Monday next, October 12th: Our mid-30's "E" film program, starting at 7:00 p.m.
From Paramount, Robert Florey's "DAUGHTER OF SHANGHAI" with Anna May Wong and
Buster Crabbe, Republic's "BORN TO BE WILD" with Ralph Byrd; and from Warners,
"PUBLIC ENEMY'S WIFE" with Pat O'Brien, Margaret Lindsay, Robert Armstrong.

October 5 1970

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"THE RANCHERO'S REVENGE" (Biograph, 1913) Directed by D.W. Griffith
Camera: C.W. Bitzer; one reel

With Lionel Barrymore, Claire McDowell, Harry Carey.

This is a generally unfamiliar Griffith Biograph, not particularly remarkable
since it is as late as 1913, but well constructed, well acted, and making
promising use of the California locations. The film was later reissued
under the title "Greed", and the rather florid titles in this print are from
that later release. After Griffith's success with "The Birth of a Nation", many
of his earlier Biographs were reissued, much to his annoyance, and the new
titles was done not only to stress the affinity with Griffith, but also to
lengthen the footage so that the films no longer appeared to be tight one-reelers.

"THE CURE" - Out of the Inkwells series. Produced by Max Fleischer
Directed by Dave Fleischer; one reel

Since the "Out of the Inkwells" films were not copyrighted, we can't give a
specific date for this delightful mid-20's cartoon. It's a pitch-perfect,
sophisticated piece of animation, with some skillful live action interpolations
and quite complex effects. Smooth and inventive rather than really funny, it
still has some good gags - and a brief Jewish stereotype gag that almost matches
a similar gag in Disney's first version of "The Three Little Pigs".

- intermission -

"THE SHOW" (MGM, 1926; released, 1927) Produced and directed by Tod Browning
Screenplay by Waldemar Young from Charles Teney Jackson's novel "The Day
of Souls"; Camer, John Arnold; sets by Cedric Gibbons and Richard Day;
titles by Joe Farahain; 7 reels

With John Gilbert, Rene Adoree, Lionel Barrymore, Edward Connelly, Gertrude Short;
Andy MacLeam, Polly Moran.

Although "The Show" has never enjoyed a major reputation one's curiosity in it
has always been piqued because those who have rediscovered the film - for example,
James Card of Eastman House - have invariably been historians whose opinions are
worthy of respect. Its recent erroneous inclusion in the Museum of Modern Art's
exhibition and book on "lost" films merely added to this tantalising aura.

Also, it must be said admitted that while it is a good and healthy thing when
any film resurfaces after years of obscurity, there are sometimes very good
reasons for that obscurity, and "The Show" is a case in point. It's the kind
of film that tends to reinforce the opinions of the unknowing that the silent film
world was odd, slow and over-wrought. If Browning was indeed an
artistically assured yet neutral filmmaking diet - one would hope that he would confine
his films like this in the depths, while bringing out plenty of Tournesols
Borzages into the sunlight. (And of course, one would also hope that those
Depths would at least be accessible to film students!)

Even admitting my own rather strong anti-Browning bias ("Freaks" always excepted),
"The Show" does seem to contain all of the Brown vices and few of his virtues.
A compelling and attention-getting opening - a Browning trademark - isn't
necessarily virtues in the film, which falls off and the tone spirals downwards
after that opening. Here all the bizarre sideshow attractions seem to promise
much in rich and colorful melodrama, but that promise is just never fulfilled.
The plot, too, consists of the standard Browning mechanics. I would agree with
the point made in a recent "Films in Review" letter (though not with the enthusiasm
with which it was expressed) that irony was an essential ingredient of Browning
plotting; but it soon became merely a gimmick, just as the shock tragedy of so
many early Brown films was an artificial device. I know nothing of the original
novel from which "The Show" was adapted, but it seems to have been redrafted to
the standard Browning formula; Barrymore in fact seems to have exactly the same
role (and the same modus operandi) as Chaney in "The Unknown" - except that
Barrymore's role is smaller and less bizarre. Another major liability of "The
Show" is that its camera speed demands silent speed projection most of the time -
making its thin and already too drawn-out plot even longer. Still, there are
compensations, the occasionally interesting sets, Alton's always interesting
directing, and Browning's performance, which do a lot to offset the absurdity of
plot and the tedium of pace.

It's good to have so many Bolings back with us - either to re-establish his legend, or to demolish it - and either here
or at the New School, we'll be getting to a lot of the silent Brownings over the
next six months.

Wm. K. Evererac