Although the Wolper documentaries on movies - and the stars - quickly fall into a rather standardised pattern, repeating gimmicks and cutting patterns that paid off before, trying to obtain as much of the footage as possible from once source - this essay on Rita Hayworth does manage to be quite a little above average. While the footage is almost solely Columbia's, it is both interesting and well-selected, and specialty shot new footage of Hayworth today in value too. The star's rise to fame is somewhat simplified of course - it would have been fun to see more representative samples of her early bit work, roles in "B" pictures and some of the westerns she made. I'm particularly sorry to see 'The Renegade Ranger' unrepresented, since she looked especially lovely in that. The unidentified Columbia "B"s - "Juvenile Court", "Circus Shadows" and "Homicide Bureau" - are however, the only concessions to coverage of her early career. On the whole however, it's an interesting 3-reeler; if only somebody had been making films like this back in the 20's what a contribution to film history it would have been!

INITIATION OF LIFE (Universal, 1934) Directed by John Stahl; screenplay by William Hurlbut from the novel by Fannie Hurst; camera: Merritt Gerstad; editor, Phil Cahn; 11 reels


Inevitably the reputation of this original "Initiation of Life" was boosted somewhat by the recent Lana Turner remake, which - following the formula also applied to "Back Street" - glamorised and updated the original so much that it's one basic virtue - sheer gutsy novelistic schmaltz - was all but obliterated. (In the original, the heroine rises to be queen of the scam in the seventies; in the remake, she becomes America's greatest actress!) Fannie Hurst's novels don't wear well anyway, and while John Stahl enjoyed quite a bit of prestige in the thirties, when "big" dramatic movies made from best selling tear-jerker novels were all the rage, he too tends to disappoint today. None of his films seem to offer anything beyond their scripts and players, as the indefinable sensitivity of Frank Borzage movies invariably do. Still, it's a big handsome period piece, lushly presented (apart from the rather too obvious back projection) with fine sets and a grand group of veteran players. Although jam-packed full of plot, it is actually far less moving than that delightful trifles "Love Story", perhaps because its very novelistic artificiality prevents anything real or poignant in the story. And the racial angle, quite a courageous one to be tackled so outspokenly in a movie of the early 30's, doesn't really pay off to well because dear old Louise Beavers is unwittingly so naive and/or stupid that one really can't blame her daughter for resenting so many frequent embarrassments! In its own much-larger-than-life way, "Initiation of Life" is however a commendable piece of slick movie-making; certainly it's the kind of film that we're never likely to see made again, and for all of its failings, it's a genre that will be missed.

I must apologise for the inadequate and appallingly typed notes for this program, and by way of explanation (and expiation) must note that last Friday I was knocked down by an automobile just off Hollywood Boulevard. Right now my ambulatory and digital powers are just about nil, this explaining also my absence' tonight and my failure to reply to letters and enquiries from many of you. Hopefully, by the next show, all will be well again ... and luckily the fracas to help make my life today a bit livelier, I've picked up some film for our next 3-month session, including the quite fantastic "Hearts of Humanity" with Dorothy Phillips and Erich von Stroheim, and Hoot Gibson's "King of the Rodeo".

William K. Everson