Monday next, Nov. 8th: John Ford's "THE WORLD MOVES ON" (1934) with Madeleine Carroll, Franchot Tone, Reginald Denny; preceded by "Crothers", "Moving Millions" and a 2-reel Technicolor Popeye "Aladdin and his Lamp".

November 1, 1971

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"TRACKED BY THE POLICE" (Warner Brothers, 1927) Directed by Ray Enright

Story by Gregory Rogers; camera, Edwin DuParr; Art Directors, Cedric Hardwicke, Lewis J. Selby; Electrical effects, F.M. Murphy; 6 reels


"tracked by the Police", last shown by this society some ten years ago, is one of Rinty's best pictures. As "satan - loyal and true - with the heart of a lion and the soul of a child" Rinty has one of his best roles, and the film is to him what "The Narrow Trail" was to Bill Hart. A seasoned veteran by now, Rinty goes through his whole bag of tricks - dramatization, comedy, pathos, stunts. And when variations on those elements (Rinty's canine sagacity only occasionally helped by a camera trick) seem exhausted, the writers drew up moral and ethical problems too -- shall he save his master's girl-friend, or his own mate Kentette, when circumstances place both in dire jeopardy at the same time. The human actors matter little, and in point of fact there are remarkably few of them - the huge dam project seems manned only by a crooked work-boss and a decidedly miniscule non-union crew. Hero Jason Robards spends most of the film ineptly depending on Rinty to help him out of his scrapes; wounded (shot, plus a broken bone or two) and decidedly ill-matched in a flatic battle with Tom Santschi, he does (presumably) win, but the knock-out punch takes place off-screen. As for Tom, his broad variety of old-fashioned variety - evil for its own sake, with no time taken to explain why he is so determined to (a) murder the dog and (b) kill Rinty, and (c) seduce the heroine. The film was top production values, even the Iverson's Ranch location - a drab area - given gloss by camera angles carefully placed high up in the rocks, where the scrubland doesn't show so clearly. The principal dam location presumably utilizes some of the preparatory work sites for the Hoover Dam and its environs, officially launched in 1928, but being much talked-about and prepared-for the year earlier. Incidentally, don't waste time trying to figure out the meaningless titles. In those days films were blocks booked well in advance, and if a distributor didn't come up with a contracted-for title, the exhibitor could legally cancel his booking. Hence the last-minute title explanation here, that Rinty had been made an honorary cop for his valor, to justify retention of a totally unrelated title. It's hard to believe that any exhibitor would quibble however; "tracked by the Police" is literally two reels of establishing footage and four reels of climax. It has even less plot that some of today's movies - but is a good deal more entertaining and better put together. As some of you will recall, we were supposed to play this film last June, but there wasn't time to put in the several hours of splicing that the disassembled print needed. This has now been done and the print is very full of splices, but hopefully it won't be too apparent on-screen. Less that a minute was unrestored; some scenes for example consisted of rapid cutting between closeups of Rinty and reaction shots of Tom Santschi, scenes so brief that to have inserted them, losing frames and adding splices in the process, would have been pointless. In a few cases, and there were only about three such scenes, where there might have been four such cutaways we replaced just two or three. I mention this only in case a jump-out here or there might suggest that more is missing, but the deleted frames are negligible with, as I say, a combined running time of less than a minute through the entire picture.

"THE LAST OUTLAW" (Paramount, 1927) Directed by Arthur Rosson

Screenplays: John Stone, J. Walter Ruben; Original story, Richard Allen Gatze; Camera, James Murray, 6 reels.

With Gary Cooper, Jack Luden, Betty Jewel, Herbert Prior, Jim Corey, Billy Butts, Flash the Wonder Horse.

Released just a month or so after "tracked by the Police", "The Last Outlaw" is one of the very few remaining examples of the program westerns that Gary Cooper made for Paramount in the late 20's. It's much superior to "Nevada", the only other one generally in circulation in the U.S., and no other prints appear to have survived here, this particular 16mm print having been brought in from Europe. What is most surprising about it (and Nevada too) is that despite the fact the Cooper was being reared as a cowboy of some note, and then that Paramount were doing rather well with their very elaborate Fred Thomson specials ("Jessie James" etc.), "The Last Outlaw" looks exactly like any good quality B from the 30's. It's on a small-scale, and while it has quite a good script, enough action to keep it interesting and certainly a pleasing performance from Cooper, there's nothing about it to indicate that it was intended as anything other than routine program fodder. As such it's an interesting curio, and quite incidentally, the title also has nothing to do with the plot, and is explained only via a last-minute subtitle.

-- Wm. K. Amerson