A Program of Comedy and Action

"Path Tub Perils" (Mack Sennett-Triangle, 1917) Dir: Edwin Frazee
With Fred Hace, Dale Fuller, Hugh Fay. 2 reels
Not up to top 1917 Keystone standards, "Path Tub Perils" is nevertheless very much of a cut above the average. It cuts quickly - and moves quickly - and if the chasing in and out of rooms seems a trifle monotonous at times, there's a bang-up (and novel) alimatic chase to make up for it.

"Hoboken to Hollywood" (Mack Sennett-Fathe, 1926) Dir: Del Lord
With Billy Devan, Vernon Dent, Thelma Hill, Lenore Sweeney.
Del Lord was one of the best, most inventive (and most demanding of his comics) of all the Sennett directors, and this fine comedy from the 20's is a good sample of his work. This version (the only one we've ever seen) is a one-reel version of a two-reeler. In many cases, these cut-downs of the Sennett's improved them, by eliminating the padding and concentrating on the gags. But here, obviously, the material was so rich that the trimming has not only upset the pacing, but leaves one panting for more of the same. However, it's all there is - and we're thankful to have it. Billy Devan is here at his very best in his familiar cheerful sadist role, howling with glee at the horrible misfortunes that befall Vernon Dent -- usually as the result of Billy's advice! There are some great gags in it, and the original 2-reeler must have been a whale of a comedy.

"Don't Tell Everything" (Hal Roach-Fathe, 1927) Dir: Fred Guiol
With Max Davidson, Jimmy Finlayson, Lillian Elliott, Jess Devorska. 2 reels
The Max Davidson comedies varied considerably; many were dull and obvious, others were excellent. We've played some good ones here before, but we've yet to come across an outstanding Davidson -- in the way that there are standout Laurel and Hardy and Charlie Chase comedies from Roach. "Don't Tell Everything" however, is certainly one of the better ones, with an odd mixture of wonderful sight gags, stereotyped Jewish humor (which nobody could get away with today), and a lot of comedy that can only be termed, in the current vernacular, "sick" -- but very amusing nonetheless. It's often in somewhat bad taste -- but the comedy of outrage was a rich and fertile field in the 20's, and if everything had been kept in good taste, we'd have missed some wonderful films!

"Harold the Cinema Manager" (Roach-Rollin-Fathe, 1916) No credits available;
a Lonesome Luke comedy with Harold Lloyd, Slob Pollard, Bebe Daniels, Bud Jamieson. 1 reel
The title we're quoting above is that on this print (a French one) and obviously isn't the original, which we haven't traced yet. We've guessing at the date too, but it has to be pre-late 1917, when Lloyd dropped the Lonesome Luke character, and it has to be after August of 1916, since there's a poster on view for "The Iron Claw", a serial of that date. Lloyd, in later years, has always dismissed the Lonesome Lukes as being primitive and of no value; personally, the few I've seen have struck me as being remarkably good; crude perhaps, but with real vigor and lots of imagination.
Presumably Lloyd feels that the obvious Charlin-derivation of his Luke character is a slap at his own originality. But whatever his reasoning, he (like many another artist) seems one of the least reliable judges of his own work, for the Lonesome Lukes were certainly some of the best comedies being made in 1916 and 17. This one, with its movie theatre back-ground, and Snub Pollard as the type of projectionist that seems to afflict nine out of ten of today's theatres, is especially diverting.

"A Sailor Made Man" (Hal Roach-Fathe, 1921) Dir: Sam Taylor; starring Harold Lloyd, with Mildred Davis, Noah Young.

Dick Sutherland, 2 reels.

"A Sailor Made Man" is a film that Lloyd thinks very highly of. For one thing, as a three-reeler, it marked the first step in his transition to features. But even allowing for the fact that this print is a French version, trimmed down to two-reels, it seems a very ordinary knockabout comedy which has fine polish, good camerawork and nice production mountings, but little that is really clever or even particularly funny. The interim Lloyds were a curious batch; some, like "Never Weaken" and "Get Out and Get Under", were truly first-rate in every respect; others, like this one, would hardly rate serious attention with a comic other than Lloyd in them. It's an enjoyable romp all right, and Mildred is as delightful as ever, but it's a comedy that hardly lives up to the reputation that has preceded it.

"The Matrimonials" (Fine Arts-Triangle, 1916) Director: Paul Powell; story by Octavius Roy Cohen and J.R. Cleve; with Constance Talmadge and Fred Warren, and Monte Blue and Charlie Stevens as extras. Starring DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS.

The 12th of Doug's 13 Griffith-supervised comedy-adventures for Triangle (late 1915-1916), "The Matrimonials", also known as "The Kissing Millionaire", is generally speaking one of the better ones. It's hardly as good as "His Picture in the Parlor", "American Aristocracy" or "Manhattan Madness", the very best of that group, but it's a lot better than "Flirting with Fate", "Mystery of the Leaping Fish", "The Americans", "The Half Breed" and some of the others. This version, only two reels of the original four, doesn't make too much sense, and poor Constance Talmadge has been almost trimmed out of it. But it seems to have been cut in such a way as to exploit Doug's acrobatics to the maximum, and in this hopped-up cut-down he's on the go all the time, scarcely pausing for breath.

"The Stuntman" (Screen Snaps; Columbia, 1953) Dir: Ralph Staub. 1 reel.

Put out to plug George Montgomery's "Fort Ti", this rather hurriedly assembled reel consists 80% of a much older Screen Snaps dealing with Hollywood stuntmen. It's all done rather carelessly, but the action shots are exciting, and the double for Ken Maynard, Tim McCoy, Bill Elliott et al go through their paces in fine style. Towards the end it gets a little wild, with obviously authentic newsreel shots of Grand National horse falls, and Annapolis cracks ups being passed off as bona fide hardiwork of movie stuntmen. It's also claimed that George Montgomery was a stuntman for John Wayne, which isn't true, but he did do a lot of stunting in Republic's serial "The Lone Ranger", as well as having a supporting role.

"Sahara Hare" (Warner Bros., 1954) Dir: I. Freleng.

No essentially comedy show like this one would be complete without at least one frenzied Warner cartoon — so here is a good Bugs Bunny. This one is particularly notable for its outrageous cruelty to animals! The whole thing is the usual series of violent gags without much plot substance, but it makes for good fun in its own rather wholesome way.
"Chasing Choo Choo" (Two reels, 1927) Starring Monty Banks, with Dud Jamieson.

The source of this comedy is a real mystery. It’s obviously late 20’s, but who made it and for what company is something we haven’t been able to uncover as yet. If this is the correct title (and it’s certainly an appropriate one) it wasn’t copyrighted as such.

Frankly, until this film came along, we’d never seen a good Monty Banks 2-reeler. Most of them were just labored and obvious bouts of prolonged knockabout, not even energetic enough to be funny by virtue of their speed. And this one starts out in the same manner — and then, zowie, something happens! The film is two-thirds chase — and what a chase!

In its staging and execution, it’s quite as good as the best that Keaton or (more similarly) Lloyd ever did, and the camerawork and editing has compositions and pictorial dynamite that even D.W. himself would have beamed happily over. And amazingly, little Monty Banks seems to be doing most of his daredevil stunts himself. We’ll say no more about the actual content, and leave you to discover these delights for yourself.

Italian-born Monty Banks, once married to Gracie Fields, had a curious career, starting out with appearances in Fatty Arbuckle comedies. Later he appeared in a whole flock of 2-reel comedies, directing many himself — it is thus very probable that he directed "Chasing Choo Choo". He was at his most prolific in the early 30’s when he played in a number of British films (such as "Atlantic") and directed hordes of others for E.I.P. — all comedies with such self-explanatory titles as "Almost a Honeymoon", "My Wife’s Family", "Why Sailors Leave Home" and "Good Old Sergeant Major".

He remained an extraordinarily prolific director right through the 30’s, his range extending from such charming trifles as "The Church House" (with Laura LaPlante) to George Formby and Gracie Fields vehicles. He returned to work in Hollywood in the early 40’s as both an actor ("A Bell for Adano") and a comedy director ("Great Guns").

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Wm. K. Everson ---

Next program— next Friday,
January 22nd. — room 10-0

The complete version of DEAD OF NIGHT; plus Laurel & Hardy’s THE LIVE GHOST etc.

January 26th., 10-0
THE MICHIGAN KID (1928) Conrad Nagel, Renee Adoree
THE NIGHT CLUB (1925) Raymond Griffith, Wallace Beery, Vera Reynolds

Coming in February:

"SCARS OF JEALOUSY" (Ince, 1923) Lloyd Hughes, Frank Keenan, Marguerite de La Motte
"EN HUR" (the good one) with Betty Bronson, Ramon Novarro, Francis X. Bushman, Frank Currier, Carmel Myers
"A CHAPTER IN HER LIFE" (directed by Lois Weber) with Jane Mercier, Claude Gillingwater, Fred Thomson
"SHIELD OF HONOR" (dir: Emory Johnson) with Neil Hamilton, Ralph Lewis

and other material to be announced.