Forthcoming programs: Pressure of work has prevented the new schedules from being completed by this evening, but they will be mailed out over the next couple of days, and should reach you by the weekend. In the meantime, here are details of the next three programs:

Tuesday Nov. 29th: A repeat of "Sunny Side Up" (1929, dir: David Butler), with Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell, to accommodate the many who were unable to get in to our previous showing, with the same accompanying 1929 excerpts from "Paramount on Parade" & "Peacock Alley".

Tuesday Dec. 6th: A program of World War One epilogues: "Three Faces East" (1930, dir: Roy del Ruth) with Constance Bennett and Erich von Stroheim; and "Lancer Spy" (1937, dir: Gregory Ratoff) with George Sanders, Dolores Del Rio, Peter Lorre, Lionel Atwill and Joseph Schildkraut.

Tuesday Dec. 13th: "Bedtime Story" (1933, dir: Norman Taurog) with Maurice Chevalier, Edward Everett Horton, Baby LeRoy and Helen Twelvetrees; "Makers of Melody" (1929), a fascinating 2-reeler with Rodgers and Hart; and one other short.

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Tuesday November 22 1966

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

An Evening of Gothic Terror

"THE UNINVITED" (Paramount, 1944) Directed by Lewis Allen
Associate Producer: Charles Brackett; Screenplay by Dodie Smith and Frank Partos From the novel by Dorothy Macardle; Music: Victor Young; Camera: Charles Lang; Special Effects by Farcot Edouart; Art Direction by Hans Dreier and Ernst Fegte, 9 reels

Like so many directorial firsts, this initial film by Lewis Allen remains far and away the best film he ever made, and almost the only one with real style. It is also quite probably the movies' best ghost story, rivaled, perhaps by the mirror sequence from "Dead of Night", but generally quite superior to "The Innocents", "The Haunting" and the very few other movies that have had the integrity to take their phantoms seriously, without explaining it all away at the end via natural or at least human agencies -- as did this film's follow-up "The Unseen", an admirable thriller until its last reel collapse.

To be sure, there are flaws in the film. In its determination to avoid mere sensation, it wisely underplays and builds up a genuinely frightening web of intangibles which cannot be explained away. In that sense it succeeds far more than "The Innocents" which shows us the phantoms too clearly and too frequently so that familiarity breeds, if not contempt, then at least the lack of doubt. But on the other hand, in avoiding visual horror it avoids most of the other visual elements too; too many things are talked about that could have been shown graphically and excitingly while still keeping the actual horror content to mere suggestion. Editing, camerawork, music, all are used to the full in the creation of tense atmospheres -- but nothing really happens that couldn't have been duplicated, in one way or another, on stage. Too, and this may be partially the result of our having been conditioned to his suave comedy image, Ray Milland seems so much in control of the situation throughout that our own fears relax accordingly. Finally, the plotting gets just a little too complicated for its own good towards the end - the rather theatrical melodramatics that are introduced via Cornelia Otis Skinner and the asylum are not used to cheat or to find an easy way out, but they do tend to muddy waters that are quite clear and satisfying enough when they adhere solely to an investigation of the supernatural. Hitchcockian gimmickry seems ever in the offing in the closing reels, and while it never really materializes, the contrived complications so suddenly introduced do rob the film of some of its chilling simplicity.

However, there are criticisms that we make only because the film as a whole is so effective; its limitations are that it is rather like enjoying a good evening at the theatre, or curling up with a solid and engrossing book, than watching a film that makes the very utmost of its potential. But good theatre and good writing are still not to be sneered at, and on those levels the film succeeds remarkably well. If it employs some of the literary cliches (such as the lonely old house on the Cornwall cliffs) it also avoids most of the cliched ones (such as red herring characters and excessive mist); above all, it convinces and chills. On the fifth or sixth viewing it still holds up as a fine piece of intellectual goose-pimpling, while those of you stunning -- not least because for once Hollywood's depiction of the English rural scene is quite remarkably convincing.