Announcements

A few words about this week's three programs. I've had to leave for Hollywood rather unexpectedly (I hope it'll pay-off in some unique items for future shows) and consequently have left the week's programs in the capable hands of Charlie Shibuk, Bob Lee and Ed Gurey. For tonight's show, to prevent their having to fuss with unfamiliar equipment, I've suggested that they run the first two silent shorts without music.

There has had to be a slight change in Sunday's program at the New Yorker. We explained that this sort of thing might happen on this series, but I didn't expect it to happen so quickly! I've had to withdraw the print of "The Last Payment" for the simple reason that this is a print I have to see for business as well as personal reasons -- and I'm afraid of subjecting the somewhat shaky print to too many screenings. So, that will form part of our November show. CRACKERJACK and FRAGMENT OF LIFE remain, plus some fascinating one-reelers by Stareswich.

Since the program had to be set up several days ahead this time, we can announce the films for Friday's Film Group showing. They are Karl Grune's "THE MARRIAGE OF CORBAI" (U.S. title: "Prisoner of Corbai") already discussed in the earlier news bulletin; plus "Everyheart", a strange, symbolic little work of 1917 vintage; "Alice's Mysterious Mystery", a typically sadistic silent Walt Disney cartoon, and "The Private Life of Oliver the 8th" with Laurel and Hardy and Mae Busch. It's one of the boys' weakest 3-reelers -- but also one of their least familiar, and the general consensus of opinion with L & H seems to be "Show it, regardless!"
The supporting bill will co-star Charlie Shibuk and Barry Schaefer (both in person) reporting on the films they've seen in Rochester and Europe respectively.


THE KLEPTOMANIAC (Edison, 1905) Directed and photographed by Edwin S. Porter

One reel.

Last month, in "The Count of Monte Cristo", we saw Porter very much at the end of his cinematic trail. Here we pick him up two years after "The Great Train Robbery" in a remarkable little social essay which is both savage and courageous for its day -- showing how the rich can get away with crime when it is not perpetrated from necessity, while the poor, acting only from motives of self-preservation, cannot. It's an interesting piece, nicely photographed, with many nostalgic New York exteriors (including Macy's) but its merit is thematic, rather than filmic. It is confusingly put together and too long wound in spots; and surprisingly, the one place that cries out for a closeup (the thief pocketing her stolen goods in the store) is done in such extreme long shot that it is difficult to know what is going on. It seems to re-confirm that Porter's promise of "The Great Train Robbery" may well have been a matter of accident -- and the now established re-editing that the film underwent in later years.

MAKERS AND SPENDERS (Reliance, 1914) Written by Forrest Halsey; director not credited; with Ralph Lewis, Norma Phillips, Jessie Lewis, Irving Cummings. George Siegman. One-reel

Like most capital-vs-labor stories of this period, "Makers and Spenders" really takes no sides. The boss of the factory is a humanitarian (with a vengeance) and the exploitation of the workers is done without his knowledge. (Needless to say, George Siegman is the lecherous foreman who
is the cause of all the trouble?) It’s a rather naive little Cinderella tale, but nicely done and well acted by a crew of old Griffith players. Nora Phillips, whom we don’t see too often these days, was billed as “Our Mutual Girl”, and is best remembered for the “Runaway June” series.


A surprisingly topical essay on juvenile delinquency, this little film still carries a surprising dramatic punch, and builds up to an extremely powerful climax. It’s well above average for Selig product of this period. The narration is a bit obtrusive, but at least is seriously-intentioned; since the film has been condensed quite a bit to its present form, the narration is in any event a necessity for full understanding of what is going on.

INTERMISSION


Perhaps it isn’t really a surprise that “They Won’t Forget” was made at all — especially by Warners. But it is a surprise that, made so late, it turned out so well. Warners, who had started off the 30’s with some of the better gangster films, and with films like “I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang” had made the happy discovery that the “social” theme, allied with melodrama, could be boxoffice. By the mid-thirties however, most of the crusading enthusiasm had worn off, and all that remained was a shell — almost a formula — to be filled by standardised action. Despite the acclaim it still receives, “Black Legion” is really little more than a dressed-up gangster film, just as “White Bondage” is no more than a dressed-up horror opera. But happily, “They Won’t Forget” is not only one of Warner’s best films in the genre, but it stands up today far better than do the few other “social” films made in the later years of the 30’s. “Dead End”, fun to watch today because of its great camerawork and fine performances, is as phoney and dishonest as they come. Fritz Lang’s “You Only Live Once” is today so loaded and contrived that one squirms at the false picture it paints in sledge-hammer strokes — despite the clever lighting and suspense sequences that Lang evokes.

Yet “They Won’t Forget”, which treads on dangerous ground by attacking a number of targets — race prejudice (against the Negro), and between North and South, mob law, political opportunism — somehow maintains a perfect balance without either pushing its punches, or loading the arguments against those it condemns. It is a beautifully made job, which seems all the better as the years go by. Less cynical (and less of a melodrama) than LeRoy’s earlier “Five Star Final”, less hysterical than Wilder’s later “Ace in the Hole”, it is quite one of the best films of its kind that Hollywood has given us — better even, I think, than “Boomerang” (which was just a little too orderly and tidy, especially in its ending). The acting is fine, the “faces” of the supporting players just right, and Lana Turner, bouncing through her brief role, a real “find”. And the unsympathetic framework of Arthur Edeson is another great asset.

— WM. K. EVRISON