WILLIAM WELLMAN - an interview (BEC-Television, Britain 1972) 3 reels

Although it tells nothing remarkably new about him or his films, this interview with Wellman, shot in London last fall, shows him to be as bluff, unpretentious and vigorous a man as one would expect.

SCENES OF CONVICT LIFE (Pathé-Zecca, 1908/9) 1 reel

Pre-dating the Warner Bros social-sensationalism of the early 30's, Pathé-Zecca made profitable use of shock and "expose" material. This grim little film is quite realistically savage, but is perhaps most interesting for the design, sense of depth and extent (emphasised by some quite long lingering shots) of its simple sets, and their fairly smooth blending with actual locations - both that blending and the set design itself being far superior to that exhibited in Porter's much later feature "The Count of Monte Cristo."

THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA (Universal, 1918) Drawn by Winsor McCay 1 reel

Despite the ravages to the print, this astonishingly little combination of newsreel and propaganda via the animated cartoon, still impresses not just with the skill of its drawing, but also for the real excitement it generates and for its real sense of film, with some quite remarkable camera "movements" created by artful design.

THE MAGICIAN (Metro-Goldwyn, 1926) Produced and directed by Rex Ingram

Adapted by Ingram from the (1908) story by Somerset Kaugham; Camera, John F. Settz; editor, Grant Wyntoek; Production Manager, Harry Lachman; sets by Henri Renessier; 7 reels

With Alice Terry, Paul Wegener, Ivan Petrovich, Firmin Gémier, Gladys Hamer, Henry Wilson, Stowitts and (probably) Michael Powell.

Ex Ingram films - the "legendary" ones like "Four Nostrums" and the less famous ones alike - invariably and automatically disappoint today, and the reason is probably that Ingram approached his films essentially as a painter. As a dramatist he was weak, and his editing was often clumsy. But he understood composition and lighting; if one is lucky enough to see an Ingram film in an original 35mm print, with all its richness, clarity, and subtlety of lighting and tinting, it becomes an entirely different and superior entity. Unfortunately, the majority of his films are available (if at all) only in black and white prints, and usually in dupes to boot. One is left with pale shadows of the originals, which may not have been works of dramatic art, but may well have been masterpieces of pictorial art. (Ingram was very much a disciple of Maurice Tourneur; the current issue of "Film Comment" contains an excellent article by Richard Koszarski on Tourneur, with specific reference to Ingram, and frame comparisons of Tourneur's "Victory" and "The Magician.") "The Magician," from a Somerset Kaugham story, is suggested by the "career" of Alastair Crowley, who also appears in some of the more interesting sound horror films, Ulmer's "The Black Cat" and Tourneur's "Curse of the Demon. In the 20's horror films had not yet become a genre unto themselves, Chaney excelled, and critics generally looked on them with disfavor. Despite its restraint, "The Magician" was criticised for being tasteless, horrible, and "un-enteraining." Nevertheless, its interweaving of "Svengali" and standard mad doctor themes are interesting, and its climactic reel with its laboratory in a tower and its wild detonation of all-out horror with bizarre humor (and some comic relief) provides such a strong blueprint for Universal's first two Frankensteins films that one feels that James Whale must have seen it and been impressed with it. Despite disappointing print quality and an over-serious approach (it is at its best in the rare moments when it takes the florid, tongue-in-cheek James Whale approach) it is quite a fascinating film, and in an original print must have been a stunner. Like Rex Ingram's other four final films for MGM (including the "Garden of Allah" and "Mare Nostrum") it was filmed at his Riviera studios and on location in France, and like all of these (perhaps partly due to leisurely shooting and lack of story line) it was a commercial failure, as opposed to his Hollywood produced films for FGK which were big moneymakers, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" in particular. The bowler-hatted, timid Englishman who appears in the fairground scenes early in the film looks like and probably is Michael Powell, later a major British director, and then a production assistant to Ingram.

Among the many prints on hand for future showings that we forgot to list in our Bulletin are the Tod Browning "The Devil's Housemaid," and two silent British adaptations of Noel Coward plays - "The Vortex" (directed by Adrian Brunel) and "Easy Virtue" (directed by Alfred Hitchcock). We plan to show these latter two together on the first program after completion of the current schedule.

Note: The sculpture and paintings shown in the early portions of "The Magician" were all done by Ingram.