Tuesday next, March 28th: Jean Renoir's "NANA" (1926) with Catherine Hessling and Werner Krauss, art direction by Claude Autant-Lara; and "She" (James Cruze), "The Soilers" (Stan Laurel) and "Is Marriage the Bump?" (Charlie Chase).

March 21 1967 The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

AN APOLOGY FOR THIS WEEK -- AND A WARNING FOR NEXT

As many of you already know we tried to spread the word as much as possible, via telephone, when the blow fell. Chaplin's "A Day's Pleasure" has been delayed by about a week. We were notified, only over the weekend, that the print which was supposed to be en route from the West Coast was still in the lab there, by which time it was too late to send out a mailing. Without minimising the annoyance or disappointment, for obviously this 2-reeler was the real coup of the program, we assume that the audience for that film is also the audience for the rest of tonight's program, and that nobody will feel "had". If they do, we apologise. Our plans to add a Day's Pleasure to our complete program, but alas to play it on our first silent program in June, so that there will be time to announce it officially, and give everybody at least two chances to see it. Now for the warning; certain films, because of their rarity and unquestioned interest, we feel justified in booking sight unseen, and occasionally we come up a cropper this way. Next week's NANA is a case in point. We had been warned that it only has French titles (only a mild drawback, as you will see) but were assured that the print would be fine. The print however is far from fine. Pictorially it is good, and seems to be long enough to be complete, but it is an inexcusable lab job from an obviously shrunk film. About 50% of the film has a jiggity in it -- sometimes mild, sometimes frenetic but always irritating. Therefore, while we hate to turn away anybody, we do urge that only the really interested members show up for it next week. This is not a subtle appeal to the dormant student level in all of you! It's a good film, and those of you who feel you need to see it will find it rewarding; but if you just like silent films per se, or are looking for entertainment values predominantly, this print is not for you. It's not exactly an eyestrain, but it's not the kind of print you can relax with. Nor -- for the sake of those who really want to see it -- do we want to suggest that you come along and try it out, since this might result in a steady stream of annoying exits. Firewarming you may not find it as bad as all that. We'll do our best to find the right speeds and the right lenses to make the periods of jiggling as easy to take as possible. Keeping a film society running on a weekly basis has more than its share of problems, and you have been kind enough to bear with us when these arise; I'm only sorry that two such problems have arisen now on two consecutive weeks......... Who

(Three additional shorts have been included in tonight's program in place of the missing "A Day's Pleasure").

PATTY & MABEL VIEWING THE WORLD'S FAIR AT SAN FRANCISCO
A Keystone Educational reel, 1915; 1 reel
With Mabel Normand and Patty Arbuckle

This Semett "educational", sugared with some rather self-conscious fooling from Mabel and Patty, is somewhat of a cheater in that we never get inside the fairgrounds (presumably the rights had been sold elsewhere, or Semett wouldn't meet the price!) and everything is shown from a bumpy boat circling the grounds. Often we are taken right away from the fair and just shown San Francisco -- undoubtedly a disappointment for 1915 audiences, though of interest to us today in seeing the city rebuilt so soon after the 1906 earthquake. However, the shots of the Panama-Pacific exposition are impressive too.

TRANSFORMATION (Pathe, France, circa 1906; 1 reel)

Though clearly not a Mélies, despite catalogue listing to the contrary, this is a charming and skillful little trick film in which babies emerge from rose bushes.


The Semett First Nationals are quite rare today, but those that survive seem to suggest that as a group, the First Nationals (made by such directors as Mal St. Clair, Billy Bevan, etc. -- all later Paramount) were technically fast, elaborate comedy almost plotless, but full of quite spectacular gagging. Its similarity to, and close proximity to Keaton's "Cops" ("Be Reasonable" came out in late December of '21, "Cops" in mid-February of '22) suggests that Semett probably saw Keaton working on his more elaborate film
and stole a few ideas before Buster's film was completed. Since both films came out through First National there may have been ruffled feelings but presumably no legal hassles. If this one seems familiar, it's because many of its highlights were later used in the Warner compilation short "Good Old Corn," although the Jewish stereotype gag (Jake, the second-hand-clothes salesman) was conspicuously absent from that rehash!

A WOMAN IN GREY: Episode 7, AT THE NERCy OF THE FLAMES. A 15 chapter serial (1919) made by the Serica Producing Co., Inc; directed by James Vincent;

scenario by Walter Richard Hall from a story by C.N. and A.H. Williamson;

With Arline Pretty and Henry G. Selig; 2 reels

Made at the Black Diamond Service in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, this uncopyrighted work is rather typical of many independent serials of the 20's, offering rather too much padding via extenuating detail and prolonged (and often quite ordinary) sub-titled conversation. However, it's well above average of its type, and the extensively used Wilkes-Barre exteriors give it added interest today. It's slow in starting, but the second half is all fast-paced action, with an excellent chase sequence involving stunts aboard an old open trolley car. Attempts to give it a little "art" via photographic framings and vignettes don't always work, and the cheesecloth in front of the lens looks both cheap and as though the shapes were ripped rather than cut! Still, even if James Vincent is no Maurice Tourneur, the attempt is there.

FASHIONS IN LOVE ( Paramount, 1936) Edited by Fred Walter & Milton Rockey; Written by H.A. Woodmensee; narrated by Alain Hervilla; 1 reel

With Mary Pickford, Owen Moore, James Kirkwood, Mr & Mrs Sidney Drew, Lillian Gish, Bobby Harron, William S. Hart, Bebe Daniels, Charles De Rochefol, Pola Negri, Rudolph Valentino, Doris Kenyon, Clara Bow, Antonio Moreno, Gary Grant, Mae West.

This one-reel forerunner of "The Love Goddesses" is an interesting if superficial compilation, fairly seriously written, corny in its music perhaps, but with an interesting short -- though once more we are regaled with the Irwin-Rice "The Kiss"!

-- intermission --

SLICK SLEUTHS (A Bud Fisher cartoon, 1925) One reel

Nutt and Jeff first hit the screen around 1910/11 in straight comedies. The cartoons didn't develop until the 20's, and while there were more mediocre than good ones, they all had pace and invention. This is one of the better ones that we've come across, presumably inspired at least partially by "Phantom of the Opera".

CALL OF THE CUCKOO (Hal Roach-WCM, 1927) Directed by Clyde Bruckman

Supervised by Leo McCarey; Camera: Floyd Jansen; 2 reels

With Max Davidson, Lillian Elliott, Speo O'Donnell, Laurel & Hardy, Charlie Chase, James Finlayson, Leo Willis, Edgar Dearing.

We ran "Call of the Cuckoo" many years ago, but our print then was minus any titles. Today's print has titles, some of them very funny indeed, and in any case the comedy -- one of Max Davidson's best -- is well worth a repeat. Laurel & Hardy, heads shaved for their convict roles in the concurrently filmed "The Second Hundred Years," join Finlayson and Chase in guest roles. As always with Davidson, much of the comedy is cheerfully distasteful.

THE GARAGE (Famous Players-Lasky, 1919) Directed by Roscoe Arbuckle; 2 rls

With Buster Keaton, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, Monty Banks.

The early Keaton-Arbuckle films are so scarce today that one can only be grateful when the odd one shows up. "The Garage" is a bit choppy, and print quality is variable, but it's substantially complete and gives us a good idea of what these more Arbuckle-than-Keaton dominated comedies were like. The slapstick is fast and furious, more sophisticated and inventive than the Semmelm variety, and if the latter sections seem derivative of Chaplin's "The Fireman," then the earlier portions -- with their spectacularly messy disasters -- seem to pre-date the Larry Semmons of the early 20's. One gag also predates a similar Fairbanks joke in "The Nut". There's something happening all the time -- including a graceful bow to Mabel Normand at one point -- and if not a major comedy, it's certainly a fast and interesting one.

-- William K. Everson --