"Office Blues" (Paramount, 1930) Directed by Mort Blumenstock
Starring Ginger Rogers, with Clairborne Bryson, E.R. Rogers; 1 reel.

This modest but lively little musical, something of a forerunner of the "You're Too Wonderful For Words" number in "Ready, Willing and Able", is perhaps unremarkable as a film, but of great interest as a showcase for a notable talent still just teetering on the brink of film stardom. In this, her third film, Ginger Rogers' charm and vivacity really come through, a little lacking in ultimate polish perhaps, but undeniably present.

"The Golf Specialist" (Rko Radio, 1930) Produced by Louis Brook; directed by Monte Brice; photographed by Frank Zucker; art director: Ernest Fegte. Starring W.C. Fields. Two reels.

The slow pacing, primitive sound and camerawork and (perhaps intentionally) stagey sets matter not one whit in this early Fields sound film, and indeed rather add to the charm of what is purely and simply a filmed vaudeville skit. Without Fields of course, it would be horrendous; with him, even if not top-notch Fields, it's a thorough delight. Much of the humour is either grisly or vulgar, and Fields, with his repellent little moustache, his hatred for children and animals, and most of his old tricks and gags, is as pleasingly nasty as ever. It's a curious all right, and a rare one; Fields fans will revel in it, and the non-Fields fan wouldn't like it even if Lubitsch and Pabst had co-directed, so its defects hardly seem to matter.

(Note: in view of the extra feature added to our show, we found it necessary to salvage a little time where feasible. Thus we have dropped the one-reeler "Lucky Stars", which wasn't announced on our initial bulletin anyway, and will play it instead on our April 30th program)

= Intermission =

"One Hour With You" (Paramount, 1932) Directed by Ernst Lubitsch & George Cukor
Screenplay by Samson Raphaelson from the play "Only a Dream" by Lothar Schmidt. Photographed by Victor Milner. Music by Oscar Straus & Richard A. Whiting; lyrics by Leo Robin.
8 reels.

With Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald, Genevieve Tobin, Charlie Ruggles, Roland Young, George Barbier, Josephine Dunn, Richard Carle, Charles Judels, Barbara Leonard, Donald Novis

"One Hour With You" was the last of a series of musical comedies that Lubitsch had begun in 1929 with "The Love Parade". Released early in 1932, it had been made in 1931, and although "The Merry Widow" was still to come (in late 1934) that was such a stodgy and disappointing film that it hardly seems to belong to the same era, or the same class, as his earlier Paramount films. (In a like manner, the MGM Marx Brothers films lacked all the sparkle and zip of their earlier Paramounts).

"One Hour With You" is a remake of Lubitsch's more famous silent comedy, "The Marriage Circle", and is that rare animal, a remake that is superior to its original. However, in some ways the comparison is not altogether fair. If "The Marriage Circle" dates, it is largely because it is one of the first of its kind, and most of what it contains has since been done better — by Lubitsch and by others. The remake however, was done at the peak of its own particular cycle of sleek, sophisticated, multifaceted sex farce. This kind of film has never been done better since, and thus it remains as fresh as ever.

When I first saw "One Hour With You", many years ago, it seemed to be just about perfect in its genre. I couldn't imagine anything of its kind being more polished or more delightful. But that was before I had seen Mamoulian's "Love Me Tonight". Unfortunately, everything pales before that film. Comparisons are unavoidable, but a second-best to "Love Me Tonight" is not so much a disgrace as an inevitability. "One Hour With You" is, on its own, a thorough delight however. The songs, including "Mistral", are sentimental and raucy, tuneful and zesty; even when used as incidental music, they keep the picture bouncing cheerfully along without a break. The title song, by the way, was later used with new gibberish lyrics as the Klopstokian love song in "Million Dollar Legs";
Chevalier, as an unadventurous husband and doctor, is rather less ideally cast than in "Love Me Tonight" -- or perhaps it is just that one remembers Monte blue too well from the original. But in any event, he soon overcomes any casting disadvantages: he launches into his songs with a sureness of verve and gusto, and the script adds a little more life to his role by having him talk directly to the audience in asides, and weigh the pros and cons of his courses of action. Genelle Tobin is fine as the flirtatious Mitzi, and dear old Charles Winninger wraps up most of the best lines -- and laughs -- as Adolph. Roland Young gets too few opportunities, and one misses Horton, but one certainly has no right to complain. Chevalier is on top form, the whole picture has that kind of sparkle that has completely gone from movies today, and its roughish and often quite outrageous sex humour make it abundantly plain that this is a Pre-Code movie.

Repeatedly, George cukor directed most of the film, if not all of it, but after Lubitsch (who was taken ill) had made all the preparations -- so it really remains a Lubitsch film, just as "desire" does. Cukor in 1932 was new to film, and his other work of the period suggests that he couldn't have achieved results like this without a great deal of outside help. Too, the closing two reels of the film, which spiral downhill rather suddenly (though not as drastically) do rather betray the lack of Lubitsch's personal hand. With songs, great lines, fine performers, Cukor obviously had to do little more (up to then) but do what the script called for. But the close of the film lacks a little more than a prolonged wrap-up, obviously needed a little more imagination. Lubitsch could undoubtedly have taken those pages of tame script, added a bit of business here, or a more visual touch there, and given it life. Cukor isn't quite up to it, and more competence isn't enough. The film sag and falters. But its performers keep delivering where the director cannot, and in any event we've all had too much fun to care. But it's a pity -- with a more inspired ending, "One Hour With You" might have been a blood-brother to "Love Me Tonight" instead of a cousin twice removed.

"GOD'S GIFT TO WOMEN" (Warner Bros., 1931) Directed by Michael Curtiz Scenario by Raymond Griffith and Joseph Jackson from "The Devil Was Sick" by Jane Hinton; Photographed by Robert Currie; 7 reels. With Frank Fay, Laura Laflante, Joan Blondell, Louise Brooks, Charles Winninger, Alan Mowbray, Arthur Edmund Carewe, Charles Judels, Tyrrell Davis, Billy House, Yola D'Avril; The Sisters "E".

We hadn't originally planned to run this film, but it became available very suddenly and its overall relationship to "One Hour With You" suggested that it might make an interesting double-bill. In content, it has similar light-weight sex comedy material to offer -- but done without the slick elegance of a Lubitsch. It aims at the "off" situation rather than the light innuendo, and if it doesn't quite reach the depths of genial depravity attained by "B" Million Frenchman" (one of the most engagingly obscene of all early Warner soundies), it is headed in that direction. Of course, adroitly handled, good honest vulgarity can be very funny -- and it is here. Frank Fay is just right in the lead, and gets the very most out of his double entendre material. One or two sight gags, which we won't spoil by describing, are marvellous, and the bedroom scenes are both subtle (occasionally) and funny (all the time). Incidentally, I have a gnawing suspicion that I saw a close remake of this (reasonably also WB), but I can't trace such a film. Probably it wasn't an "official" remake. Reginald Denny's "clear the decks" was based on a play called "When the Devil Was Sick", but there is no other similarity, and in any case, that was made earlier. However, all this is academic -- obviously the main interest is in Louise Brooks. Sad to report, she is shamefully wasted -- flitting about in front of the camera like a ghost extra in the first reel, with just one scene; then coming into her own into the 2nd half of the film, with one gorgeous closeup, generous glimpses of those long legs, and a complete disregard of her erotic qualities. So shamefully is her face hidden from the camera that one wonders if Curtiz had ever seen her European films. But if Louise is wasted, lovely Laura Laflante comes through beautifully, and provides a measure of compensation.

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Next Tuesday - a John Ford Program - MY DARLING CLEMENTINE and THE PRISONER OF SHARIA ISLAND