"THE INCORRIGIBLE DUKANE" (Famous Players-Lasky, 1915) Director: James Durkin A Daniel Frohman presentation, based on the play by George C. Shedd; 5 reels with John Barrymore, Helen Weir, Stuart Baird, William McDonald, Wm. T. Carlton

For years the earliest known extant Barrymore films were the 1920 "Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde", and rare ones most infrequently shown, his 1917 "Raffles". "The Incorrigible Dukane" from 1915, his fifth film, thus fills in a major gap. Only two prints of it are known to exist, so we can be only grateful for the rather harsh print quality. If it were not such a rare Barrymore, it probably wouldn't cause any undue excitement, for certainly as an entity on its own, and as a Barrymore vehicle, it is quite a bit below the standards of "Raffles" of only two years later. Its plot is curiously Fairbanksian - in fact it almost parallels "When the Clouds Roll By". But whereas Doug plays the repressed Easterner who goes West and proves he's as good as he thought, Barrymore plays a dissolute and drunken playboy who is made into a man almost in spite of himself. The Fairbanks films, coming later, had more speed and were more elaborately mounted, shooting both in New York and in California. Here, while the city streets are nostalgically authentic New York, the rather tame East Coast landscapes are made to double, none too convincingly, for Colorado! And the villainy likewise lacks subtlety, having none of the tongue-in-cheek quality of the Fairbanks heavies, but rather duplicating the direct schemings of Paul Panner in "The Perils of Pauline", with a bomb as the answer to all obstacles. Barrymore himself, wearing a mountache that makes him look quite astonishingly like blackmailer Liang, incidentally rather more than he actually was, is not too well served by the direction or the photography. There's hardly a full closeup in the entire picture; while all of the standard Barrymore mannerisms and bits of facial "business" are there, they're all but lost in the medium and long shots. As if aware of it, Barrymore mugs and clowns rather too energetically at times, as though he were a slapstick comedian suddenly dumped into unfamiliar territory. The whole film has the typical stagy look and harsh lighting of most of the early Famous-Players films, and it's to Barrymore's credit that his personality gets through at all. But it does, and the film itself moves briskly, combining comedy, whimsy and action quite effectively, though downplaying the romance. Incidentally, an Eastman House brochure includes the name of George Foisy in the cast; we haven't been able to pin him down however, and it may have been a misprint intending to list Foisy as the cameraman.

"THE GREAT K & A TRAIN ROBBERY" (Fox, 1926) Directed by Louis Seiler Scenario by John Stone from a story by Paul Leicester Ford; Camera, Daniel Clark; 5 reels With Tom Moore, Tony, Dorothy Dean, Ed Piel or., William Walling, Carl Miller, Harry Gripps, Curtis McHenry.

For years as rare as the early John Barrymore have been the peak-period Tom Mix westerns. Only the untypical "Riders of the Purple Sage" and (happily) the first-rate "Sky High" have been available. Now a whole rediscovered group (including a couple directed by John Ford) is in the process of being copied and preserved, and "The Great K & A Train Robbery", one of the best, is the first to come to light. It could hardly be a more typical Mix vehicle; superbly photographed by Dan Clark on location at the Colorado Oreg., it follows the Mix pattern to a "T" - non-stop action, elaborately mounted stunts (some of the train stuff in the opening reel is quite incredible, with Mix apparently doing most of it himself), and a neat welding of rugged and realistic action with a decided non-realistic story in which the scenario is never very threatening and nobody ever gets hurt. The story is already well under way in the first scene, and the pace never lets up, though it frequently changes to a stress on comedy. Even though this is from Mix's biggest money-making period. For every other Mix film was bestracked into pretention and bigger "prestige" productions. It remains fast, economical, brief (less than 5000 feet) production, giving the fans EXACTLY what they wanted. It's the reason that Republic, producers of the best sound westerns, often failed to heed. Every dollar spent shows up on the screen, but apart from the glossy photography and locations, there's no attempt made to dress the picture up to look like a special. The only complaint that one can really direct at the Fox Mixes - and it seems a churlish one - is that they all had such solid production values and kept the action moving at a pace they never seemed to think it necessary to build up to big climaxes. The films run finish on the same even keel, a rather surprising lapse in showmanship, although not enough of a lapse to produce a sense of disappointment.

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