Next program: Thursday Sept. 5th: Preston Sturges' THE MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK with Betty Hutton, Eddie Bracken, Diana Lynn; and shorts to be announced.

The September/October schedule will be mailed at the end of this week. Please double-check dates; our September showings will be somewhat erratic so that we can avoid conflict with the NY Film Festival, and also with the best of the horror cycle at the New Yorker Theatre.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society August 27, 1963

A Burton Holmes Travelogue, comprising "Bustling Brussels", "Beautiful Bruges" and "Going to Vollendam" (One reel)

We've never run a travelogue before, considering most of them time-wasters, but this pleasingly composed little film, printed on amber stock, seemed interesting enough for us to break our unofficial ban on the species. The first two items seem early indeed, certainly prior to World War One judging from the costumes, the limited amount of motor transport, and the greater quantities of horse-drawn wagons. Photographically it is quite polished, and there is one really expert dissolve, presumably done in the camera. The third segment seems to be from a much later period, presumably the early or mid 1920's.

"The Ring" (Crystal Films, 1913) Director: no record; One reel
With Pearl White, Edmund Brundage, Baldy Belmont, Chester Barnett.
Pearl White's one-reel, pre-"Perils of Pauline" melodramas and comedies for Crystal were a curious lot. For the most part, they looked much earlier than they actually were, and the costuming and sets had that cramped, amateur theatrical look that one associates with so many primitives. Not that we've seen a great many of them - eight or nine at best - but "The Ring" seems to be easily the most adroit and polished of the few that have survived, and it being a good print into the bargain is a further asset. It tells a neat little story, offers some enjoyable street scenes, and some fantastically macabre wallpaper guaranteed to give any tenant the horrors after an hour or two of exposure to them. Pearl plays in her usual pleasant and assured style, and there's a particularly enjoyable piece of sustained White pantomime as she opens a letter and conveys such sundry emotions as shock and doubt - the kind of thing that was so often so ludicrously overdone, but for which Pearl pulls her punches sufficiently so that it's devoid of mugging yet remains as eloquent as a couple of lengthy titles.

"The Nickle Hopper" (Hal Roach-Pathé, 1926) Directed by F. Richard Jones; Photographed by Floyd Jackman; 3 reels
With Mabel Normand, Theodore von Eltz, Michael Visaroff, Boris Karloff, Margaret Seddon, Oliver Hardy, James Finlayson, Jimmy Anderson.

Mabel Normand's handful of shorts and the one feature, "Raggedy Rose", that she made for Roach at the end of her career were a curious group of films. She herself looked wan and ill, and the films lacked the zip and sparkle of the contemporary Charlie Chase 2-reelers. But it wasn't from lack of effort; "The Nicklehopper" shows well above average care in its production values and especially in its lighting and camerawork. It must have been depressing working with a star so obviously in decline, and somehow this flattening spirit seems to show through. "The Nicklehopper" has almost enough plot for a feature, yet not enough comic incident for a two-reeler. As a three-reel featurette, it is decidedly awkward and slowly paced. Yet there are occasionally very funny moments, and the cast certainly makes it worth a careful look. Oliver Hardy, sans moustache, is seen but briefly; Karloff however, lecherous and leering, gets several excellent closeups, and even runs sufficiently true to form to
get into a frenzied tussle with a blind man! Boris' seedy if not too serious villainy quite dominates the two short sequences that he has.

- Intermission -

"THE SEA LION" (Hobart Bosworth Productions—Associated First National, 1922)
Directed by Rowland V. Lee; story by Emilie Johnson; scenario by Joseph F. Poland; camera, J.C. Taylor; 5 reels

"The Sea Lion" was a remake of a yarn that Bosworth had produced and starred in several years before, and was the kind of thing that he specialised in right up to the end of the silent era -- as you may remember from "The Blood Ship" of a few months back. Bosworth rather fancied himself as a Jack London personality, though it was rather more of a pose than the romanticised but other genuine Western that Bill Hart affected off-screen as well as on. But pose or not, Bosworth turned out some rugged little pictures -- economically made, but not cheap-looking, and with a genuine London flair to them. Reviews of "The Sea Lion" in 1922 remarked that the story was old-hat stuff, but that it was "the best marine production of the year", and that its authentic sea stuff carried both conviction and punch. There's a rousing fight, a whale of a storm climax, and an enchantingly old-fashioned story-line about a long-lost child who of course turns up on a desert island in the form of Bessie Love, playing "Blossom, an unspoiled child of nature".

This is the kind of unpretentious, bread and butter fare that neither wants nor warrants further descriptive comment. It was a short, compact film, running only 4367 feet in 35mm. As of this writing, we haven't had a chance to check the print carefully, since it is only available on the night of the showing (please bear with us in our ad-lib musical scoring!), but just from looking at it on the reel, it's obvious that it is all there. It's also obvious that it is richly tinted, and thus a great improvement on the black-and-white print that we ran some ten years ago when we were just getting started.

Rowland V. Lee, who directed, went on to become something of a second-string James Whale (if one can be a second string prior to the advent of the first string) with such films as "Barbed Wire", "Return of Dr. Fu Manchu", "One Rainy Afternoon", "The Sun Never Sets", "Tower of London", "Son of Frankenstein", "From a Stranger" and, of course, "Zoo in Budapest", to his credit. Emory Johnson subsequently turned director ("The Still Alarm", "Shield of Honor") and writer Joseph Poland went on to become one of the most prolific writers of serials and "B" westerns.

Wm. K. Everson