First of all, we're glad to report that we have moved, permanently (as far as any film society is permanent!) to the Adelphi Hall. Here we are free of union intervention, and we have considerably more elbow room that at any time in our history. We think that these two advantages more than compensate for the fact that our new location is not quite as central as some of our previous ones have been.

Thanks again, to Mr. Len Hannagan, for his cooperation in furnishing the room at West 57th Street, and thus enabling us to keep operating until we arranged this permanent set-up.

As before, one show will always be on the third Tuesday of each month. The second show may vary, but will probably, as hitherto, be one week later. HOWEVER, OUR SCREENINGS MAY NOT ALWAYS BE IN THE SAME ROOM. This month, certainly, they are not. Of course, the room will always be designated both in these notes, and on the notice-board in the foyer of the Adelphi Hall, just inside the door.

John Adams of the Museum of Modern Art advises that there are still a few vacant seats for the special Saturday morning series. This series is devoted to the running through of everything in the museum's vaults (other than films to be shown in the auditorium in the regular way), and after a very auspicious first year of screenings, the second year is now about to get under way. Among the items coming up are several Fairbanks, a group of wartime documentaries, Betty Bronson's wonderful "Peter Pan" (worth the admission fee in itself!), and a number of rare American silents - Colleen Moore, etc. Fee for the whole series is $20 (about 75¢ a show!) and those interested should contact either John Adams or Christopher Bishop at the Museum, 11 West 53rd Street.

THREE PROGRAMS OF SILENT WESTERNS

This series is not in any way designed to outline the history of the western film; none of the early films of Griffith and Ince are included, nor are such western milestones as "The Covered Wagon", "The Iron Horse", "Wagon Tracks" and "Three Bad Men", which we hope, most of you are familiar with.

Rather it is a coverage of some of the top-liners among western stars, and a contrast of the often striking differences in their methods of movie-making. Our coverage is not completely comprehensive, since there are one or two unavoidable gaps. Art Accord material is rare even on 35mm, and apparently non-existent on 16mm. None of the great Buck Jones westerns for Fox appear to have survived. Nor have any of the Tom Mix vehicles for Fox, other than a couple ("Riders of the Purple Sage" & "Sky High") held by the Museum of Modern Art. Rather than show Mix in an unrepresentative vehicle (i.e., a Selig one-reeler) or a talkie, it seemed fairer not to show him at all. In the future, we hope to devote at least one show to the sound western, and then both Mix and Jones can be included more easily.

Each show has been arranged to illustrate as much contrast as possible, and happily it has also worked out that each show runs exactly 12 reels - or three hours. There are of course a number of interesting but not vital westerns that we had no room for in this series - films with Yakima Canutt, Jack Perrin, Bob Steele and other second-string western stars. We'll fit the best of these into later shows.

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Note: The rather arbitrary statement is made on the last page that LAW AND ORDER and TUMBLEWEEDS were the last great westerns. This is not so, and not the intended statement either. Space ran out before we could expand, discuss THE WAGONMASTER etc.
APRIL 16

PROGRAM ONE: Adelphi Hall, 74 5th Avenue (off 11th Street), Room 10-C, at 7:30.

"THE RETURN OF DRAW EGAN" (A Triangle-Key Bee Production) Rel: October 5 1926; 5 reels;
Directed by William S. Hart; Scenario by C. Gardner Sullivan;
photographed by Joseph August; Art Directors: Robert Brunton.

Draw Egan (William S. Hart); Myrtle Buckton (Margery Wilson); Poppy (Louise Claum);
Arizona Joe (Robert McKim); Nat Buckton (J.P. Lockney); and Robert Kortman.

Although an early, and "vintage", Hart, "The Return of Draw Egan" was already Hart's 33rd film. It's typical of the best of his early work - taut, incisively directed, good strong
meat with the inevitable Hart sentiment, but sentiment that was not as protracted
and unrestrained as it became in later pictures. Hart's love of the West, and his
insistence on an absolutely authentic representation of it, shows in every foot of the film. The sense of dust and space, the rugged feeling of an austere, dangerous existence,
these are elements that Hart captured so magnificently, and which have vanished from the
facile and stereotyped western of today. Directorially, the film is very interesting too,
and shows Hart to be a man of few tricks but a thorough understanding of cinema sense; the
one time in the film that the camera trucks, it does so to tremendously telling effect.
The photography by Joe August, one of Ford's favorite cameramen, is top-notch too. And as
an example of how Hart's influence is still felt, compare this film with a Bill Elliott
vehicle of remarkable similarity only a year or two ago, "Topeka". "The Return of Draw
Egan" encompasses most of Hart's favorite scenes, including an almost immediate desire
for reformation and soul-cleansing when he first glimpses the heroine. Since, in this case
it is lovely Margery Wilson - "Brown Eyes", of "Intolerance" - it is quite understandable.
This is a fine, gutsy western in the old tradition, one of the best of the Hart-Ince
group for Triangle. And we recommend no late arrivals, as it starts with a whale of a gunfight
and chase!

"THE INDIANS ARE COMING" (A Universal serial) 1930; Directed by Henry MacRae; starring
TIM McCoy, with Allene Ray, Francis Ford, Wilbur McCaughey, Bud
Osborne, Lafe McKee, Edmund Cobb.

Extract from episode four; all of the 12th (and final) episode.

Midway between Hart and Fred Thomson stood McCoy. McCoy, like Hart, had a genuine western
background, and in his early westerns at least (particularly those for MGM, directed by
Van Dyke) strove to inject authentic western lore into his movies. But McCoy was more of
a showman than Hart, and tended to exploit his western background rather than use it.
He made some fine sound westerns - for Columbia, Monogram, sundry independents like PRC and
Victory - and some very bad ones too. He never quite achieved the stature of Hart or Mix,
and was a bit too slick in dress - and too hammy in his acting - to create a completely
convincing picture of a westerner. Nevertheless, he was one of the best of the second
echelon of western stars. "THE INDIANS ARE COMING" was both Universal's last silent, and
first sound, serial, being released in two versions. The exploitation of sound was shown
in a plot which stressed a romantic interest more than usual, achieved end-of-episode climaxes
on purely dramatic, as well as melodramatic, notes. This is particularly evident in the
last chapter, which comes to its conclusion on a long dialogue episode. (Our print is the
silent, titled version). Incidentally, the quite elaborate battle scenes at the beginning
of episode 12 are actually stock from an earlier Universal film, "Vanishing Frontier" - what
in "The Indians Are Coming" is a sort of the Indians was, in that picture, the massacre
of General Custer at Little Big Horn.

"THUNDERING HOOFPS" (F.B.O., 1927) 5 reels; Directed by Al Rogell; story by
Marion Jackson; photographed by Ross Fisher;
Art Director - Frank Ormont; starring Fred Thomson and Silver King,
with Ann May, Charles Mailes, Willie Fung.

Fred Thomson was the very antithesis of Bill Hart, and made the type of westerns that old
Bill thoroughly detested. They were slick, streamlined and showy, specialised in action
for its own sake, and presented the customary glamorized picture of the West. Fred Thomson's clothing too, had a dude-like appearance to it, especially his gun belt and white boots, which look like the cheap merchandise sold to those horrible little youngsters who line up outside Madison Square Garden every year for the rodeos. Thomson himself, however, was far from a phony - he had a pleasant personality, and was a fine athlete. Most of the tricky stunts in this film he performs without a double; Thomson was understandably tremendously popular, and his religious background (he had trained for the ministry) and thoroughly "clean" and moral code of living earned him the support not only of youngsters, but also of pressure groups - at a time when Hollywood was having its trouble with scandal. From these FBO films he went on to specials at Paramount ("Jesse James") and died at the end of the silent era from a sudden illness. (There is a typical Hollywood mystery surrounding his death, his ghost having reportedly appeared shortly afterwards).

FBO (Film Booking Offices), an outgrowth of Robertson-Cole, and forerunner of RKO Radio, made some fine little westerns with Fred, and with Bob Steele, Tim Tyler and Tom Mix. They were fast, slick, and loaded with real production values. "Thundering Hooves," far from being Thomson's best, is still a grand western. The action is beautifully staged, the sets are solid and convincing, the photography crystal-clear throughout, and often beautifully composed. Our print too, is in a fine state of preservation - a perfect and lovely toned original.

Even for a deliberately tongue-in-cheek Fairbanksian western, "Thundering Hooves" has some surprisingly hard-to-take moments - in particular, the wonder horse, Silver King's, burying of Fred Thomson's father is a trifle incredible, and his placing of a cross and flowers on the grave strain belief even more! However, perhaps one shouldn't apply a Bill Hart yardstick to a Fred Thomson vehicle. A runaway stagecoach episode is particularly well done, and the climax in a Mexican bullring makes for a really rousing finish, and some top-notch athletic stunt work.

PROGRAM TWO: Adelphi Hall, April 23rd, 7:30, in room 11-B.

"ANOTHER MAN'S BOOTS": (Ayon, 1922) 5 reels, directed by William J. Craft, scenario by Daniel F. Whitcomb, photographed by Edward T. Rastbrook.

Starring FRANCIS FORD with Elvira Weil, Frank Lanning, Robert Kortman.

Although an active director of, and actor in, westerns and serials through the 20's, Francis Ford's most important contributions to westerns were much earlier, when, as a director under Tom Ince, he made fine little subjects on the Battle of the Alamo and kindred material. "Another Man's Boots" is shown not so much as an example of Ford's acting, but rather as an example of the quite creditable little "B" westerns made by the really cheap independent outfits. (Everything else in our series is on a much higher budgetary plane). Of course, many of these "B" westerns were just plain awful - a little horror with Al Hoxie called "The Ace of Clubs" is worse than anything even FRC turned out in the sound era. "Another Man's Boots" is neither top independent standard, not, quite certainly, bottom. It is a good, reliable example of the general standard of the better independents - and as such quite an interesting film.

It has the usual signs of budget-paring - no expensive running-inserts, no big cast, The episode of the heroine's runaway horse is done without the elaborate camera angles and careful inter-cutting that made the runaway in "Thundering Hooves" so exciting. In fact, it follows exactly the same pattern as the runaway in Edwin S. Porter's "Life of An American Policeman," in which the two riders gallop into long-shot static camera set-ups. But, it's an intelligently handled little film, neatly put together, and with a workmanlike plot which seems to be a plagiarism from Hart's "Square Deal Sanderson" (which may explain why Aywon never copyrighted the film!) Francis Ford obviously emulates Hart in his acting too - especially in his romantic closeups. Within its limited budget, the film is very well made; the camerawork is clean and attractive,
and the fights are quite well staged. There are some interesting comedy bits too, touching on America's prohibition era, and the fact that in the twenties it was considered a sign of effeminacy for a man to wear a wrist-watch! The print is another fine toned original.


In his early two-reelers at Universal, Hoot Gibson established a pattern that he adhered to throughout his career - a light-hearted, bantering style, villainy that never attained unduly serious proportions, and a good deal of comedy. Yet it was a fairly realistic style, and one that at no times approached the ludicrous self-satire of some of the Rogers and Autry musical westerns. Gibson could ride well, and look after himself in a scrap, but like the films of George O'Brien, his westerns were often quite light on action. There's relatively little action in this one, and perhaps because of it, "Fight It Out" emerges as a very refreshing and enjoyable off-beat little western. The print is a toned original.

"RED RAIDERS" (First National, 1927) Directed by Al Rogell; supervised by Harry Joe Brown; story by Marion Jackson; starring Ken Maynard with J.C. McGowen, Chief Yowlachie, "Tarzan", Ben Corbett and Lafe McKee.

"Red Raiders" is another example of the really slick little westerns that were being turned out in the 20's. Star considerations apart, "Red Raiders" is quite as big a picture as "Stagecoach" and some other "supers". The action is staged on a massive scale, and the whole picture is dedicated to the proposition that action matters far more than plot. Indeed, there really is no plot in this one - merely a situation - and no real villainy. The film has no white heavies, and the Indians are, as always, collective and largely unmotivated villains. However, it is worthy of note that they are presented sympathetically and as human beings - a rare note in the twenties, mid-way between Ince's "Heart of an Indian" and Delmer Daves' "Broken Arrow". The titles, incidentally, are full of little historical footnotes a la Griffith, and the cast includes one Indian whom, a title informs us, is the sole survivor of the Little Big Horn days.

Ken Maynard was at his peak when "Red Raiders" was made, and an absolutely first-rate action performer. His riding stunts, even when completely unnecessary, are really something to see. Maynard was less effective in the talkies, due to poor acting ability, a tendency to ad-lib much of his dialogue, and an unfortunate over-fondness for liquor. After some good films in the very early thirties, he began to decline rapidly - although still active, assisted by many doubles, until the mid-forties. Not a great western, "Red Raiders" is a show-case for Maynard's amazing riding skill, and for the application of the "running insert" or riding closeup. Note how much more exciting the chase scenes are, thanks to this dramatic device, than the chases - done with simple pans - in our co-feature, "Another Man's Boots". Of course, "Red Raiders" was proving this for the first time - Griffith had done it years earlier in "The Birth of a Nation", and even before that. Incidentally, the film is another collaboration between writer Jackson and director Al Rogell, who also worked on "Thundering Hooves". Rogell gets a surprising amount of variety into his runaway stagecoach scenes - both films have such a sequence, each is quite different from the other.

"Red Raiders" - another good toned print - is a wonderfully exciting and spectacular western, one of the best we've run across in years.
PROGRAM THREE: Adelphi Hall, April 30th, 7.30, in Room 10-D.

"THE PRAIRIE PIRATE" (P.D.C., 1925) 5 reels; Directed by Edmund Mortimer; produced by Hunt Stromberg; from the story "The Yellow Seal" by W.C. Tuttle; scenario by Robert Anthony Dillon; edited by Harry L. Decker.

Starring HARRY CAREY, with Fred Kohler, Lloyd Whitlock, Jean Dumas, Trilby Clark, Robert Edeson.

One of the western stars most firmly in the Hart tradition was Harry Carey, although in actual fact Carey's taciturn characterisation predates Hart in that he was active in Biograph westerns for Griffith some years before Hart made his first western. Perhaps partly because his obviously leathery and non-youthful appearance prevented it, Carey avoided the streamlined westerns that Maynard and Thomson made so popular. Hart's were always westerns of the old school, sometimes a little slow on action, but always strong on plot. There was a definite sign of Hart in those plots too; Carey's "Satan Town" was a very creditable lesser "Hell's Hinges", and a respect for womanhood was a staple ingredient with both Hart and Carey. This extends, in "The Prairie Pirate", to another Hart plot motivation - the death of the hero's sister, and the tracking down of the man responsible. There are signs that "The Prairie Pirate" was intended as more than just another western; the mounting is elaborate, and the film gets off to a really punchy opening. Somehow after that it descends into formula, and one gets the impression that the film was running over budget, and had to be finished off in a hurry by cheapening certain sequences. (The waterfall episode is not built up quite the way one expects). Nevertheless, "The Prairie Pirate" is a well above average cather, and a fine print with amber and blue tones throughout. Incidentally, Richard Talmadge can be seen doubling for Harry Carey in the climactic reel. Fred Kohler was always one of the very best western villains, and is on top form in this one.

"TUMBLEWEEDS" (Hart-United Artists, 1925; reissued in 1939 with a spoken foreword by Hart); Directed by William S. Hart and King Baggott; Story by Hal G. Evarts, screenplay by S. Gardner Sullivan; photographed by Joseph August.

Don Carver (William S. Hart); Molly Lassiter (Barbara Bedford), Kentucky Rose (Lucien Littlefield), Will Lassiter (J.Gordon Russell); Bill Freal (Richard Neill); Bart Lassiter (Jack Murphy); Mrs Riley (Lillian Leighton); Old Woman (Gertrude Claire); Old Man (George Marlon); Major of Cavalry (Capt. Ted Duncan); Kidman of the Box K (James Gordon); Riley boy (Turner Savage); Hicks (Monte Collins); Hotel proprietor (Fred Gamble).

As a boxoffice attraction, Hart had been steadily waning in the mid-twenties. His refusal to compromise with new western trends which called for slick, streamlined, "glamorised" westerns was of course praiseworthy and just what one would expect of Hart. However, in his determination, he seemed to bend over backwards to repeat the type of material which was new considered out of date. His austerity of style was supplemented by a completely unrestrained sentimentality, and, although very well along in years, he still persisted in playing the allegedly youthful hero who ultimately won the girl. This reached its ultimate in the unfortunate "Singer Jim McKeen", a particularly wildly-plotted film, and quite Hart's worst ever. In it, already a middle aged man, he undertakes to look after the baby girl of an outlaw comrade. Years later, as her guardian, he is secretly in love with her. Misfortune sends him to jail, and when, still more long years later he is released, it is to find the girl waiting for him, ready and willing to accept his proposal of marriage. Under the circumstances, it was not surprising that audiences were wearying more and more to the vigorous and less sentimental westerns of Tom Mix, films that had a gusto and sense of lively fun rivalling those of Fairbanks. Hart and Zukor argued bitterly over the sort of films that Hart was making, and, refusing to accept writers and directors who would exercise control over him, Hart retired from the screen.

"TUMBLEWEEDS", almost two years later, was his comeback picture. It was also his most expensive, with a budget of $312,000, and by far his biggest enterprise to date.
Those who expected Hart to have given in, to have made the sort of western that audiences apparently wanted, were sadly mistaken. In "Tumbleweeds" Hart had reverted to type with a vengeance, although apparently having taken some of the earlier criticisms a bit to heart, had reduced the number of sentimental scenes involving himself. However, he had not reduced the intensity of those that he retained — and the climactic reunion scene is unfettered Hart emotion at its peak.

In many ways, "Tumbleweeds" is one of the very best of the screen epics. It is staged on a lavish scale, but again, Hart's refusal to introduce action for its own sake, his methodical pacing, and his refusal to "streamline" development, made it seem a trifle slow and old-hat. The giant landrush sequence notwithstanding, its epic qualities were appreciated, and noted, to a far lesser degree than those of the generally inferior "The Covered Wagon." However, "Tumbleweeds" was a much more popular film than "Singer Jim McKay" had been. It opened to excellent reviews, and top business at the Rivoli in New York. The record, however, was not sustained; UA disliked the film, and sought to cut it to 5 reels. Hart prevented this. UA hit back by deliberately mishandling the film, booking it into minor situations where its potential could not be realised. Hart took the case to court, charging UA with failing to exploit the picture, and won his case. (Hart took on many of the big boys, and never once lost a case!) However, his victory here was only a technical one, for the damage had been done. While Hart recouped his production costs, he estimated that he had lost half-a-million dollars in unrealised profits. Discouraged, he retired from films permanently — although still remaining on the fringe. He made a guest appearance in Marion Davies' "Show People" (1928), coached Johnny Mack Brown and Robert Taylor for their respective Billy the Kid films, and sold his old story, "O'Malley of the Mounted," to Fox for a George O'Brien Western. However, he was so distressed at the routine results that he refused to sell any further properties for remakes. Instead, he settled down on his Newhall Ranch and wrote (Hart's books are tough going, deliberately couched in western vernacular, and full of a rugged but far from rhythmic poetry. But they're well worth the effort of sticking to, and his autobiography, "My Life East and West," is especially readable, even though a trifle romanticised and inaccurate).

Reverting to "Tumbleweeds," Hart placed in it many of his old Ince cronies — Richard Neill, Lillian Leighton and others. The use of Lucien Littlefield as a comic partner was an odd touch, and probably only an unconscious sign that Hart had noted the existence of this cliche in the newer westerns. A stickler for authenticity to the last, Hart hated faking of any kind, and thus there is fairly little stunt work in his landrush sequence. The crashing of a wagon is rather crudely done at one point, and this is typical of Hart, and a flaw that can be noted in "O'Malley of the Mounted" and other films. If Hart had to resort to smoothly organised stunt work to get an action effect, he'd rather avoid it — or get around it as well as possible by purely editing effects. This is especially notable in the scene where Hart escapes from the stockade. A double performs the very tricky vault over the wall. But rather than have the same double mount the horse, and then pick up Hart from a different angle, Hart puts in a jump cut, and in the same scene, takes over from the double, to do his own riding. (This may have been partially vanity too, for Hart disliked it to be known that he used doubles, and in this way he was probably trying to create the impression that he did the leap too.) The landrush itself is a grand-scale affair, and contains at least one shot of sheer poetry — Hart galloping along on his horse rides over the crest of a hill, the camera angled in such a way as to give the impression of man and rider literally flying. The land-rush, quite superior to the one in Wesley Ruggles' "Chiricahua," is a mighty sequence, and is introduced by some fine editing. Between the title "Rally for the Signal" for the maddest stampedes in American history and the actual start of the rush, there are 60 frames, split up into 25 separate shots, the shortest of which run for only 5 frames. This sequence is almost mathematically constructed, the shots of the tense homesteaders running twice as long as those of the disinterested observers.

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