THE PULLMAN BRIDE (Keystone-Triangle, 1916) Produced by Mack Sennett; 2 reels
With Gloria Swanson, Mack Swain, Chester Conklin, Tom Kennedy, Phyllis Haver, Polly Moran
James Card up at Eastman House has a habit of deliberately scheduling troublesome items (films in need of repair or reassembly) on the theory that an approaching deadline will thus force him into action and force him to do work which otherwise might otherwise be ignored for years. There is no evidence that this system has ever worked at Eastman House and now on the much lower Emerson-Hurman level we have proof that it doesn’t work in New York either. This Sennett, acquired some months ago in a titleless form, was scheduled for tonight in order to force our hands in the matter of getting titles written, shot and inserted. Since it’s a costly business, we’d want to make sure that they were good titles, as close to the original as possible, and this entails the finding of a complete original synopsis, with character names etc. All this preamble is by way of admitting that pressure of work has prevented this from being done. As Dick Kraft pointed out quite eloquently in The Times recently appræses the festival’s screening of an inadequately titled print a “sacrifice” and not just an “incomplete.” Not only is the audience deprived of information, but the whole rhythm and structure of a film is affected. However, rather than pull it and play it later, we decided in favor of playing “The Pullman Bride” as is; although it would be nice to know who is who plot is hardly a major factor in this Sennett, which merely dumps bride Gloria and husband Mack Swain on a train, and involves them in a series of slapstick gags. Even the gags seem to spring out of such activities as sipping soup by an open window, or climbing into an upper berth, and seeming not too dependent on plot, so for the most part the film works in this version, even though the already imposed by the lack of titular punctuation, Swanson has surprisingly less to do than in “Teddy at the Throttle,” “Who’s Baby?” and “Danger Girl,” and is merely the pivot around which much of the action swings.

LOVES OF CASANOVA (France, 1927; US release by MGM, 1929)
Direction and original story by Nicholas A. Volkoff; scenario, Nora Fedke and Ivan Moshokin; supervised by Louis Nalpas; US release length: 2 reels. This version, edited from the British version: 3 reels.


Although quite notorious for its nudity, this “Casanova” seems to have made little impression otherwise. Paul Rotha dismisses it with the shrill observation that it is elaborate but unconvincing; and its US distribution seems to have been so sparse that it can only be granted that it was released in this country. It turns out to be a wonderfully handsome and stylish film, with qualities that can be admired even through the abysmal print quality. It is another blow-up from 9.5mm—certainly not as good a job as can be done, far from being as bad as some previous attempts that we’ve shown (“Cinderella” by Berger being a case in point), but on the whole just about acceptable.

Fortunately, the worst quality is at the very beginning, so that not only does not improve, but we also get used to it, and by the end it doesn’t seem bad at all. Regardless, it is all the more disappointing to see we can be grateful for small mercies. Like all of the British 9.5 condensations, it is drastically cut, but one senses done with a certain amount of taste and affection (David Lean edited many of these versions) so that one is left with a reasonable familiarity of the story line, plus a good representation of the best sequences and the best individual shots, compositions, etc. Clearly influenced by Crossland’s “Don Juan” in its construction and style, though a trifle grimmer and guttier, it does rather lack the Barrymore bravura, Mosjukin, fine as tor the standard and considerate. It is a little nudity, but not enough to make any of our two or three dirty old men of varying ages—probably some time only because of the famous still (Casanova surrounded by some thirty delightful nudes) which, sad to say, is NOT represented in this condensation.

COPPETTI (First National-British, 1928) Directed by Graham Cutch; Original story by Douglas Furber; scenario by Reginald Fowey; Cameral Ross Overbury; Art Director, Norman Arnold
Original length: 3 reels
This print: 2 reels
With Jack Buchanan, Sidney Fairbrother, Annette Benson, Robin Irvine, Andree Sayre, George Tereff.

Graham Cutts, one of the pioneers of British films, enjoyed his biggest vogue in the 20's with gentle romances and emotional dramas like "The Hat", "Woman to Woman" and "Paddy the Next Best Thing". Although active in film until the 1950's, his stock fell somewhat in the sound period, and his last films were "B" comedies and documentaries. His daughter, Patricia Cutts - later Patricia Wayne - has been in a number of British and American films from the 50's on.

"Confetti" is a curious film, something like a collaboration between Griffith and von Sternberg. It's the kind of film that was very popular all over the world in the late 20's - ultra-lavish, handsome, with great sets and photography; almost no plot, dashes of poetry, symbolism and philosophy to give them a quasi-intellectualism. Such films never really pleased either the public or the critics, they invariably lost money, and yet the studios kept grinding them out and selling them as big prestige specials. Visually, "Confetti" is both stunning and fascinating, and I am not knocking its emptiness or absurdity; in fact, its naive poetry pays off rather better today, when nobody makes this kind of film any more. This is not an "official" condensation, being rather a salvage job to save representative portions of the film from a decomposing print. Fortunately, enough of it remained - in sequence - to give a good idea of its size, its camerawork (by the usually rather stodgy Roy Overbaugh, who also photographed "The White Sister") and its story-line. I suspect that it may seem far better here than it really is; despite rather sudden jumps, the whole story is conveyed, and concluded, in these two reels, and there really seems insufficient substance for an eight-reeler. An intriguing rediscovery, it reminds us once again how many tremendously costly and ambitious filmic ventures have completely vanished into an obscure limbo. Let's hope that at least some of those limbo are air-conditioned and favorably disposed towards the preservation of old nitrate, so that delights like "Confetti" can continue to surprise us over the coming years.

**Intermission**

"THE DEVIL HORSE" (Hal Roach-Pathe, 1926) Directed by Fred Jackman Camera: George Stevens; 5 reels
With Yakima Canutt, Rex the Horse, Gladys McConnell, Bob Kortman, Fred Jackman Jr., Roy Clements.

The best and certainly the most elaborate of the several westerns that Roach made in the mid-20's, "The Devil Horse" is shy on anything but the sketchiest of story-lines, but strong on prolonged action sequences. Many of the wild horse sequences in this and the other Roach westerns were to turn up for years to come in sound westerns and serials, and still bring home the bacon for the stock-shot libraries servicing tv westerns today.

When we last ran this film some years ago, we had a superb toned print; today's print is less handsome, being an ordinary black-and-white, but nevertheless the sweep and grandeur of George Stevens' photography is most impressive, and comparisons with his later "Shane" are inevitable. Yakima Canutt, always a better villain and stuntman than a western hero, fortunately has little real acting to do, but pulls off his various stunts, leaps and falls with aplomb. He's still active of course, having recently staged the battle and action scenes for "Khartoum", on which he was the 2nd Unit Director. Good old Bob Kortman makes a wonderfully sly and lecherous villain whr. doesn't beat around the bush when the heroine asks him why he is chasing her, and gives her an honest and direct answer - "We Want You!" If the American indians were somehow affiliated with the NAACP, films like this might well find themselves linked with "The Birth of a Nation"!

"The Devil Horse" is fast, spectacular and uncomplicated. And it really moves. It has been quite a while since we saw a modern western that fills all those basic requirements.

--- Wm. K. Everson ---