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Vertigo,' Hitchcock's Latest; Melodrama Arrives at the Capitol

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

YOU might say that Alfred Hitchcock's latest mystery melodrama, "Vertigo," is all about how a dizzy fellow chases after a dizzy dame, the fellow being an ex-detective and the dame being—well, you guess. That is as fair a thumbnail digest as we can hastily contrive to give you a gist of this picture without giving the secret away. And, believe us, that secret is so clever, even though it is devilishly far-fetched, that we wouldn't want to risk at all disturbing your inevitable enjoyment of the film.

If that recommendation is sufficient, read no further. "Vertigo" opened yesterday at the Capitol.

However, if you are a skeptic and want to know just a little more about this typically Hitchcock picture, which has James Stewart and Kim Novak as its stars, let us give you two hints that should be helpful.

The first hint is that the story begins with this long-legged ex-detective, a known sufferer from acrophobia (fear of heights), being hired by a San Francisco magnate to shadow his strangely acting wife. Seems that this chic and silent beauty, who the magnate says loves him very much, is given to mysterious wanderings in and about that dramatic city with the startling views—and, believe us, it is dramatic, as seen in color and Vista Vision in this film.

She goes to the Mission Dolores and places flowers on the grave of a famous San Francisco beauty who died years ago. Then she goes to the art museum, the Palace of the Legion of Honor in Golden Gate Park, and sits staring at the portrait of this beauty as though she were in a daze.

Slowly, the gum-shoe realizes that, somehow, this dizzy dame has spells when she thinks she's animated by the personality of this tragic lady of the past. And he has no doubt about it when, one day at Old Fort Point, beneath the Golden Gate Bridge, she flings herself

desperately and suicidally into the bay. Naturally, our fellow saves her and finds himself falling in love.

Still the mystery haunts him. What is this thing that invades the moody person of his loved one, the wife of another man? And how can he free her from this demon—and from her husband?

That's all we will tell you! Now—

Second hint: This fascinating mystery is based upon a tale written by the same fellows, Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, who wrote the story from which was taken that excellent French mystery, "Diabolique." That film, if you remember, told of a terribly devious plot to simulate a murder that didn't happen.

There! No more hints! Coming or not?

What more's to say? Well, nothing, except that "Vertigo" is performed in the manner expected of all performers in Hitchcock films. Mr. Stewart, as usual, manages to act awfully tense in a casual way, and Miss Novak is really quite amazing in—well, here is a bit of a hint—dual roles. Tom Helmore is sleek as the husband and Barbara Bel Geddes is sweet as the nice girl who loves the detective and has to watch him drifting away.

One more thing: there is a big hole—a big question-mark—at a critical point. It will stop you, if you're a quick thinker. But try not to be and enjoy the film.

VERTIGO, screen play by Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor; based on the novel by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac; produced and directed by Alfred Hitchcock for Paramount Pictures. At the Capitol (Broadway at 51st Street). Running time: 127 minutes.

John Ferguson James Stewart

Madeleine Kim Novak

Judy

Midge Barbara Bel Geddes

Galvin Elster Tom Helmore