Comedy & Melodrama from the 20's

"OLD SAN FRANCISCO" (Warner Brothers, 1927) Directed by Alan Crosland
With Dolores Costello, Warner Oland, Charles Bentack, Anders Randolf, Anna May Wong, Sojin, Joseph Swickard; story by Darryl F. Zanuck, scenario by Anthony Goldway; Original length: 9 reels; length of this version: 3 reels.

Most of you will be familiar with Bob Youngson's very one-reel version of this film, which consisted principally of the last reel of the picture. A few hardy early-risers saw a complete print about a year ago on one of our Sunday morning 35mm shows at the New Yorker. But to most of you the bulk of the film will probably be new, and thus this "Silents Please" version, which won't be shown in NY until after the newspaper strike ends, is a rather handy pocket version of the whole. A slowly if stylishly paced film, it lends itself well to condensation, and most of the plot ingredients and colorful highlight sequences have been retained. A very lengthy prologue has been largely eliminated, and some of the climax has been trimmed, but this version still gives a good idea of its colorful melodrama, and of Alan Crosland's richly visual style. The story is glorious old hokum, having most of its plot motivation on the casually stated - and presumably then accepted - infernality of the Oriental to the Western races! And apparently the whole San Francisco earthquake (excellently staged, largely via first-class miniatures) is brought about solely in response to the prayers of Dolores Costello, as the only way to save her from the shame of white slavery! Incidentally, originally, under the old block-booking system, exhibitors had been offered a Dolores Costello vehicle titled "A Million Bid". Failure to have delivered the picture would have given exhibitors legal reason to sue for breach of contract, and exhibitors, far from hating Warner's in the late 20's, were usually only too ready to sue. So to prove that this was actually the same picture under a new title, Warner's wrote in a somewhat implausible sequence in which Dolores is auctioned off to a group of lecherous Chinamen. One of them, a dapper Astro-philosophical character, finally wins her when he bids a million dollars - thus justifying the title. However, the picture had turned out so well that exhibitors found they were virtually getting a "special" under old "programmer" terms, so they were not prone to complain, and thus Warner's removed the somewhat hair-brained sequence. However, plenty of colorful Oriental chicaneary remains, and it's good to see those two Charlie Chan, Sojin and Warner Oland, here at their villainous best!

"PAY DAY" (First National, 1922) Written and directed by Charles Chaplin; photographed by Rollie Totheroh; with Charlie Chaplin, Phyllis Allen, Edna Purviance, Jack Soalin, Sid Chaplin, Henry Bergman, Allan Garcia. 2 reels.

The seventh of Chaplin's eight films for First National, "Pay Day" rather has Chaplin marking time - although that in itself is hardly a criticism. Lacking the brilliance of his first (and best) for First National, "A Dog's Life", it is nevertheless still quite superior to some of the others, and most specifically the over-rated "Sunny Side" and "The Idle Class". It is slapstick and visual comedy pure and simple, and as such comparable with the average standard of his mutt films, though hardly as good as the best of them. If Charlie Chase had made "Pay Day", exactly as Chaplin had made it, it would doubtless be forgotten today, at least by the chroniclers and historians. But as a Chaplin, it is assured a kind of immortality which it does't altogether rate. If we're being hard on it, it's only because "The Rink", "Easy Street", "The Immigrant" and "A Dog's Life" have entitled us to expect far more from Chaplin at this stage in his career. But it is
fast, inventive, well-timed, pleasingly free from pretentiousness, and
often very funny -- so we really have few grounds for serious complaint.

**INTERMISSION**

"CLASH OF THE WOLVES" (Warner Brothers, 1925) Directed by Noel Mason Smith
Story; Charles A. Logue; Camera; Edwin Butler and Alan Thompson;
edited by Clarence Kolster; Art Directors; Lewis J.Selb, Laddres Hartley
With Rin Tin Tin, Minneta, Charles Farrell, June Marlowe, Reenie Conklin,
William Walling, Pat Hartigan, Walter McGrail; 5 reels.

One either loves Rin Tin Tin, or sees nothing in him at all -- along with
those unfortunate souls who don't like Laurel and Hardy and Shirley Temple.
Obviously we like him, or we wouldn't show so many of his films, and you
like him, or you wouldn't be here. So it hardly matters that "Clash of the
Wolves" is not exactly top Rinny fare. That is to say, it's not up there
with "The Night Cry" or "Tracked by the Police". But there's no such thing
as a bad Rinny movie -- Rinny himself, plus the always excellent photographic
quality and the liveliness of the plots, more than sees to that. "Clash of the
Wolves" maintains the good average standard of most of his films, and
in terms of plot incident does even a little wilder than usual. This is the
one where Rinny foils the heavies by being disguised with a false beard --
and is discovered only when the beard drops off. Poor Rinny too to smart
take such a gimmick seriously, and looks more than a little relieved when
the sequence is over and he can get back to serious acrobation and dramatics
again. Occasionally he gets a little outside help -- a string helps to way
his tail at one point, and a honey wap is injected to rae on a window pane
at another -- but one feels that these little deceptions are there only
because he felt a little out of sorts that day, or perhaps didn't "feel"
the scene the way he felt he should. In any event, the handsome and lovable
Rinny effectively wraps up the whole picture as always, and nobody else
stands much of a chance -- except maybe the title-writer. Photographically
it is as high-calibre as always, and shows real care not only in the
lighting and composition, also in the mechanical set-ups for certain
shots -- such as the scene of galloping hooves shot from a camera pit. As
always, it's an economical job -- even to lifting a number of impressive
forest fire scenes from "Lucriza Lombard" -- and as always, the slickness
of the production hides that economy so well that it never once looks cheap
and the duo-toned print further enhances its handsome appearance.

**SCENE ANNOUNCEMENT**

NEXT SUNDAY there will be a show at the New Yorker, 9:30 a.m. Because of
a busy schedule this week and lack of time to work on silent prints, it's
going to be a sound show -- and one aimed primarily at our serial and
melodrama addicts. The feature is the British 1925 "The Thrashing Beast"
with Fritz Fazner and Syne Gibson, based on the famous "Clubfoot" novels;
edited incidentally, by David Lean. Plus: the first 3 episodes of one of
the peak-period Republic serials, "The Haunted Harbour", with Mae Richmond
and Ray Aldridge, directed by Spencer Bennet. We have it all, and will
continue it in large or small doses, depending on merit and general interest.

Tuesday - April 9th - "CH. HOUR WITH YOU" (1932, Lubitsch-Gukor) with
Harrie Chalier, Jeanette MacDonald, Charlie Ruggles, Roland Young. Plus:
Ginger Rogers in "Office Blues" (1930) and "J.C. Fields' "The Golf Specialist"
(1930)

Coming: "The Eagle and the Hawk" (Grant-March-Lombard) ... "The Sorrows of
Satan" (D.W. Griffith, with Lya de Putti, Adolph Menjou, Ricardo Cortez,
Carol Dempster) ... James Whale's "One More River".