
Note: this program is being printed some two weeks in advance, and thus we cannot even guess as to whether the regular transportation strike will be upon us again... and even if it is, it may well be settled by the time the 5th rolls around. However, if there is a subway and bus strike on any Monday night, that program will be automatically cancelled, and rescheduled later.

December 29th 1969

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"THE GIRL IN THE SHOW" (MGM, 1929) Scenario and direction by Edgar Selwyn
Based on the play "Eva the Fifth" by John Kenyon Nicholson and
John Golden; Camera, Arthur Reed; 7 reels
With Bessie Love, Edward Nugent, Raymond Hackett, Ford Sterling, Jed Prouty,
Mary Doran, Nanda Finzi, Lucie Beaulmont, Richard Carlyle, Alice Hoe, Frank
Nelson, Jack McDonald, Ethel Wales, John F. Norrissey.

An obscure film from that transitional year of 1929 when even non-obscure films had a habit of getting lost in the shuffle, "The Girl in the Show" is a slight but rather charming little picture about a small-town "Uncle Tom's Cabin" troupe. Its appeal is nostalgic, its valueless as a motion picture than as a rather realistic reconstruction of rural time and locale. Nothing very much happens in it, yet its simple plot twists are far from predictable, and in any event it's always a delight to watch Bessie Love (still a very charming person and most capable actress) in a lead role. Be prepared to relax and not expect to encounter any dramatic thunderbolts, and I think you'll find "The Girl in the Show" a most enjoyable if minor movie.

"TORCH SINGER" (Paramount, 1933) Directed by Alexander Hall and George Sommes
Screenplay by Lenore Coffee and Lynn Starling from "Mike" by Grace
Perkins; Camera, Karl Struss; 7 reels
With Claudette Colbert, Ricardo Cortez, David Nourmand, Lydia Roberti, Baby Leroy,
Florence Roberts, Shirley Ann Christensen, Cora Sue Collins, Ethel Griffies,
Helen Jerome Eddy, Mildred Washington, Charley Grapewin, Virginia Hammond, Albert
Conti, Kathleen Burke, Davison Clark, William B. Davidson, Bobby Arnet,
Edward Le Saint, James Burke.

"Torch Singer" is a curiosity indeed — a stark, Warner-Brothers-type of sex and confession melodrama, but done with the glossier, ladies' magazine approach of Paramount and steering clear of the raw but more honest characters that populated such stories over at Warners. None of it is very credible, and since Miss Colbert rises from unwed mother to luxury and the top income tax bracket very quickly, it doesn't even have the superficial realism of the Chatterton, Davis and Stanwyek trawlers in Burbank. However, it's a surprisingly enjoyable film, held together almost entirely by the four-de-force performance of Claudette Colbert, who not only runs the emotional gauntlet, but puts on an altogether remarkable show as a singer. Clearly it is her voice, and she not only sings well, but "sells" her songs well in terms of style, stance, body movements and so on. It's an aspect of the Colbert personality that never seemed very likely, and the surprising thing is that she wasn't immediately thrust into more of the same.

--- W. K. EVANS ---