Next programs: Friday next. Sept.27: Whale's INVISIIL MAN; Ulmer's BLACK CAT
Tuesday Oct.6th: CLOSE HARMONY (1929, Nancy Carroll) 3 SMART GIRLS (Durbin)
Due to pressure of work this week, we've had to cancel the Sunday morning show
at the New Yorker Theatre.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society
Sept. 24th 1957

IMPORTANT NOTICE: We've taken the rather arbitrary (but we think you'll agree, justifiable) course of removing the two shorts from tonight's bill in order that we can sit in a very special extra feature this evening as a kind of sneak preview. The two shorts are not lost -- we are transferring them to our October 29th show. As to the feature: please don't think we're being coy or playing for suspense by not announcing it, but there are good reasons. Actually we shouldn't show it, but if nobody has come to see it, and nobody pays specifically to see it, there should be no repercussions later if and when it leaks out. So bear with us, and we think you'll be pleasantly surprised. The absentee will also realize that the greatest reward comes to those who worship at the shrine of SILENT cinema. We assume our audience tonight will be a small one -- our real old reliable -- so we're glad to offer this as a kind of dividend or bonus.

PAINT AND POWDER (K.E. Chadwick Productions, 1925) Produced and directed by Hunt Stromberg; camera - Sol Polito; titles by Fredric and Fanny Hatton; story and adaptation, Harvey Gates; Art Direction - Charles Cadwaller; Art Titles: Edward Withers; Seven reels.

The Cast: Mary Nolan (Elaine Hammerstein) Jimmy Everett (Theodore von Eltz) Mark Kelsey (John St. Polis); Philip Andrews (Stuart Holmes); Dago Mike (Russell Simpson); Mildred Hope (Tom Roberts); Mildred Bell (Opalina Purcell); Staten MacCordell (Pat Hardigan); Cabbie (Charles Murray); Dancing Master (Ernest Belcher); Detective (Fred Kelsey)

Like Herbert Brenon's "Painting Mothers", "Paint & Powder" is a formula picture that lifts itself well out of the rut by unusual ingredients -- in this case some decidedly off-beat plot elements, and some really first-class camerawork. Although it's hardly a jazz-age film in the sense that many of the contemporary Bow and Moore films were, it inevitably reflects many of the more colorful aspects of roaring 20's movies. One wild, drunken party is an especial delight, and reminds one more of Stroheim's Viennese spree than of the night life of New York's theatrical crowd! The show business background naturally brings in a number of typical and nostalgic dance numbers of the period, and there are some nice shots of a clean and attractive Times Square by day and by night. The film is interesting too in its slight but imaginative attempts as symbolism; for example, it pre-dates Peck's "Broadway" in its impressionistic opening of a giant figure of Destiny hovering over Manhattan. It also predates Murnau's "Sunrise" in the use of one gag routine, possibly not original here either, but developed a step further in the Murnau film.

No world-beater at the boxoffice, the film nevertheless did well enough, and the critics praised Stromberg's inclusion of the off-beat even at the risk of lessening popular appeal. All Chadwick productions in the 20's were models of how to make really neat, expensive-looking independent films. Cast, sets, camerawork -- all have a lush, "class" look to them that is more impressive than some of the production values offered by major companies in the same period. (Chadwick's fortunes didn't last -- his sound pictures were really cheap, and every dollar they didn't spend more than showed up on the screen!)

"Paint and Powder" is hokum, but enjoyable hokum. The cliches are played for all they're worth, and every so often it'll surprise you by avoiding the expected cliche. The main titles are snappy and bright, and the pacing tight. It's sometimes a little hard to believe in Elaine Hammerstein as a combination of Sarah Bernhardt, Jeanne Eagels and Marilyn Miller, but she certainly puts her all into it. Formerly a Selznick star, she was here trying to make something of a comeback. However, she retired from the screen a year later when she married Los Angeles businessman John Walter Kaye. Both were killed in an automobile accident in 1943. Of the other players, few are still alive or active. Theodore Von Eltz does occasional narrations, and Stuart Holmes is a regular extra at MGM and Fox. Russell Simpson, Fred Kelsey and John St. Polis have all died since our last screening of this film (in 1955). Hunt Stromberg, whose peak as a producer was at MGM in the early 30's, has fallen on comparatively evil days, and his post-30's work has been spasmodic and usually indifferent.

Incidentally, "Paint and Powder" was remade much later in the 20's, and on an infinitely smaller scale, as "Showgirl" with Mildred Harris. And some of the impressive establishing shots of NY theatres and dives, including the giant Destiny, were sold for stock footage and added distinction to several minor "B" films of 1927-29.