For literally several years we have been wanting to show an example of the short-lived series of early talkie 2-reelers that Harry Langdon made for Roach. Unfortunately, every one that showed up -- "The King", "The Fighting Parson" -- was worse than the preceding one. Langdon was obviously floundering; accepting no guidance or direction, and literally destroying himself. While Laurel and Hardy almost accidentally found themselves using -- and milking -- one or two simple situations for an entire comedy, Langdon went after that end deliberately, literally standing around and pantomiming sequences that had no valid comedy content to begin with. It was pathetic to watch this once great talent in such surroundings, and it was for this reason that no Langdon- MGM was included in the recent Roach cycle at the MFA. "The Shrimp" however, while still of greater academic than entertainment interest, is at least amusing enough to justify a showing to illustrate this particular MGM-Roach group. When we say that it's by far the best of the group, you'll have some idea of how unspookedly bad the others are. But it does have its moments, an interesting cast, and, oddly enough, the voice of Wilfrid Lucas dubbed in for the actor playing the doctor who introduces Max Davidson.

"THE WORLD IS OURS" (20th Century Fox, 1939) Directed by Basil Wrangell
Story and screenplay: Lou Harris, Herman Hoffman; Special Effects, Gordon Jennings; Music: David Snell; Narrator, Truman Bradley; 2 reels With Samuel S. Hinds, Dorothy Peterson, Charlie Grapewin, Anne Shirley, Johnny Walsh.

Here's a rather sadly nostalgic flashback to the days when Hollywood was really king and knew it -- and patted itself on the back for being the world's greatest artistic and cultural influence as well as being a leading entertainment media! It uses as a launching pad one of those ombre- colored innocuous families which (hopefully) existed only in Hollywood, and the computerized catering to which reduced the intellectual level of the Hollywood film to such appallingly low levels between (particularly) 1936 and 1939. It's hilarious on that level, fascinating on another, for just about every star in Hollywood (at least, of the companies belonging to the MPPA -- thus Monogram is represented, but Republic is not!) is shown during the course of these tightly-packed two reels. Apart from the pomposity of the narration, some incredible errors are made: The family sees "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" at their home town theatre, and later in Hollywood sees the film being shot. Moreover, head of the family Sam Hinds doesn't seem too surprised at seeing Sam Hinds on a Columbia set! In addition, James Stewart appears to be working for Capra and Selznick simultaneously, and the ease with which this family breezes in and out of studios and locations is never quite explained! Charlie Grapewin, in his best Jeeter Lester-Grandpa Joe manner, complains about the moral level of all the current movies with their "huggin' and kissin'"; one shudders to think what he'd say if this short were being made today!

"THE DANCERS" (Fox, 1928; released 1925) Directed by Emmett Flynn

Not all of the recently mined Fox films glitter with genuine gold; "The Dancers" is little more than elaborate programmer material, its limited potential not even fully exploited due to its straightforward and unimaginative direction by Emmett Flynn, much more at home handling the company's Westerns with Tom Mix. Not having read the original play, I can only assume (from its authors) that it had considerably more depth than this, and that (if used) its symbolic cutting book and forth between the dancers of the world had more symbolic point. Here its Victorian morality is decidedly quaint, literally equating dancing and night-club life with sexual debauchery and sin; although actually such morality was far more commonplace in America of the 20's than we often think, misled as we are by such diverting but not necessarily representative jazz-age films as "Our Dancing Daughters." With its fascinating comments on contemporary fashions, its interesting cast (George O'Brien does surprisingly well with little direction) and its generally good production values -- enhanced by a fine toned print - this is an intriguing little pot-boiler for all of its flaws. Fox remade it in 1930 with Lois Moran, Mae Clarke, Phillips Holmes, Mrs Patrick Campbell and Walter Byron, changing and updating the plot to its decided benefit, and getting quite a bit more movement and action into it. -- Ms. K. Eversgam