THE THEODORE HUFF MEMORIAL FILM SOCIETY
Program for Monday
Dec. 23 1937

LEWIS MILESTONE'S
1928 - THE GARDEN OF EDEN
with Corinne Griffith
Lowell Sherman
Charles Ray

"THE GARDEN OF EDEN" (United Artists, 1928) 8 reels
Produced and directed by LEWIS MILESTONE
Supervised by John Considine; scenario by Hans Kraly from the play adapted
by Avery Hopwood and written by Rudolph Bernauer and Rudolph
Osterreicher; photographed by John Arnold; art direction
by William Cameron Menzies; Assistant Director - Nate Watt;
Interior Decoration by Casey Roberts; titles by George
Marion Jr.

The Cast:
Tom Lebrun ............. CORINNE GRIFFITH
Henri D'Avril ............. LOWELL SHERMAN
Rosa .................... LOUISE DRESSER
Richard Dupont ............ CHARLES RAY
Madame Bauer ............... MAUDE GEORGE
Colonel Dupont ............ EDWARD MARTINDEL

NEXT SHOW: January 21
Abel Gance's "NAPOLEON" -and-
a condensed version of "CHRONICLES OF THE GREY HOUSE"

also
D.W. GRIFFITH'S
THE PRIMAL CALL
with CLAIRE N. DOWELL
AND
THOMAS H. INCE'S
The Switch Jauer
with FRANK BORZAGE
"THE PRIMAL CALL" (American Biograph, 1911) One reel
 Directed by D.W. Griffith; photographed by C.W. Ritzer
Starring Claire McDowell and Wilfrid Lucas, with Frank Grangin, Vivien
Prescott, Alfred Paget (playing two different bit roles), Florence La Badie
(as the maid), Tony O'Sullivan, Christy Miller and others.

Certain sequences of the second "Battle of the Sexes" excepted (and these
due primarily to the spirited playing of Phyllis Haver), comedy was never one
of Griffith's strongpoints. That he himself was aware of this is obvious,
since he stuck mainly to drama, melodrama and action material. His instinctive
dislike of Douglas Fairbanks in the Triangle days was another tipoff that,
cinematically speaking at least, D.W. didn't have too much of a sense of
humor. This romantic comedy, in the mold of "Taming of the Shrew" and "It
Happened One Night" is thus neither Griffith at his best -- or at his most
typical -- and should thus be of especial interest to followers of his work.
The mood is never too constant, and the construction is a little clumsier
than usual -- for example, the hero (Wilfrid Lucas) is not introduced until
the film is almost over. Made during Griffith's second trip to the coast
(in the winter of 1911), it's quite an elaborate production. All the Biograph
players seem to have been put to work in the lush garden party scenes, and
the most is made of the principal exterior location -- Redondo Beach. Too,
Griffith makes use of the schooner he had just finished using in "Enoch
Arden" (which had an almost identical cast) -- but perhaps to prevent his
economy from being too obvious, he has the cameramen shoot only half of the
ship! Presumably Griffith used production values such as these to convince
the boys back in New York that he was spending their money wisely -- so they
would leave him alone to go off into the hills and shoot the films that
really interested him -- "Fighting Blood" and the others which showed far more
of the real Griffith than does "The Primal Call".

"THE SWIDTHOWER" (Broncho, 1915) 1 ½ reels. Produced by Thomas H. Ince;
written by Ince and G. Gardner Sullivan; director not stated. Starring Walter Edwards as Bill Wharton, and
Frank Borzage as his son, Joel.

Not knowing which of the many Ince directors is responsible for this film
is, as always, both frustrating and annoying. It is good enough to be the
work of one of the best of Ince's crew -- Reginald Barker perhaps -- but to
assume that might be to do an injustice to Richard Stanton or any one of a
dozen others. In any event, it's a fine little melodrama, distinguished
principally by its really fine lighting and photography, adroit choice of
angles (particularly in the climactic sequence) and an excellent use of
obviously authentic locales -- the railroad yards in particular. Its plot is
a little naive and tends to stretch coincidence a little too far (at least,
for 1915) but this may be also partially due to the fact that one or two
scenes are obviously missing from this well-worn print.

- INTERMISSION -

"THE GARDEN OF EDEN"

Not in any way to be confused with Walter Bibo's nudist epic (playing
concurrently with our show!) "The Garden of Eden" can best be described
as a Lubitsch plot peopled by Stroheim characters. Herman Weinberg once
categorised it as "a fairy tale for adults", and it's an apt description.

Not an important film, "The Garden of Eden" is a thoroughly enjoyable one
Corinne Griffith (who has just returned to the screen in Hugo Haas' "Stars in the Backyard") was here at the peak of her popularity, and except perhaps for "The Divine Lady" (in which she was magnificently photographed by John Seitz) she never looked lovelier. Camera man John Arnold pulls out all the stops (and puts in all the filters) in giving Miss Griffith the A-1 glamour treatment here, although Corinne has an unfortunate habit of manipulating her upper lip to give the (unintended) impression of a sneer, which undoes some of Arnold's magic. Lowell Sherman, deliciously lascivious as always, is perfect as a late 20's Lemmex Sanderson; the middle portions of the film, when he is absent, would have been helped considerably by his lairs and prances.

Maudie George, keeper of the flame for Stroheim, performs a similar function here; as the Madame who offers her "wares" in the form of a restaurant menu, she is well up to form. The only real weakness among the performers is fact and it is a serious weakness - can be found in the miscasting and mis-playing of Charles Ray. As a dashing playboy, he is not only out of his element, but adds to his discomfort forever striving to recapture the mannerisms and studied awkwardness of his "country-boy" days. Still good looking, but obviously past his prime, Ray presents a rather pathetic picture. And in one important sequence, he lets the film down very badly. A very promising comedy episode was Charles Ray desperately trying to get a "Yes" to his marriage proposal from a Corinne Griffith who is rapidly feeling the effects of a sleeping potion. The idea is well-written. Directorially, little could be added. Corinne, prostrate on a bed, obviously can contribute little except passive glamer. The success of the scene rests solely on Ray's shoulders, and unfortunately he can't carry it through. Luckily, for the most part, the comedy material is carried - successfully - by others, and the climax is merry and furious.

With all due respect to Miss Griffith however, perhaps the real star of "The Garden of Eden" is William Cameron Menzies. His art direction in this film brings back the happy memories of days when movies were movies, and had both magic and glamour. (Not that we are condemning movies without magic, which would be to take a swipe at everything from "The Immigrant" to "The Crowd"; but we're all for the exotica and the lush facade in the less serious type of movie which benefits so immeasurably from it. "Trouble in Paradise" and "Shanghai Express" are two of the prime examples). The sets glisten and gleam. The costumes dazzle. The camera glides across ballrooms, and lingers lovingly on a closeup of a beautiful face. "The Garden of Eden" has two particularly scintillating examples of this gloriously unreal movie gloss. One is in the titular garden of the great hotel. As the lovers meet beneath one of the proudest trees ever created, apple blossoms drift lazily downward on to a limpid pool. A couple of swans drift hither and yon, so completely on cue that one just knows that, just out of camera range, Milestone has his assistant, Nate Watt, prodding the birds with a pole! And note too what happens when the top of a grand piano is set up. It forms a triangular image in the centre of the screen around which all sorts of other images are built - long shots, close-ups, reflections. Milestone and Arnold really get every inch that can be gotten out of that one camera set-up.

As you may have gathered by now, we like "The Garden of Eden" not because it's a great film, or an important film, but just because it's fun. It lets you relax instead of coming out slugging you. And it gives you the impression that nobody connected with it deduced themselves that they were making an important film. They were just having fun too.