Monday next, Feb 14th: Zane Grey's "THE RAINBOW TRAIL" (1925), a sequel to "Riders of the Purple Sage", and one of the most strongly-plotted of all the Tom Mix westerns; with Anna Cornwell, George Bancroft, Lucien Littlefield; preceded by a fine lampoon of "SPANGERS" (Universal, 1925) with Karien Nixon, Hobart Bosworth, Pat O'Malley, Gladys Brockwell.

February 7 1927

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"TROLLEGEN" (Furst Film, Norway, 1927) Directed by Walter Furst Scenario by Alf Rod from a novel by Kikjel Fonhuus; Camera, Ragnar Westfelt; Distribution: Norgesfilm; 7 reels

The Cast: Hans (Bengt Djerberg); Ingrid (Tove Tellbank); Gunnar Slenika (Einar Tovito); Oupsa (Trygve Larsen); Halstein Rustebakke (Harald Stormeren); Uncle Rustebakke (Nils Arehui); Piper (Hauk Aabel); Bellina (Kimi Kihle); Tjen (Egil Hjorth Jønsen); Turi (Julie Lampe).

Here, in probably its first American showing, is the film that Norwegian critics and archivists generally consider to be Norway's finest silent film. It is easy to understand their enthusiasm: not only is it a fine showcase for lovely Norwegian landscapes, but it is a slick and polished production which, on a superficial level at least, can be compared with Swedish and Hollywood production on the period. The camerawork is smooth, the editing slick and professional. It would certainly be presumptuous of me, having seen so few Norwegian films from this or any period to dispute the judgement of Norway's own film men. Yet it can't help feeling that Norway's first silent feature, Growth of the Soil (which we showed some years back) is a better, if admittedly older, production. Its plot certainly had more substance, it had much more of a genuine feeling of affinity with the soil, and most of all, its characters - and its faces - seemed real. Despite the frequent titles extolling the love of the land of the two principals, one never really believes it. The players, even though unfamiliar to us, are patently actors; the hero even wears more lipstick than the heroine.

But it's picturesque: when we know so little of silent Norwegian cinema, it's a major event when we can fill in the gap even a little. For all its obvious weaknesses, it's an economically-made film; most of it takes place out of doors and the few interiors seem to be either cauthetic, or rather meagre sets. The locations are fresh. The scenes are shot in interesting sequences shot around Oslo's railway station.

The plot, though very simple, has a strangely Stroheim-esque air to it, not only in the characters themselves, but also in the construction and use of coincidence. Some of the editing is quite sophisticated, and indicates a possible study of earlier Griffith and Stiller works, while Stroheim himself would have been delighted with the sequence where the lecherous uncle tries to force himself on Ingrid while she are riding to a fairground merry-go-round, and are being whirled about in the air in a pure-white swan boat! (The chances of successful molestation in such surroundings may be a bit remote, but the image is quite striking.) The film's many subtitles do not need to be understood for a full grasp of the plot-line; but in any case we are issuing a detailed synopsis separately, which should be read prior to the screening.

"SUCH MEN ARE DANGEROUS" (Fox, 1929; released, 1930) Directed by Kenneth Hawks; Asst. Director, Melville Burke; Produced by Al Rookett; Scenario by Ernest Vajda from an original short story by Elinor Glyn; Camera, William O'Connor; George Eastman; Art Director, Stephen Goosson; editor, Harold Schuster; 8 reels

Original title: "The Mask of Love" also released in a silent version.


"Such Men Are Dangerous" has received some mild fame as the film on which director Kenneth Hawks (brother of Howard, and husband of Mary Astor) was killed while making the brief aerial scene. For his pains, Fox removed his name from the credits, and the film carries no director credit at all. It's a curious film which sounds from its different components - a Glyn story that vaguely predates "Seconds", its cast, Lugosi in a sympathetic role - as though it should be a really colorful and bizarre work. Unfortunately it isn't. The interesting elements - including Baxter's good performance under heavy makeup in the earlier scenes - never seems to mesh properly. The heroine remains unsympathetic, the plot lethargic, the pace slow and pacing constantly rather flat. Other than for the Ukrainian ideal of preserving all film on principle, there is really nothing about it which can be said to have earned its right to preservation ahead of, for example, a lesser, routine, but still useful John Ford film like "Riley the Cop". With this totally negative approach on my part, you may well be expecting nothing at all and thus may be pleasantly surprised. Certainly there is interesting enough to justify a re-exposure - but it may also prompt a re-evaluation from the originally quite enthusiastic critical response.

--- Wm. K. Everson ---
To the mountain folk of Norway the troll-elk is almost a legend. It is seldom seen, though when it appears it is easy to follow because of its large tracks. It moves swiftly, and kills are rare. Gaupa is one of the most eager hunters. Accompanied by his best "friens", an elk-hound, he follows the elk's spoor — but on this occasion there is a mishap. He falls, is injured, and the hot has killed his beloved hound.

Found the same day, he is taken to his home by other hunters. It is a lonely, bear-like home. He almost dies of his injuries, but when he does recover, his mind has become affected, and he is regarded as "strange". He no longer hunts the elk, but constantly tells tales about it to his friend Hans, a young hunter who visits him frequently. Gaupa has also refurbished a spent bullet from the war — it killed a man then, and he is waiting to use it on the elk.

Hans lives in the valley on a small farm with Turi, his widowed mother. He works reluctantly at the big farm of the Ruskabakken, the local landed gentry, although he would rather be on his own, free, hunting. There he has met Ingrid, daughter of the house. Periodically she goes off to the mountains, to a little shack, where the cow herd grazes, and Hans suggests that they meet there.

Ingrid's father however is anxious that she should marry Gunnar, a rich horse-dealer. Their antagonism is apparent when Gunnar wants to buy her own horse. Gunnar too has a shack in the mountains, where he stores food. Tjen, a Ruskabakken servant, also has dreams of marrying Ingrid.

(During this part of the story there are occasional outsways to Gaupa, telling stories to the children about the elk.)

At one of their mountain meetings, Hans declares his love for Ingrid, apologises for his recals their different station in life, but she confirms that she does in fact love him too. Next day there is a celebration — it is her father's 50th birthday. Ingrid, Hans and Gaupa are there to help. Hans and Gunnar get into an argument, and Hans is ridiculed for wanting to marry Ingrid; her father laughs and says that he must first prove his worth by killing an elk. Gunnar and Hans get into a fit, during which Gunnar gets a knife, which then falls to the ground. He falls on it, and gunna that Hans has killed him. Two men have seen what really happened, but they are friends of Gunnar and keep quiet. Hans is forced to run away. Later he realises he can never prove his worth and decides to go to the city. Ingrid tries to find him, but it is too late — he has already left.

In the city (Oslo) Hans joins a cheap fairground act as a marksman; his boss is Piper, while the dancer with the show — Bellina — takes an instant fancy to Hans. Ingrid meanwhile has reached a decision. Her father threatens to throw her out if she doesn't remounce Hans, but she says that she loves him and is going anyway — to find him. In Oslo, Piper is annoyed because of Bellina's interest in Hans: "Remember, it belongs to me!" Ingrid arrives, staying with a rich relative who, unknown to her, has a rather unsavoury reputation. Cross-cut between the fair, with Piper taking to drink as Bellina rejects him, and Ingrid's unsuccessful search for Hans. Hans is miserable too, and longs to return to the mountains. While at home, Ingrid's father misses her and is sorry for his anger. Matters come to a head when the uncle takes Ingrid to the fairground, and tries to molest her. Disgusted, she returns home to a now more understanding father.

Hans too, decides to return home at about the same time. Hans meets no luck again — Gaupa seems to be madder than ever, and still hunts for his dead dog. One day, Hans sees Ingrid — but as a hunted killer, is afraid to approach her. Gaupa suddenly regains his senses, but only on his death bed. He gives Hans the special bullet that he feels can kill the elk, and also warns him to "beware of Gunnar" — who was not killed after all in the earlier fight. Hans' reputation has long been restored. That night Gaupa dies, and in the morning Hans goes to find Ingrid. On the way, he runs across the tracks of the elk, and with Gaupa's bullet tracks it and finally kills it.

Meanwhile, Gunnar is forcing himself on Ingrid in the lonely mountain cabin. Hans arrives just in time to rescue her, and wins the approval of her tardily-arriving father. Apart from having disposed of the lecherous Gunnar, he also points out that he has fulfilled the condition of killing the troll-elk.

Father smiles benignly and says "If I make a promise — I keep it".