Monday next, October 13th: An off-beat drama: "LADIES' MAN" (1931) with Kay Francis, William Powell and Carole Lombard; and an equally off-beat comedy, "THE MEANEST GAL IN TOWN" (1934) with Zasu Pitts, James Gleason, Port Kelton.

October 6 1969

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society


Despite its unpromising title, "A Desert Wocing" (which we last ran over eight years ago) is an extremely enjoyable programmer mixing action, drama, comedy and romance, held together by some elaborate and often quite fine subtitles. Something of a combination of "The Taming of the Shrew" and "The Wind", with a bit of Bill Hart thrown in, it aims at providing something for everybody.

The western aspect of it all is downplayed however; Jack Holt, a fine rider, has some good rough-riding scenes, but they're all edited down to a nubbin, presumably to keep the film out of the "western" category and ensure its acceptance as a classier "drama" instead. It's a real pleasure to see Holt again, and what a pity that so few of his silents are available today. He has a typically virile role here, and just the right clean-cut no-nonsense name for his manly character - Barton Masters. Enid Bennett (who died just recently, the wife of Sidney Franklin) cuts a more attractive and appealing figure than she did in her plumper "Robin Hood" days. Incidentally, there's a lovely shot of 1918 New York (5th Avenue and 42nd Street) at the very beginning of the picture, with part of a poster for Griffith's "Hearts of the World" nicely in view. But Tom Ince wasn't one to plug a competitor's picture on purpose, and the shot was probably taken and edited in before his eagle eye spotted it. However, he leaves you in no doubt as to who produced THIS picture -- in the credits alone, his name appears no less than six times, sometimes twice on a single title card -- and then there are the Ends of reels, and the final end title itself!

The print is an original one, and at least a generation better than the copy we showed in early 1961.

"THE COMING OF AMOS" (Cecil B. deMille Productions-PDC, 1925) Dir: Paul Sloane Camera: Arthur Miller; scenario by Garrett Fort and James Creelman from the novel by William J. Locke; 5 reels

With Rod la Rocque, Jetta Goudal, Noah Beery, Trixie Friganza, Arthur Hoyt, Richard Carle, William von Brincken.

The combination of Paul Sloane, one of Hollywood's least interesting directors, and Rod la Rocque, one of its worst actors, teamed up for one of deMille's PDC programmers, is not an unduly exciting prospect. (The majority of the deMille LaRocques were pleasant and adequate but no more, and some of them, like "Stand and Deliver", were frankly dreadful!) But "The Coming of Amos", happily, is one of the very best of the group. Coming at the beginning of deMille's independent period, right after he left Paramount, it has far more care and production values than the later la Rocque vehicles. The bigger budget shows not only in the cast, but also in the finesse of the camerawork; some of Arthur Miller's glass-shots are superb, and put the shaky matte-work of current movies to shame. It's always a pleasure to watch the lovely Jetta Goudal, and Noah Beery is in his element with some beautifully tongue-in-cheek villainy. The ultra-melodramatic climax, with its big dungeon scene, is splendidly done, and the whole film is genial and amiable about everything, never taking its romance or its villainy too seriously. The titles - there are few without a pun - enter into the fun spirit very nicely, and one doesn't even feel inclined to quibble over an Australia people almost exclusively by London cockneys!

To my knowledge, the last film that Paul Sloane made was a modern color version of "Madame Butterfly", made in Japan in the early 50's. It was a well-done film, and gave a good supporting role to our old friend So Jin, who died a year or so later. So far as I know, it was never released here, either theatrically or on television. "The Coming of Amos" is a fine toned print, and this would seem to be its first New York showing since we last ran it ten years ago.

William K. Everson