

THERE was a time when she just was another pretty face in just another movie flick, and if fans did remember her at all it was mostly for certain faint resemblances she bore to Amalia Fuentes or to everybody's idea of the girl-I-didn't-get. It was not that she could not act; her scripts never did give her enough to act on. She was the embodiment of the hero's girl—pretty, sweet and unobtrusive—rather like a pretty vase to complement a Picasso original.

And then one day, it seems, the vase decided to give Picasso a run for his money and everything was never the same again. Overnight,

the sweet girl came up from behind the hero's pants—and Helen Gamboa was at last a STAR. Where she used to mumble sweet-nothings to the handsome leading man, the girl now said it all in song. Where she used to traipsy shyly to his advances, she now did it with soul and body shakes.

It was as if the duckling has suddenly discovered her true colors—and she has not stopped singing and dancing since for the benefit of hungry movie fans. Helen today ranks among the top five names in local movies—male and female—standing second perhaps to the Fernando Poe, Jr.-Susan Roces colossus. And she is that kind of star whose box-office

appeal relies on the complementary pull of a good leading man.

Some movie writers have, in fact, suggested that Helen is most devoured by fans when she stands alone like the Alamo. Movie producers have given trying to make her part of a love team. In the typical Helen Gamboa film, the archetypal boy-meets-losses-gets-girl routine is still evident, but the swinging and the dancing are the essential ingredients.

The moment her body begins to move and her voice begins to make music, forget all your troubles and forget all your cares. And listen. Helen loves you. She belongs to any boy or girl or parent who comes in to her parlor. **FM**

