movies...

By Jeff Stokes

Can you imagine a Hollywood production without women? "Beau Geste," to tell the truth, has just one. The scene is the local Algerian desert where she dances for about five minutes. After some line close-ups of a gyrttag girl the script to coax our hero Beau Geste (Guy Stodel in disguise) into something more interesting. In the finest tradition of the French Foreign Legion and of mid-19th-century American cowboys, he pens her off; like many a young Legionnaire, he has also sworn off the life that ran away from. In that other life was a woman and an unfaithful business partner, and so Beau Geste has washed his hands of life.

But as soon as he encounters French aristocrat Sergeant d'Aiglet (Telly Savalas), disciplinarian of the post, he gets tangled again. The story is built around their conflict: the rest of the Legionnaires, who are mentally afraid of the Sergeant, worship Beau Geste because he is the only one courageous enough to stand up to him. The American-born, whose real pseudonym is Graves, finds himself cast into a role he does not wish to play.

Conflicting characters Nevertheless, he is forced to play it by d'Aiglet himself. The Sergeant has a heart that is black through and through. He hates Graves with a passion and does everything he can to provoke an outbreak of temper from him.

as they go on, probing for each other's weak spots, through the struggle of the Legionnaires, and through several fierce attacks by the Arabs, both of them finally triumph over the other.

This may be one of the better adventure films to come out of Hollywood, with its beautiful color vistas of the Sahara Desert and its magnificent cast. Beau Geste's brother at the Alamo is played by Telly Savalas, who produced a funny clip reminiscent of David Crockett at the Alamo. In place of the music of the Alamo, the producer wrote into the movie some simplifying, unobtrusively drawn from the book.

Colored battles Notwithstanding its obviously Hollywood origin, the bad guys and fake characters were kept to a minimum. Even the hero had almost done something bad when he was in the United States. The battle scenes are certainly fulfilling, with soldiers falling off the lookout tower, plenty of blood and gore, gobs of smoke and fire. A couple of beautifully ironic touches, like the Sergeant's attempt to make casual conversation to a soldier: "Well, where are those big dreams now?" or something to that effect. No reply. Dead man tells no tales, as they say on the Spanish Main.

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