THE NEW THEODORE HUFF MEMORIAL FILM SOCIETY

Program for Tuesday December 20th, 1955, at 7:30 in the Marine Room, 5th floor, Capitol Hotel, Eighth Avenue & 51st St., New York City

"HIS NEW PROFESSION"

Keystones, released August 31, 1911, written, directed by and starring CHARLES CHAPLIN.

This very rarely seen Chaplin (it has also been known as "The Good For Nothing" and "Helping Himself") is certainly one of the best of his Keystone group. Coming some two thirds of the way through the series (it was the 26th film, with ten more to follow before the move to Essanay) it contains more genuine humor and less crude vulgarity than most of the Keystones. The delightfully handled casual sadism of Charlie's treatment of the wheel-chair invalid produces some very funny moments, and Charlie Chase is also on hand to add to the general mayhem.

"SATURS, BEWARE" Hal Roach - Pathe 1927

Starring Laurel and Hardy, but made before Hal Roach and the rest of his crew were releasing through MGM, this film provides an interesting blueprint of what was to come when the popular comedians got fully into their stride. Here their material is typical, with Hardy largely the butt of laurel's well-meaning ineptitude, but as yet they are not welded into a cohesive team. Each performs on his own, with Laurel getting the bulk of the footage and most of the laughs. One of the funniest situations sees a midget card-shark posing as a baby and cleaning Laurel out in a poker game! Lupe Velez, incidentally, has a few scenes as an extra. The main titles and credits are missing from our print, which is otherwise in good condition and quite complete.

"AUNTIE'S PORTRAIT"

Witagraph 1914, Directed by George D. Baker, written by Sam SMILES.

This delightful little film with Mr. and Mrs Sydney Drew is one of the best of their sophisticated domestic comedies. The plot is slight and avoids slapstick in favor of more subtle gags and the wonderfully flustered panoply of Mr. Drew. This film is a wonderful come-Back to those who claim that comedy in 1914 was strictly a matter of farcical Bennett knockabout.

PAINT AND POWDER

Produced by HUNT STROMBERG

The Cast
Harry Nolan ................. BLAINE HAMMERSTEIN
Jimmy Everett ............... THEODORE VON ELTZ
Mark Kelsey ................. John S. Polka
Philip Andrews ............ STUART HOLMES
Iago Pike .................... RUSSELL SIMPSON
Old man at party ........... TOM HICKETS

- 90 minutes -

NATIONAL MEMORIAL FILM SOCIETY

Program for Tuesday December 20th, 1955, at 7:30 in the Marine Room, 5th floor, Capitol Hotel, Eighth Avenue & 51st St., New York City

"HELL'S HINGES" (1916) Directed by and starring WILLIAM S. HART, with Clara Williams, Robert McKim and Louise Glum. And other film to be announced.

- 15 minutes -

"SALERS, BEARE" Hal Roach - Pathe 1927

- 30 minutes -

Starring Laurel and Hardy, but made before Hal Roach and the rest of his crew were releasing through MGM, this film provides an interesting blueprint of what was to come when the popular comedians got fully into their stride. Here their material is typical, with Hardy largely the butt of laurel's well-meaning ineptitude, but as yet they are not welded into a cohesive team. Each performs on his own, with Laurel getting the bulk of the footage and most of the laughs. One of the funniest situations sees a midget card-shark posing as a baby and cleaning Laurel out in a poker game! Lupe Velez, incidentally, has a few scenes as an extra. The main titles and credits are missing from our print, which is otherwise in good condition and quite complete.

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In presenting "PAINT AND POWDER" today we are not doing so on the grounds that it is a "rediscovered masterpiece". One of the prime functions of this society is to bring back the good and interesting programmers which, because they are no more than "good" and because they often lack the established silent "names", are largely ignored by the operators of other film societies and large film archives. "PAINT AND POWDER" was discovered by accident in a film library in New Jersey, where it appears to have been lying on a shelf for a couple of decades! Certainly this print, an original, is in such first-class condition that it seems to have been run hardly at all.

Like Herbert Brenon's "Dancing Mothers", "Paint and Powder" is a formula picture that lifts itself out of the rut by unusual ingredients - in this case some off-beat plot elements, some slick cutting (especially in the sequence where the heroine is threatened with asault by Stuart Holmes) and some really fine photography. Although the film isn't a commentary on the jazz-age, as were the Sue Carol and Clara Bow films of the same year, it inevitably reflects many of the more colorful aspects of the roaring twenties. One wild, drunken party is an especial highlight, and reminds one more of Stroheim's spread in "The Merry Widow" than of the night life of New York's theatrical crowd. The show business background naturally brings in a number of typical and nostalgic dance routines of the period, and there are some excellent shots of a clean and attractive Times Square by day and by night. The film is interesting too in its occasional slight (and simple) attempts at symbolism; for example it pre-dates Paul Fejos's "Broadway" in its impressionistic opening of a giant figure of Destiny hovering over Manhattan. It also pre-dates Humeau's "Sunrise" in the use of one gag routine, possibly not original even here, but developed one step further in the Humeau film.

Not a world-beater at the boxoffice, "Paint and Powder" nevertheless did well on release in 1925, and the trade papers in particular commented on, and praised, Stroheim's inclusion of the "off-beat" even at the risk of lessening popular appeal. For an independent production, the film is unusually expensive. The cast is large, and the sets as ornate and luxurious as one would expect in a comparable film from the major companies.

Elaine Hammerstein, formerly a Selznick star, was here trying to make something of a comeback, and gives a very appealing performance. However, she retired from the screen a year later when she married Los Angeles businessman James Walter Hays. Both were killed in an automobile accident in 1918. (This latter information from an article by Roy A. Uselton in the current "Films in Review"). Of the other cast members, few are still active in films, Theodore Von Eltz, whose resemblance to Edmund Lowe is quite uncanny, hasn't appeared in a film for some time but occasionally reads narration for documentaries. Russell Simpson of course is perennially active, especially in John Ford productions. His latest appearance is in William Wyler's "The Friendly Persuasion" (which also brings Mary Carr back to the screen) Stuart Holmes, one of the silent screen's most unpleasant villains, is an extra in most MGM productions, and wandered silently through many scenes of "The Cabaret".

Producer-director Hunt Stromberg has had an interesting career. Starting as a newspaper reporter, he soon became a well-known sports writer for the St. Louis Times, and then was appointed advertising and publicity director for Sam Goldwyn in New York. In 1919 he went to California for a tie-up with Thomas H. Ince, with whom he remained as a personal representative until 1923. Stromberg then entered independent production with a series of Doris May comedy dramas for Metro release, and then switched to P.D.C. and other independent activity. During this period he directed such films as "Paint and Powder", "The Siren of Seville" and "Fire Patrol", and supervised many Priscilla Dean and Harry Carey vehicles. (One of his Carey westerns, "The Prairie Pirate", will be shown by the society in 1953). Then, in 1925 he began a long alliance with Metro, first as an associate and then as a full producer. Among the many films he worked on were "White Shadows in the South Seas", "Eskimo", "Red Dust", "Treasure Island", "BombsHELL", "Our Dancing Daughters" and (the last, in 1932) "I Married an Angel". After a period during the war with the Treasury Dept., Stromberg set up his own production unit again in 1943-44, releasing through UA. ("Lady of Burlesque", "Guest in the House" etc.). His output more recently, i.e. "Mask of the Avenger" for Columbia release, has been less interesting and a far cry from his former glories at MGM.

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Committee of the Film Societies: Dorothy Lovell, Edward Connor, Richard Kraft, William K. Everson
Program Notes and enquiries: Wm. K. Everson, Manhattan Towers Hotel, 2166 Broadway, New York C.24
SOME THOUGHTS ON OUR PAST YEAR ... AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Looking back on our first year (or at least, our first year after a lengthy close-down period) we think our record hasn’t been too bad. We have shown, apart from many shorts, twenty one features that haven’t been shown at any other film society (or theatre) during the year – or for that matter for many many years – and we have had three U.S. "premières".

Our membership has grown, and we’re fortunate in having a group that really loves old films – the bread-and-butter films as well as the classics. Financially we’re still in the red, but not seriously. Our operation is such that we could probably never come out ahead without a big increase in membership and a change in policy to secure that membership. Since we don’t want that, we consider slightly underbalanced books a small price to pay for continuing as we are. For the record, of our 14 shows so far, seven have either broken even or made a profit of a few dollars, and seven have lost money. One couldn’t ask for a better average than that! Tonight’s showing is not included in those 14 of course.

Most successful shows of the year (in terms of attendance) – in first place (surprisingly) "Othello"; second the jazz-age combination ("My Lady of Whims", "Walking Back"); third – The Silent Serial. Biggest disaster of the year (again, surprisingly) – "The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle" — which we showed primarily because we thought it was a sure-fire attraction to help recoup our losses. Instead it doubled them — but we’re still glad we played it! Enigma of the year — the surprisingly small turnout for the very fine "Cain and Artemis" — only half of the audience that came to "The Ghost That Never Returns".

For the future ... .....

"WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS" is a top priority, and by the time these notes reach you we may have already set a date. The print is all paid for and we’re merely awaiting delivery, promised for "any day now". As soon as it arrives, a special screening will be arranged over and above our regular schedule.

When we re-started our operations last January, we listed many films that were scheduled for showing by the society, and so far we have screened approximately 50% of them. One or two – i.e., "Pragmatist of an Empire" — were deleted from our schedule because of subsequent showings at the Museum of Modern Art or elsewhere. But for the most part, the films announced definitely will be shown. Many – i.e., "The Prairie Pirate", "Dobbsy and Son", "The Hessian Renegades" etc. — are prints that are owned by this society. Thus when prints like "Lorna Doone" and "Where the North Begins" come along – prints that are so often available only at specific times – it is obviously safer to play them right away, and postpone the subjects that are always available and can be played at any time. In due course, we will get through all the films named on that earlier list — although we already have shown the best items on that list.

For the future: we’re still after that elusive print of THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH, which seems to be most in demand ...HELL’S HINKIES, next month, is in our opinion one of the most important films we have ever shown, and is quite certainly one of William S. Hart’s finest productions. Non-Hart partisans who have always regarded him as merely a western star will have their eyes opened — wide — by this remarkable production. Another good program scheduled for February or March consists of two delightful films of 1923/24 — "HALLELUJAH I’M A BUM", the Lewis Milestone film with Rodgers and Hart music, from a story by Ben Hecht, and starring Al Jolson, Harry Langdon, Madge Evans, Frisch Hareman and Chester Conklin, and HIS DOUBLE LIFE with Lilian Gish and Roland Young. We have hesitated to play these films before because both have been shown on television — but as many members have either not seen them, or want to see them again free of commercials, that it seemed a good idea to double-bill them on one nostalgic program of early thirties song and sentiment, "HALLELUJAH I’M A BUM" is, we hasten to add, the cut reissue under the title "Heart of New York" — but it is still a wonderful and exhilarating film. We recently screened the complete version in England (unfortunately it is not available here) and thus in our notes will be able to give a blow-by-blow account of the contents of the missing 12 minutes. Happily, the cuts are not jarring. More good things on the way in early ’56 include a Henry B. Walthall "festival" — "THE COMPASSION", "ROOSTERMAN" and "THE FLIPEAF OF PATE".

Good film-hunting in the New Year!

W.K.E.