Monday next, April 20: "THE SROCK" (1923, dir: Lambert Hillyer) with Lon Chaney, Virginia Valli; preceded by "THE BELLS" (1925, dir: James Young) with Lionel Barrymore, Boris Karloff, Gustav von Seyffertitz.

April 13 1970

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"YOU WILL REMEMBER" (British Linc, 1960) Directed by Jack Raymond
Produced by Charles Q. Steele; Camera, Henry Harris; Story, based on the life of Leslie Stuart, by Lydia Hayward; additional scenes by Robert Morley and Sewell Stokes; musical director, Percival Mackey; 7 reels
With Robert Morley, Emlyn Williams, Dorothy Hyson, Allan Jeayes, Tom E. Pinaulas, Gertrude Musgrove, Charles Lefaux, Mary Kerrall, Nicholas Phipps, Muriel George, Olaf Olsen.

Although 30 years have given it an added patina of nostalgia, and new perspective in terms of Robert Morley's work, "You Will Remember" is still a rather good example of what (at that time particularly) was wrong with too many British films. It lacks showmanship, and more important, it lacks the courage of its own convictions: nobody connected with the production really seemed to have been convinced that it was worth doing at all. Admittedly, it was made before the vogue for musical biographies ("The Great Waltz" excepted) and it also made for a relatively small British independence, and by the low standards, it is quite a creditable job. On the one hand, the highlights - actual or scenario-devised - of Stuart's career are handled so casually, and with such a vague sense of period and chronology, that the biographical aspect looks like merely a flimsy framework to present his still charming music. And yet on the other hand, apparently unconvinced that the music still has merit, the film gives us far too little of it. The film has a certain charm and it moves quickly, but it sorely needs a little Hollywood expertise. It also has a substantial academic interest as the first British film and first starring film role for Robert Morley, extremely well-known on the stage as actor-writer of course, but - "Marie Antoinette" apart - a newcomer to film. Without knowing whether Stuart really was like this, it's difficult to tell whether it's a good performance or not, but one does rather get the impression that Morley tackled it right after absorbing Jannings' performance in "The Last Command". Since Morley later did the Gilbert & Sullivan and Oscar Wilde biopics, he perhaps comes closest to being Britain's Muni - although fortunately he has devoted the greater part of his screen career to comedy roles. In any case, the film is an interesting showcase for him. Nobody else has much to do, although Dorothy Hyson (seen here recently in "The Ghouls", to be seen again soon opposite George Formby in "Spare a Copper") is as always both charming and graceful.

"FIRST LOVE" (Universal, 1939) Directed by Henry Koster; produced by Joe Pasternak; screenplay by Bruce Manning, Lionel Hawes; musical director, Charles Previn, orchestrations, Frank Skinner, arrangers, Joseph Valentine; 8 reels

Although perhaps a trifle formulaic, and lacking the genuine freshness of the very first Durbin vehicles, "First Love" is still "vintage" Durbin, and one of the good early group which perhaps came to its climax with "Nice Girl". The plot is a deliberate and obvious "modernisation" of the Cinderella fable, and all power to it for bringing its fairy-tale qualities so clearly into the open, allowing for the huge earning-power of Deanna Durbin films in those days, it is still an extraordinary production in terms of gloss and lavish sets; no other Durbin films were ever quite so handsomely mounted. The big ballroom set would seem to be a glistening re-vamping of the old "Phantom of the Opera" set, wherein Chaney descended the stairs to parade through the revellers. The cast is full of old Universal favorites, Eugene Pallette type-cast again as the gruff millionaire, and Leatrice Joy inheriting Alice Brady's scatterbrain-wife role. Lovely Peggy Moran, unbilled, but the wife of the director, decorates some of the earlier scenes rather nicely. There appears to be very brief scene missing in the middle (at the riding stables), but if so, dialogue carries it perfectly. All in all, "First Love" is still a most enjoyable, carefree diversion, and in this day and age it's rather nice to see a film in which the bitch gets her comeuppance and there's a happy ending for all who deserve it.

William K. Everson