"THE MANXMAN" (British International Pictures, 1929) Directed by Alfred Hitchcock; screenplay by Elliot Stannard from the novel by Sir Hall Gaine; photographed by Jack Cox; Executive Producer, Sir Hall Gaine; made at Elstree Studios; starring Carl Brierson, Lilian Hall Davies, Malcolm Keene. Released in January, 1930, after "Blackmail", although produced earlier. Original length: 8 reels. This condensation: two reels.

One colorful and no doubt true tale told by the late Gene Fowler had John Barrymore, on a semi-sobriety stroll through the city, wandering into a pet shop to give the owner a lecture on how the manx-cat came to be without a tail. As he told it, the species' ancestor once had a tail like other cats -- but a very heavy and boring volume by Sir Hall Gaine fell on its nether regions, sliced off the tail, ever more dooming its descendant to be unadorned. All of which perhaps serves no point here, except to pass on John Barrymore's opinion of the original work on which this film is based.

"Number 17" and "Harder" excepted, early Hitchcokes invariably disappoint. They have distinctive moments and pictorial tricks which seem to be blueprints for the later Hitchcocks, but they all seem rather full of missed opportunities too. However, if they disappoint (judged, unfairly perhaps, by the standards of his later melodramas), they are frequently surprised with unexpectedly effective handling of actors, and in the choice of subject matter too.

Although I have never read "The Manxman", it was one of those stories that British authors (and in the '20's and '30's, British film-makers too) used to delight in - simple yet rather improbable romances, making effective and often melodramatic use of the forces of nature and the English and neighboring countryside. In a loosely all-embracing vein, such films as "Carnival", "Caravan", "The Edge of the World", "The Brothers", "The Turn of the Tide" (how I wish we could show that lovely and forgotten film!) and "Red Wagon" fell into this category, and so does "The Manxman".

It had been filmed earlier in England in 1917 by George Loane Tucker, with Henry Ainley and Elizabeth Riordon. Curiously, an Independent 1917 American film, also based on a Hall Gaine original, was titled "The Deserter", a title that could have fitted "The Manxman" equally well. However, they are two separate and quite distinct stories; Gaine, like Gene Stratton Porter, John Steinbeck and Harold Bell Wright, frequently reverted back to favorite locales as the backgrounds for his stories.

It is of course difficult to judge "The Manxman" accurately by this much condensed version. The romantic and dramatic story-line has been maintained fairly well, but one suspects that the subsidiary themes — the poisoning at sea for example — may well have had more interesting footage. Certainly the few seascapes and outdoor sequences that remain have a pleasing vitality and such fine photographic composition that one would like to see much more of them. However, even as is, its dramatic content holds up well, though its meaning is somewhat modified at times thanks to the ultra-discreet titles utilised for this particular print, designed for British home-movie users. In one scene, as the husband listens to a torrid confession of betrayal, seduction and his wife's pregnancy from her lover, British "restraint" reaches a new pinnacle as he is given a title saying solely "I'm going to be a father!" and one learns of the illicit aspects of it all only from the facial expressions of the guilty pair!

Incidentally, two more of these early silent Hitchcock condensations are scheduled for the near future: "Champagne" and "The Ring". The latter also stars Carl Brisson, who, in "The Manxman" is such a dunderheaded hero that one can't really blame the heroine too much for straying.

"PICCADILLY" (British International Pictures, 1929) Directed by E.A. Dupont; screenplay by Arnold Bennett; camera - Werner Brances; made at Elstree Studios; US release by World-Wide. Original length: 10 reels; this condensation: 3 reels.

The Cast: Gilda Grey (Isabel Greenfield); Jameson Thomas (Valentine Wilmot); Anna May Wong (Sho-sho); King Ho-Chang (Jin); Cyril Ritchard (Victor Squires); Hannah Jones (Jessie); Charles Laughton (A Continental visitor).
The enigma of R.A. Dupont -- how any man could direct an enduring masterpiece like "Variety," wind up making routine "B" pot-pourris ("Nederland's Man") in the 50's, shortly before his death, and turn out almost nothing of real interest during a prolific career in the intervening 25 years -- is something that has been brushed over so often that a further autopsy here is pointless. "Macedonily" at any rate, made in England at a time when B.I.P. seemed to be using more German talent than English, is probably his second best film. Certainly it is better than "Atlantic," although that was admittedly slowed down by dialogue and hampered by the cumbersome early sound equipment. "Macedonily" is somewhat of a parallel to Paul Leni's American film "Broadway" of the same year -- a similar story of underworld life against a nightclub background, and a similar triumph of style over material. With its use of moving lights and shadows, its fluid camerawork, its bizarre atmospheric settings, "Macedonily" is a masterly film in a purely visual sense, and the excellent quality 2.5-mm print does it reasonable justice. A director's film in every sense of the word, it makes one wish all over again that Dupont's style had had a chance to really establish itself. Since he developed no personal style one can hardly point to this and recognize it right away as a Dupont film. But it frequently looks like a bizarre and wonderful collaboration between Josef von Sternberg and Orson Welles -- and perhaps that in itself is praise enough.

**Erratum:** Paul Felson, not Leni.

(The two 2.5-mm prints are owned by Major George Mitchell, to whom thanks are due for not only loaning the prints but also for coming along with his 9.5 projector to screen them. Because of the difficulty in pre-screening 9.5 material however, our scoring for these two films will have to be largely ad-lib, and we ask you to bear with any inaccuracies in that department. Thank you)

- **INTERMISSION** -

"The Bohemian Girl" (Alliance British Productions, 1922) Directed by Harley Knoles, photographed by Rene Guissart; adapted by Harley Knoles and Rosina Henley from the opre (music by Michael Telfe, libretto by Alfred Bunn); 5 reels

The Cast: Gladys Cooper (Arline Arnhelm); Ivor Novello (Thaddeus); Constance Collier (Gypsy Queen); C. Aubrey Smith (Devilshoof); Ellen Terry (Greta the Nurse); Henry Vibert (Count Arnhelm); 313b McLaughlin (Count Florestein)

"The Bohemian Girl" is an extremely handsome production from a period of British film-history ill-represented today, although it must be admitted that its handsome pictorial values seem to be a rather forced attempt to duplicate the superb imagery of the Maurice Tourneur pictures of the period. Almost any Truese would make a wonderful still; the sets and the grouping of players maintain a careful symmetry; the masking devices produce an interestingly varied array of iris effects; and almost every scene is ingeniously "framed" -- by buildings, by tent flaps, by trees and foliage. In a sense this is self-defeating since the film soon becomes a series of lovely picture postcards, and the framing loses the dramatic effect that had in full measure in such Griffith films as "Orphans of the Storm" and "America," and of course in so many Tourneur films. However, if its pictorial elegance isn't matched by vivid and cinematic style, it is still a fascinating film to watch. The outdoor scenes are fresh and pleasing, the sets lavish, and the whole production nicely mounted. There are also several extremely smooth examples of discreet yet effective use of the moving camera.

Harley Knoles, who directed, was a curious film-maker who worked in both the U.S. and England, and who seemed to have a fondness for this Kusturian schmaltz. He also made a version of "Carnival," and did the Anthony Hope-ian "He_Guided_His_Coach" with Alice Guy, the only other angle-directed film this society has shown, in 1912. In 1917-22 period, when he felt he had six or more films a year, he made little of note after 1922's "The Bohemian Girl." In fact he was absent from the screen until 1926, when he returned to direct two frothy comedies. His photographer on "The Bohemian Girl" incidentally was Rene Guissart, who later collaborated with Karl Struss on "Ben Hur.

Not the least of the many delights of the film in its wonderful cast of familiar Londoners. All of them else have passed on now, save the indestructible and always reliable Gladys Cooper. balletically proficient in Broadway play, C. Aubrey Smith, on the stage since 1906, was already a film veteran of some ten years when he made this film -- and he seemed to age hardly a day between this and his last films in the 40's. For Ivor Novello, this kind of thing was to become his modus operandi for years to come; despite frequent effective dramatic performances (what a Dorian Gray he would have made!) he was best loved by the British public (especially during the war years) for his output of middle-European schmaltz of this nature. He wrote, directed, starred, wrote the
songs and sang them in a succession of hits like "The Dancing Years" and "King's Rhapsody". However, despite films for Hitchcock and Griffith, he never became a top screen star; his basic popularity was with the London theatre audience, and when his works were transferred to the screen, it was players like Dennis Price and Errol Flynn who took over his roles. But to his fans, Noelso was a British Romberg -- with a Barrymore profile.

"The Bohemian Girl" was first done as an early one-reeler; this British version was the second, and of course Hal Roach made a third in 1936, with Laurel & Hardy, Jacqueline Wells, Mae Busch and Antonio Moreno. It was good fun, the operetta music and story-line retained relatively intact, and the comedy interpolations neatly fitted in. Miss Wells made a somewhat sexier Arline than Miss Cooper, and showmanly Hal Roach added a neat little scene where she is stripped for florigillas (perhaps a revival of this enjoyable frolic should be scheduled for a future program; all in favor?) There was also a later 2-reel "version" put out in 1939 by Warners under the title "A Swing Opera".

Despite the relative simplicity and absurdity of its story-line, this "Bohemian Girl" holds up well, even without the Bally music. Incidentally, any music-lovers who came along for an operatic treat as well as a cinematic one, may be somewhat disappointed. Incredible as it seems (after all Laurel and Hardy immortalised it, and Hardy even sang some of the score in "Zenobia") the music just isn't available on records here at all. We were able to dig up the overture, and found one (unsual) vocal, but that seemed to be the limit -- and we're still smarting under the contumacious chances of the sauciness at the Record Hunter, Sam Goody's et al. So the delightful "I Dreamed I Dressed In Marble Halls" will, alas, have to be supplanted by as close a parallel as we can find by Faccini or one of his contemporaries with a little assist from Keesee, Herbert, Strauss and Romberg.

William K. Everson

NEXT PROGRAMS: Sunday next, New Yorker Theatre, 9:30 a.m.

ABOVE ALL LAWS -- an incomplete but still fascinating American print of the first "The Indian Tomb" -- a German melodramatic classic directed by Joe May, and starring Conrad Veidt.

Plus: the two concluding chapters of QUEEN OF THE NORTHWOODS and other short subjects. All 35mm material. Next month we start our new serial, THE BLUE FOX, 1921, director Duke Worne, starring Ann Little. This promises to be a much better serial than the one we've just finished.

Next Tuesday: Adelphi Hall, 7:30 p.m. THE SKELETON WITH John Barrymore and Dolores Costello; THE DRUNKARD'S REFORMATION (D.W. Griffith, with Marlon Leonard, Arthur Johnson, Florence Lawrence); BECAUSE I LOVED HER, a Mack Sennett comedy with Sam Bernard, Mae Busch.

The mailings for February and March are going out on Wednesday or Thursday of this week. Films to be shown include the silenter SHALLOWS (Directed by William Kyrle); THE GIRL ON THE BARGE (Sally O'Neill, Joan Marshalt); JACQUES (the silent version; Abel Gance); HIS PICTURES IN THE PAPERS (Douglas Fairbanks) and SPIRIT OF THE USA (Johnny Walker). Possibly also Mervyn LeRoy's HAROLD TERN.

Sound material will be headed by a Roubon Macoullan cycle -- three programs, including CITY STREETS and LOVE IT TONIGHT -- plus FESTER IRETON, THE GLASS KEY (Raft-Arnold version) and possibly THE BIG HOUSE.

As these notes are completed, it seems probable that the additional short subjects at next Sunday's show will be LOOKING (c.r.a., Edmund Cobb), PAY THE CASHIER (Charlie Chase) and an untlited Louis Gúñi one-reeler.