Monday next, April 24: THRU DIFFERENT EYES (1929, dir: John Blystone) with Mary Nolan, Warner Baxter, Edmund Lowe, Sylvia Sidney; preceded by "ANIZONA EX-RESS" (1924, dir: Thomas Buckingham), a lightning-paced stunt action melodrama with Pauline Starke, Evelyn Brent, David Butler, Harold Goodwin. **Error: Mary Dunwoody**

April 17 1922

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"TRAILLIN" (Fox, 1921) Written and directed by Lynn Reynolds; camera, Ben Kline; from an original (1920) story by Max Brand; 5 reels With Tom Mix, Eva Novak, Bert Sprotte, J. Farrell MacDonald, Carol Holloway, Jay Morley, Cecil van Auken, James Gordon, Sid Jordan, William Duval, Duke Lee, Harry Dunkinson, Al Fremont, Bert Hardley.

"TRAILLIN" is the earliest Mix-Fox feature that we've run, and while it isn't as elaborate as the later ones, it maintains his high standards rather well. Only partially a western, it is perhaps the most complicated film we've seen since "The Big Sleep". Not only does it portray some interesting railroad scenes.

Complications in fact tend to take the place of physical action for a while, but the latter part of the film more than compensates with a marathon of really fast and exciting stunt action. Unfortunately, the film was later remade by Fox in the early 30's as "A Holy Terror" with George O'Brien and Humphrey Bogart.

IMPORTANT NOTICE relative to THE SEAS BENEATH

As we announced last week, the expected print of "The Seas Beneath" is still being worked on in a Hollywood lab, and we are forced instead to run a far-from-ideal work-print. Be warned that it is not a print which lends itself to being viewed on the magnified Ford students. Viewing it is an academic experience, not a particularly entertaining one. It is from a peculiar negative of German make-up, not a particularly entertaining one. It is a peculiar negative of 35mm dead made up for a German version. There are constant lugs of white leader intended for the insertion of German subtitles. While the sound-track has been printed, it is often but submersed beneath the musical score for the silent, non-dialogue version. Finally, it is so fantastically and inconsistently out of sync that no amount of juggling with the loop can compensate. It often starts a reel ahead, and is always out of sync! The only compensations: the copy (from an American full-length release print) now being worked on. Frankly we don't feel justified in charging an admission for a print like this, and yet our overhead remains. We'll suggest therefore that those who do not feel up to it after this description leave after the Tom Mix, and at no charge. Only those who stay will be asked to contribute on this occasion. Incidentally, by the second half of the film is virtually all action, and the mechanical drawbacks then become less irksome.

"THE SEAS BENEATH" (Fox, 1931) Directed by John Ford; scenario, Dudley Nichols.


In his interview-book with Bogdanovich, Ford rather dismisses this film, and vents his spleen on the necessity for having written an unnecessary heroine into the story to accommodate Marion Lesseing, a short-lived Fox discovery whose knowledge of German (which Ford disputes!) enabled her not only to act, but to play roles like this, but also to take the leads in German versions of other Fox films, such as "The Big Trail". Ford does admirably add a strong note of contrivance, but the film is in any case a strange mixture of near-documentary coverage of the Submarine operation in World War One and rather noveletish spy stuff. On the whole though, it is a remarkably good film, burdened perhaps with a little too much of Ford's usual comedic visual cameraderie, though this aspect is lessened in this particular print where so much of the dialogue is drowned out and the action does not always go smoothly together. It's stiff and sincere, somewhat like Anschutz's "Tell England" and plot-wise something of a forerunner of Dick Powell's "The Enemy Below". Catalina serves entreves and well for a character of this port, and the action, when it comes, is extremely ingenious and well-staged. The seascapes and sea action are superbly photographed by August (comparisons with his later Ford film "They Were Expendable" are interesting) and there's a beautiful done funeral at sea - the first of several such for Ford - in which he (as always) mixes honest sentiment with underplayed patriotism, and makes it work - beautifully. A lot of later Ford sequences - and characters - have their roots in this film, and while it is admirably something of a chore to sit through a print in this condition, it's worth the effort. The original, by the way, used an absolute minimum of subtitles in the extended German scenes.

Some of the submarine footage was used again in both "The World Moves On" and "Submarine Patrol". (John Lodge spoke fluent German, and appeared in many early German talkies).

- W.K. Everson -