

"World of Suzie Wong" Is a Guaranteed Hit

"The World of Suzie Wong" premed at the Broadhurst Theatre last evening to one of the biggest advance sales on record. That's not surprising, for super-salesman David Merrick is its producer, and the eminent Joshua Logan its director. Then, too, word of what it's about has been getting around town.

Well, it all takes place in a sordid part of Hong Kong. The action centers around a hotel whose proprietor doesn't investigate his customers if they have the money for rooms used by the local courtesans who pick up sailors and other adventurous gents at the hostelry's bar. That's a rowdy hangout when the fleet's in.

ENTER A YOUNG Canadian

WINCHELL SAYS: "BIG HIT!"

with a small bankroll, bent on becoming an artist. He falls for the most attractive of the bar butterflies, but has to let her go to an Englishman with more moola and a frigid wife. But true love always wins out in the end. The painter starts selling pictures, and the girl loses the child—in a flood—for whom she's been saving her earnings.

In other words, this Pinkerton doesn't ditch his Chinese Madame Butterfly. In essence, it's a musi-

cal without the music. A switch on an old story, with philosophic overtones and a few laughs for good measure.

The hero of the evening for us was Jo Mielziner, who designed the stunning atmospheric, elaborate and fluid sets. And there's the rub. Paul Osborn's sketchy play, based on Richard Mason's novel, gets lost in them occasionally. It becomes overpowered by the backgrounds. And Dorothy Jeakin's costumes are eye-fillers.

France Nuyen is charming as the girl who'd never really known love until she met the hopeful young artist. She is exotic, vivacious when on the make, and sensitive at the right moments. William Shatner, the present-day Pinkerton, is a bit stiff in the earlier passages, but sparks up when he has to fight for what he wants.

RON RANDELL drew spontaneous applause with his portra-

of a chin-up Britisher finding release from a dull spouse in the Hong Kong sin dens. Sarah Marshall, Noel Leslie, Stephen Cheng, Takayo and Mary Mon Toy are other standouts in the cast. The suave Cheng garnered chuckles when he explained that his establishment was not a brothel, since that was against the law.

Congratulations
I am sure that
you'll be there for
at least 2 years
Ken