"The Michigan Kid" (Universal, 1928) Director: Irvin Willat; based on a
(5 reels) novel by Rex Beach; adaptation by J. Grubb Alexander,
continuity, Peter Milne. Cameras: Charles Stumar, Starring CONRAD NAGEL
and Renee Adoree, with Lloyd Whitlock, Fred Lemelton, Adolph Milar,

While it is in no way an outstanding work (until the climax, at least), "The
Michigan Kid" is a good, rugged, virile melodrama -- the kind Universal always
did well, and for that matter still do, though more rarely these days. It's
program fare, pure and simple, but done with style. In fact, today it seems
a good deal better done than it did back in '28. Then, in the face of bigger
films like Metro's "Trail of '68", it probably seemed quite ordinary, and in
fact both the trade and lay press were quite unenthusiastic about it all.
When it opened at the Roxy in July of 1928, the kindest comments were that
it was great stuff for the kids, and a pleasant time-killer for the hot nights.
"A picture in which the long arm of coincidence assures centipede proportions"
was one comment, while another critic dismissed it as "refurbished drama of
the Dorothy Dalton days". However, everybody was agreed on two things -- that
Conrad Nagel was quite fine (even if the nobility of his character was overdone)
and that the climax of fight, forest fire and escape over the rapids
was a real humdinger. This rapid's sequence is exceptionally well faked
by a variety of means, including the unusual one of sending a camera bobbing
and swaying down a miniature studio cataract, and cutting this footage in
with other material. We once had the pleasure of seeing this film with a
flaming red tint -- and how it paid off. Tonight's print unfortunately is
only black-and-white, but it's still a whole of a sequence. "Film Daily"
praising the sequence, commented that it was "probably double exposure" -- but
so well done was it, that they weren't sure. Today the tricks are more
obvious -- not because they are badly done, but because they've been so badly
done ever since (and much more shakily) that they have become far more
apparent. Universal's 1947 "Michigan Kid", by the way, was not a remake.

"The Night Club" (Paramount, 1925) Directors: Frank Urson & Paul Tribe;
(5 reels)
based on the play "After Five" by William & Cecil B. DeMille;
camera: Reverell Harley. Starring RAYMOND GRIFFITH, with
Vera Reynolds, Wallace Beery, Louise Fazenda, Harry Woods, William Austin

Comparatively few of Raymond Griffith's films seem to be available today.
"Handa Up", his best (pending re-discovery of others!) has been seen both at
this society and at the Museum; "Wedding Bells" is included in the Museum's
current comedy cycle; and we also ran an earlier Griffith, "Miss Bluebeard",
a few years ago. And that about sums up the availability today. When "The
Night Club" appeared in 1925, it was applauded as a really first-rate comedy
and a great personal triumph for Griffith, whose first starring film it was.
Today, and especially with "Handa Up" under our belts, it doesn't seem quite
as impressive -- but Griffith himself is in fine fettle, and makes the very
most of his material. The film, which presumably owes but little to its stage
origins, and has nothing whatsoever to do with a night club, is a strange
mixture of Semetonean slapstick and more subtle humor. (In this respect,
it is curiously like Keaton's talkies, "An Old Spanish Custom" -- which also
had a vaguely similar story-line too). All in all, slapstick predominates
-- but at that, it's pretty good slapstick, and the film rolls along pleasantly
with enough good Griffith highlights to make it a film well worthy of
revival.

------------------ Wm.K.Everson ------------------

Coming in February: Thomas Ince's SCARS OF JEALOUSY (1923); Lois Weber's
"A CHAPTER IN HER LIFE" (1923); Neil Hamilton in "SHIELD OF HONOR" (1927);
the original "BEN HUR" with Ramon Novarro, Francis X. Bushman, Betty Bronson.