Tuesday next, Dec. 20th. A happy, jolly Christmas program!  
"THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD" (Stuart Walker, 1935) with Claude Rains  
"THE WALKING DEAD" (Michael Curtiz, 1935) with Boris Karloff, Ricardo Cortez

December 13 1966

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"Fallen Arches" (Hal Roach-KGW, 1933) Directed by Gus Meins; camera: Hap Depew  
With Charlie Chase, Muriel Evans, Billy Gilbert, Eddie Dunn, Charlie Hall. Two reels.

Despite some labored moments, this is quite one of the best Charlie Chase sound comedies, not least because some of its funniest gags are reworkings from his silent films - though it's a pity that the routine with the car stalled in the giant puddle isn't developed as thoroughly as it was in its source film, the silent "All Wet". With more sight gags than usual for a Chase talkie, a plot that's constantly on the move, and denouncing Charlie in good form, this is a really amusing little comedy.

"Makers of Melody" (Paramount, 1929) Directed by S. Jay Kaufman  

This curious and fascinating early sound short has Rodgers and Hart (not really the comic he thinks he is, and that his looks suggest he might be, and rather more like character actor and bit player Lou Lubin than anyone else) introduce three of their most popular numbers - "Manhattan", "The Blue Room" and "The Girl Friend". Since my knowledge of personalities of the stage of that era is decidedly inadequate, I don't know whether the various singers and dancers are of interest in themselves, although our musical historian Miles Kreuger will doubtless fill us in on them. Regardless, they put the numbers over with verve. All told, a fascinating little post-script to the early talkies and to our knowledge of the musical film.

"BEDTIME STORY" (Paramount, 1933) Directed by Norman Taurog  
Screenplay by Norma Rose Johnson, Waldemar Young and Benjamin Glazer  
From a novel by Roy Horniman; songs by Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin;  
Camera: Charles Lang; 9 reels


Although not exactly toned-down Chevalier - it's still pre-Code, and pretty raucous when it wants to be - "Bedtime Story" is decidedly off-beat Chevalier, and a strangely motivated attempt to provide him with a warmer, more human vehicle without quite descending to the depths of Jolson bathos. On the whole it works quite well, Chevalier's charm and Taurog's taste blending rather felicitously, although disheart Chevalier devotees, well catered to in the opening couple of reels, may feel a little let down towards the end. Curiously, although the infant Baby LeRoy is just a manipulated "thing" here, and not the real personality he became when pitted against adults, the plot is so built around him that when he is off the screen for any length of time - as he is in the last third - all the romantic complications seem rather a waste of time.

Obviously much of the footage is ad-libbed to take advantage of the best "baby" scenes, and obviously too Taurog must have shot reels of footage to have gotten just the right reaction shots and other LeRoy expressions. The youngster was obviously not yet performing on cue, as witness the dubbed in laughter when close examination shows that his face is singularly sour and unamused! Edward Everett Horton gives a masterly display of making the very most of minimal material, and always manages to prevent the baby from stealing scenes from him, intentionally or otherwise. The plot is full of holes - even for a trifle like this - and only bachelors and spinsters (or at least, non-mothers and non-fathers!) will be able to really relax during the early portions of the film, when for what must be the best part of a day nobody thinks of giving the baby anything to eat or drink! A minor Chevalier certainly, with even the songs somewhat below par, "Bedtime Story" nevertheless isn't minor Taurog and if viewed as an entity on its own, rather than as a Chevalier vehicle, it can be enjoyed as a slick, amusing and consistently charming little trifle.

William K. Everson