gown be an anachronism, a deterrent to the action of a picture or a distraction to the viewers leading interest away from



STOFFEL & Co., SAINT-GALL

White organdy gown worn by Gail Robbins in «The Girl in the red velvet swing».



**FORSTER WILLI & Co.,
SAINT-GALL**

Black eyelet embroidery.
Gown worn by Joan Collins in «The
Girl in the red velvet swing».

Models by Charles LeMaire.

Photos by 20th. Century Fox

story or plot. Mr. LeMaire recalled his trip to Hong Kong for the filming of «Love Is a Many-Splendoured Thing». Chinese costumes were, in part, made in Hong Kong for this picture. However, Chinese tailors were outraged by Mr. LeMaire's insistence that the pipings around the neck be larger than customary. The tailors were thinking of their traditional art. Mr. LeMaire was thinking of the cameras which need emphasis on fine points in order not to lose detail. What is flattering in the salon often becomes ridiculous in the eyes of the camera. Color, too, even for black and white pictures must be very carefully chosen.

Mr. LeMaire keeps a large selection of white, pink, blue and yellow Swiss organdies on hand for color and for effect. He states that he will use no other. He also buys yards and yards of fine Swiss embroideries sometimes for a specific purpose and sometimes just because he falls in love with them and hopes he'll have an excuse to use them. He explained to this writer that he cannot stock

up on Swiss goods because deliveries take too long for his quick-paced schedules. However, he says he dreams of the day when there will be a Swiss shop in Beverly Hills handling the fabrics of four or five fine mills so that the studios might go to them as frequently as they would really like to do.

Perhaps this is something for our Swiss readers to think about? It is certainly something that many residents of Beverly Hills would be as fascinated by as would Mr. LeMaire, and this could be another opportunity for the fabrics of Switzerland to be known and worn by even more of the most beautiful women in the world.

Thanks again, Mr. LeMaire, for another of your continually novel and enchanting ideas... you are so consistent!

Helene Miller