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 Program Two. Tuesday February 15th at 8.0. p.m. in the Marine Room on the 5th floor,  
 Hotel Capitol, 51st Street and Eighth Avenue, New York City.  
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"THE LUCKY DEVIL" Paramount, 1925. Produced and directed by Frank Tuttle; story by Byron Morgan, screenplay by Townsend Martin. 30 minutes. Starring RICHARD DIX and ESTHER RALSTON with Edna May Oliver.

Paramount had an odd habit in the twenties of avoiding plots in their films! Seven, eight, ten reels would be devoted to the thinnest of story-lines which rambled along slowly without ever getting anywhere. Of course, occasional films ("The Ten Commandments", for example) went to the other extreme and were over-loaded with story content, but it was typical of Paramount in this period to avoid substance and to make up the length with sheer padding. Sometimes the results were justified; Von Sternberg's "Docks of New York" has, basically, sufficient plot for a two-reeler and no more, and yet what a powerful, wonderful film it was! But the dearth of plot material really made itself felt in the programmers, denied the camouflage of big budgets and production values, and of this species "The Lucky Devil" is fairly typical. At seven reels the film was frankly a bit of a bore (as far as any 1925 film can really bore us today) and even this shortened version, condensed to two reels, is leisurely and uneventful. However, it is a pleasing little subject, a fine toned original print, and affords a welcome opportunity to renew acquaintance with the very beautiful Esther Ralston and the rugged Richard Dix. A good deal of the film is shot out of doors, and all told it makes for enjoyable light fare.

"MOVIELAND" Lupino Lane Comedies, 1926, for Educational Pictures. Written and directed by Norman Z. Tauxog. Photographed by Leonard Smith. Starring LUPINO LANE with Wallace Lupino, Glen Cavenar, Kathryn McGuire, Tom O'Grady. 30 minutes.

Although Lupino Lane is regarded primarily as a British music-hall and screen comedian, and is known chiefly for his "The Lambeth Walk", which is as British as they come, he probably did more film work in the United States than in England. He made a whole series of two-reelers for Educational in the mid-twenties, appeared prominently in D.W. Griffith's "Isn't Life Wonderful?", and over into the sound era, was top-lined opposite Lillian Roth in Lubitsch's "The Love Parade". "Movieland" is fast, non-stop slapstick which moves along at a breathless pace and is notable (a) for affording a free rein to Lupino for all his acrobatic stunts, and (b) for providing always fascinating shots of the interior of a studio in the silent period. Surprisingly, when Hollywood was at its peak as the centre of movie glamor and mystery, the comedy film-makers, and notably Sennett, were doing their considerable best to satirise it by debunking films themselves, and by ridiculing film production methods. The debunking in "Movieland" isn't as subtle as Sennett's, but it moves along just as quickly!

"THE FLOWER FAIRY" Pathé, France, 1900. Two minutes.

This little gem is a real find, and Johnny Allen deserves a vote of thanks from us all for resurrecting one of these wonderful old hand-colored films and making a 16mm color negative from it. It wasn't as simple back in 1900: every single frame of every single print had to be colored, meticulously, by hand. Despite the great beauty of this little film (and the labs today have recreated wonderfully well the quality and texture of the original colors) it was still but a beginning in the hand-coloring field. Ten years later, the technique had been perfected until it was a fine art, and looking today at a film like the German "The Margrave's Daughter" (a full eleven minutes, still laboriously done frame by frame!) one finds it hard to believe that the film was not photographed in color. To say that, by those later standards, "The Flower Fairy" is a little primitive does it no injustice; it is a really fine little subject. In line with our policy of inviting guest program annotators, we were pleased to find that the enthusiasm of Charles Shibuk so matched our own that he promptly sat down and added some comments of his own: "This two-minute short really demands serious attention. 'The Flower Fairy' is one of the earliest examples of color in the film - and what beautiful color! It can make technicolor hide its head in shame! The film itself is a static display of a girl's flower garden, presented to us through dissolves, stop motion and double exposure. For both technique and sheer pictorial beauty, this 55 year old film is a film historian's choice item and a thorough delight".

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"HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW" Butcher's Film Service Ltd., England, 1954. Written and directed by James M. Anderson; narrator: Fredric Grisewood. Produced by Henry Fisher; camera - Billie Williams. Print loaned through the courtesy of Gordon Films Inc., New York. 30 minutes.

During the war years, a new kind of filmic horror was thrust upon British exhibitors and

paying customers -- the three-reel quota featurette. They were designed solely to meet the exhibitors' legal needs for more British features, the law requiring that a certain percentage of all product booked must be British. Anything over 3000 Feet ranked as a full feature, and thus the British cinemas became submerged beneath a welter of the most unutterably boring so-called "interest" films running for approximately 35 minutes, and dealing almost exclusively with the sort of fodder usually relegated to lesser-grade one-reelers -- such fascinating subjects as the training of dogs, the making of barrels and the pickling of herrings were dealt with ad nauseum, and had more of an effect on British morale than the robot bombs. The passing of time, the resentment of a long-suffering populace and the increase in the production of regular British "B" second features put a stop to the wholesale production of these quickies years ago, and only one good thing emerged from all the years of suffering. Public and exhibitors alike had been attuned to three-to-four reel documentaries, and provided the subject matter was of sufficient merit, there was never any trouble in securing bookings. Films recapturing the past via old film -- whether the past be historical, political, cinematic or otherwise -- have always been tremendously popular in England, much more so than in America where films like "Fifty Years before your Eyes" have been comparatively rare. Productions along similar lines in England, often concentrating in some detail on a mere ten-year span, have been quite numerous, and many of the films have dealt almost exclusively with the early days of the movies.

HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW -- given its American premiere by this society -- is a rather off-beat member of this cycle of films. It deals with collectors -- of old posters, match-box covers, cigarette cards and similar curios -- and of course, film, which for illustration purposes, laps over into the other categories too. Since we have many such collectors in our midst, we know you'll find the film a fascinating and nostalgic one. It has a good deal of padding of course, to sustain it to a four-reel length, but we are concerned not with its merits as a documentary after all, but with the interesting and rare things that it contains. It was written and directed by James M. Anderson, a prominent British film historian and collector, who has made one or two other films devoted exclusively to the history of the motion picture.

A collection of postcards is responsible for introducing rare sequences from old films of Lillian Gish, Mary Pickford and Maurice Costello. Wonderfully preserved newsreel footage not only recalls the triumphs of Colonel Cody and the Wright Brothers, but also the less spectacular but perhaps more fascinating records of England as its leisure -- at the Henley Regatta, at Brighton, at a monster carnival. Here too, we have an extract from Sarah Bernhardt's film of "Omnibus", and photographic records of many of the top theatrical and variety hits of the day -- "East Lynne" and "The Curse of Gold" being typical of the former, Marie Lloyd and escape artist Harry Houdini of the latter. Amazingly well preserved posters of the period. At least two of these sequences are reproduced from what were originally hand-colored films. The hectic days of the serial film's peak are admirably recalled by fine highlights from "Zigomar", Pearl White's "Plunder", "The Voice on the Wire" and other still-thrilling chapter-plays. Smooth transitions from a collection of cigarette-cards remind us of the value of the cinema in recording, or recreating, history. Interesting newsreel footage of King Edward the Seventh, Czar Nicholas the Second and others are followed by intriguing extracts from enticing-looking epics. (Alas, many of these are not identified by name, providing additional food for thought for historians in our midst!) Included in this section is an early British film dealing with the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson, the Battle of Waterloo, a well-staged Charge of the Light Brigade (from "Balaclava"), the San Francisco earthquake and some really spectacular civil-war footage. (Apart from the use of a phoney backdrop, it is almost worthy of Griffith). Finally, a visit to London Transport's Lost Property office proves amply rewarded when, amidst a clutter of the usual lost articles, an ancient projector and film are discovered. A rather nice touch this, both projector and can look ancient and rusted. We still shudder when we think of the otherwise admirable "Magic Movie Moments" from Warners which got off to a rather phoney start by showing endless rows of thirty-year old films gracefully reclining in brand-new Eastman cans in a slick projection room. Needless to say, all of the cans must have been empty, and their alleged contents, if still in existence, were doubtless rotting away in some hole in the ground! "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow" finishes off with a vigorous early Italian slapstick comedy, following the classic pattern of its time -- a hectic chase, with more and more people joining in the melee as the film progresses.

"WHERE THE NORTH BEGINS" Warner Brothers, 1923. Producer: Harry Rapf; director: Chester M. Franklin. Story: Fred Myton and Millard Webb. 80 minutes.  
Starring: RIN TIN TIN, Walter McGrail, Claire Adams, Charles Stevens, Pat Hartigan, Myrtle Owens.

It's a well-known fact that Rinty really paid off the mortgage for the freres Warner on many a costly flop, and this grand little melodrama is a good sample of how and why.

Obviously a cheaply made picture, it nevertheless delivers the entertainment goods with a vengeance, mixing sentiment and action, throwing in a baby for good measure (dogs and tots always meant more to the sticks than drawing rooms and boudoir dramas) and working up to a rousing action climax. And despite its cheapness, it isn't a shoddy production either: the photography is a joy, shots are nicely composed, and the camera is consistently mobile. The print uses amber and rose tints throughout, and the few "exterior" sets constructed in the studio put to shame a lot of the sets that are dished up today. For Rinty, it is a comparatively leisurely film with less of the frenzied derring-do than usual; nevertheless Rinty gets in some good stunts, performs heroically in the climax, and as always, acts to the hilt. Here he has the opportunity to run the gamut of love, hate, jealousy, grief and joy: one scene in which circumstantial evidence indicates that he has eaten the baby (!) brings forth some really top-grade acting. Make no mistake about it, Rinty was more than just a well-trained animal (later in the year when you see Dynamite, Universal's equivalent, you'll know what we mean) but a really fine little trouper, and, with Shirley Temple, one of Hollywood's most remarkable stars.

Darryl F. Zanuck got his start writing scripts for Rinty; this is one that he didn't write, and, coincidentally, it is one of the more sober scripts with which the canine star was confronted. The two writers were Fred Myton (later one of the most prolific writers of cheap PRG and Monogram westerns) and Millard Webb, who soon after became a director ("The Sea Beast", etc.) Producer Harry Rapp, who died in 1949, became a slick maker of A-minus and B-plus action pictures, two of his last being "Gallant Bess" and "Scene of the Crime" for MGM. Director Chester Franklin continued as such on more imposing properties, and also became one of the best 2nd unit directors in the business, specialising in animal material ("The Yearling"). Good old Charles Stevens, here seen as "The Fox", one of the lead heavies, is still going strong in minor roles, "Killer Leopard" being one of his latest. Our print incidentally is in fine shape, and is the full original six reels.

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OUR NEXT PROGRAM: March 15th. Thomas Ince's BARBARA FRIETCHIE, with Florence Vidor, Edmund Lowe. We have a fine toned original print on this, in its original length. Since this subject runs a full two hours, we will be playing only one or two carefully selected shorts with it, to be announced in due course on our program notes mailed in advance.  
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Thoughts In Passing .... our apologies to those of our members who were confused by a typing error in our last notes which had our second show scheduled before our first! Several members were kind enough to write and point it out, the modern element appropriately symbolised by our contemporary "Film Experimentalists" who cryptically wrote "You goofed!" ... other sad errors that should be corrected: Hart's "Wild Bill Hickok" was of course directed by Cliff Smith, not Lambert Hillier - and it is Wesley Barry, not Junior Coghlan, who appears in "Skyscrapers" .... silliest story of the year - that "Stagecoach" is to be taken off the market so that it can be remade! .. where do these idiotic stories start? .... Back issues of FILM CULTURE and FILMS IN REVIEW can always be purchased at our meetings. Getting a new magazine started is always a tough proposition, so FILM CULTURE, which is certainly worth supporting, can use all your support, both moral and financial ... the new issue should be out before our next show, and good things are promised .... when Film Experimentalists played "The Birth of a Nation" recently, this society helped out a little by providing program notes. This is quite an elaborate brochure, running to five pages, and containing additional material not used in our own notes last year. Spare copies are available, and we'll be glad to send one to any member interested enough to drop us a postcard .... watch the Museum of the City of New York for an interesting series of Saturday afternoon shows, among them D.W.Griffith's "Musketiers of Pig Alley" with Walter Miller on March 5th., and Doug Fairbanks' wonderful "Manhattan Madness" on March 19th. This is one of his best - and as far as we know, admissions are free! ... too bad the Museum had to cancel its planned evening screenings of "Blood and Sand", "Man's Genesis" etc. Let's hope the plan will be revived soon! .... are you as annoyed as we are that Columbia hacked "Member of the Wedding" down to 65 minutes for release? ... incidentally, a complete print of Ford's "The Sun Shines Bright" can be obtained on 16mm. If enough members share our dismay at the missing three reels here in New York, drop me a line and we will schedule the film for a future program .... sad to report that the new version of "Alraune" with Hildegard Kneff and Von Stroheim is quite atrocious. Not even Von can save it, although he has some good moments .... signs of the times: a nickelodeon in Hollywood, playing old movies, has just installed a giant wide screen! We assure our members that this will not be repeated at our society. We haven't even gotten around to talkies yet! ... three eras of glamor on view in Allied Artists' new CinemaScope epic of Wyatt Earp, "Wichita" - Gertrude Astor from the twenties, Mae Clarke from the flaming thirties, and today's Vera Miles. By today's standards Vera isn't bad - but we'll still vote for Mae (and for Betty Bronson, Laura la Plante and a few others) ... glad to report that Alice Joyce ("Beau Geste", "Dancing Mothers") has recovered from a serious illness and is out of hospital ... the Swedish nudity cult seems to be growing: Ingmar Bergman's recent "Monica" sets a new low in pointless nudity and miscellaneous sex. It's nicely photographed, but that's all.....

Program Notes and enquiries - William K. Everson: Manhattan Towers Hotel  
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