"WILD COMPANY" (Fox, 1930) Directed by Leo McCarey
Scenario by Bradley King from an original story by John Stone and Bradley King; Art Direction, Stephen Goosson; Camera, L.O. O'Connell 6 reels
With Frank Albertson, H.B. Warner, Joyce Compton, Sharon Lynn, Claire Doddwell, Mildred Van Dorn, Bela Lugosi, Richard Keene, Frances McCoy, Kenneth Thompson, Bobby Calahan.

An ordinary little late-jazz age melodrama that possibly doesn't warrant the considerable expense of preservation (outside of a utopian world in which all film is preserved!) "Wild Company" is something like the silent "Walking Back", though rather less exciting. Its basic interest to us today is the academic one of its being representative of Leo McCarey's transitional period of being a first-rate director of silent comedy shorts for Hal Roach and, from 1932 on when he hit his stride again, a first-rate comedy director of such features as "Duck Soup", "The Kid from Spain" and "Ruggles of Red Gap". It is his fourth sound feature, his first under a much-publicised (but generally unproductive and short-lived) new contract with Fox. If it demonstrates no great subtlety or skill, it is at least a big step forward from his first feature, 1929's "The Sophomore", which we played some years ago. Curiously, it doesn't "look" like a Fox feature; it's well-enough mounted, with no skimping on sets or extras, but somehow it looks more like an above-average effort from Tiffany or Pathé rather than a routine one from Fox. However, it is too short to be dull. The cast is interesting - amusing Bela Lugosi as a smooth night-club operator, and one's only complaint in the frequent cutting away from the limited musical element and the consequent minimising of Sharon Lynn's contribution. Interestingly enough the film's then up-to-date moralising about wayward youth and the responsibility of the parent is constantly being echoed today in movies, newspaper editorials and so on - although the climactic lecture at-the-audience seems a trifle misplaced in view of the innocence (just proven) of the young fellow (Frank Albertson) who has provoked it.

DICK TURPIN" (Fox, 1924; released 1925) Directed by John O. Blystone
Scenario by Charles Kenyon and Don Lee; Camera, Dan Clark 8 reels
The Cast: Dick Turpin (Tom Mix); Alice Brookfield (Kathleen Meyer); Tom King (Alan Hale); Lord Churiton (Philo McCullough); Squire Crabstone (James Marous); Sally, the maid (Lucille Hutton); Bully Boy (Bill Montana); Barmaid (Fay Horderness); Bristol bully (Jack Herriott); Taylor (Fred Kohler)

Although one of the longest and biggest Tom Mix vehicles, and certainly one of the most elaborate in terms of sets and decor - and also one of the best preserved by the critics, who thought it grand stuff and sure-fire entertainment - "Dick Turpin" was one of the least successful Mix films at the boxoffice, and one that Mix fans tend to recall with apathy if not disfavor. I suppose at the time the near doubling of the normal length literally meant cutting the customary Mix speed in half, and in direct comparison with the regular Mix westerns it may well have seemed a bit ponderous, just as "Robin Hood" by Fairbanks suffers by direct comparison with "When the Clouds Roll By". Today, however, while admittedly a bit protracted and slow-moving in spots, "Dick Turpin" is a vastly entertaining semi-western swashbuckler, carefully made, and with the big action sequences done in the typical tongue-in-cheek Mix manner. However, since the Turpin story is so well-known, and even allowing for the fact that history has given him as a great a whitewash job as it gave Jesse James, the totally false happy ending (though understandable for a Mix vehicle) strikes as discordant a note as the happy ending to Vidor's "Billy the Kid". It's a pity that Fox couldn't have taken the film seriously enough to end with Turpin's death, even if romanticising it. (In the same way, it's a great pity that none of the 'thirties and 'forties films included the very much romanticised but generally "accepted" version of Robin Hood's death; Fairbanks could have handled it beautifully, as he later showed in "The Iron Mask"). Incidentally, there was a rather good early-'30s British "Dick Turpin" with Victor McLaglen that would bear reappraisal today. Direction of "Dick Turpin" is by the durable John Blystone, brother of Stanley Blystone (stock villain in silent and sound films). Blystone's career is worthy of research and indexing some day - it was long and varied, and included one of the best Laurel & Hardy features, "Blockheads".

Wm. K. Everson