"SHOW THEM NO MERCY" (Schenck-20th Century Fox, 1935) Dir: George Marshall
Produced by Raymond Griffith; Screenplay by Kubec Glasmon and Henry Lehman;
Camera: Bert Oleman, edited by Jack Murray; 7 reels
With: Rochelle Hudson, Cesar Romero, Bruce Cabot, Edward Norris, Edward Brophy,
Warren Hymer, Herbert Bawilon, Robert Gleckler, Charles Wilson, William B.
Davidson, Frank Conroy, Edythe Benedict, Orrin Berke, Sootho Howard, Paul Mooney,
William Benedict, Wilfred Lucas.

A part of the spectacular new gangster cycle launched by "G-Men", with the
stream now on the efficiency of the law enforcement agencies rather than on the
color of the gangsters themselves, "Show Them No Mercy" indicates quite clearly
where it stands by its title alone. Other contemporary gangster films bore
similar titles: "Let 'Em Have It", "Don't Turn 'Em Loose", "Hussy "Em Up". No
longer was it necessary (or in these post-Production Code days, advisable) for the
criminal to be dissected to see what made him tick; instead, like the Red
Indian, he had become a convenient mass villain for cope-and-robbers action
shows. Its production creates its own marketing time (if not its cast) indicating
that it is no more "in vogue". "Show Them No Mercy" is quite an off-beat little film,
far more interested in suspense place than a standard gangster epic. The mood is
characterically created and sustained by excellent sets and lighting, and it is quite
a little picture, even though much is left unsaid, and the drug addiction of
one of the villains is conveyed by that old device of the literary novel.
There is no individualized police hero this time, like Capone in "G-Men", and
in fact the FBI crew seem a rather heartless bunch. Unintentionally, the
crooks garner a lot of sympathy for themselves, not least in a railroad station
action sequence when a suspect is mowed down by machine gun fire, even though - for all
that the cops knew - his crime might have been no more heinous than cheating on
his railroad fare! It's a tight little movie, with plenty of humour along
with its suspense, and Rochelle Hudson, as always, a most appealing heroine.
Incidentally, some of the footage in the stock shot montage comes from John
Ford's early gangster film "Born Reckless".

"INVISIBLE STRIPES" (Warner Brothers, 1935) Directed by Lloyd Bacon
Produced: Hal E. Wallis, Jack Warner; Associate Producer, Lou Edelman;
Camera: Emmie Haller; Screenplay by Warren Duff from a story by Warden
Thomas, Lee Gorcey, Margot Stevenson, Marc Lawrence, Joe DeSoto, William Haade
With: George Raft, William Holden, Humphrey Bogart, Flora Robson, Jane Bryan,
Paul Kelly, Noromi Oho, Tully Marshall, Henry O'Neill, Frankie
Jack Mower; Al Hill, Joe Devlin, Joseph Crehan, Jack Ferrin, John Ridgely,
Victor Kilian, Walter Jams, Ma. B. Davidson, Chester Clute, Charles Wilson,
Selma Jackson, Frank Pyle, Harry Parnell, John Hamilton.

In a story sense, "Invisible Stripes" is pure formula - the kind of thing that
Warner's would normally have made as a "B" with Dick Purcell and John Litel.
But, obviously trying to milk their current gangster cycle ("Angels with
Dirty Faces", "The Roaring 20's", "Each Dawn I Die"), they were throw-in a
lot of top names, some real production values and the usual Warner zip in the
action scenes, in never quite escapes its formula category, but it's a most
entertaining film within the limits of that formula, and its incredible (by
modern standards) cost makes it something of a mystery as to why it has
never been reissued, or even by the New Yorker. Some of the characters
(Paul Kelly, Margot Stevenson) have surprising depth to them, and all of the
characters at Warner's zip in (except Flora Robson - better served at Warners in "The Sea Hawk" and "We Are
Not Alone" - as George Raft's mother! Like most films of this type, from
"You Only Live Once" or, the scales are too loaded against the hapless hero,
that one can't really take his misfortunes or his antagonists, seriously.
In fact one soon loses interest in Raft, and becomes much more concerned with
the fate of Humphrey Bogart, who manages to dominate it all quite easily!

William K. Everson

Good News for horror afficionados: it has now definitely been confirmed that
color print of "The Mystery of the Wax Museum" has been found; it's in this
country, and from one of the few sources, you should be seeing it soon; the
"Old Dark House" has also been doped and preserved; and we'll be bringing back a
further "lost" horror classic from Europe this Summer. You'll also be seeing
"Seven Footprints to Satan" at the MMA before too long, so it'll be a good
year for us all - even though it'll leave Bert Gray with nothing left to
live for except the new Russ Meyer production.  

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June 30 1936
The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society