Next program: November 5: "HEADWINDS" (Universal, 1925, dir: Herbert Blaché) - House Peters and Patpy Ruth Miller in a romantic-comedy-melodrama with a "History of the Shrew" motif; preceded by "THE Vortex" (Gaumont, 1927, dir: Adrian Brunel) - Ivor Novello in an adaptation of the Noel Coward play.


If "One More Spring" seems a little slow and uncertain in getting under way, it is probably because one unconsciously tries to fit it into a well-established depression-era niche. At first its raw satire suggests "My Man Godfrey"; later its moments of poetry bring "Man's Castle" to mind, and its overall impression being a fable - allied with its Central Park location - automatically brings "Men in Black" to mind. Actually, it has echoes - or foreshadowings - of all of these films, but not a theme pattern and rhythm all its own. It doesn't quite come off its true slate but one can't blame it if one doesn't assume it is going to follow a pre-ordained path. Its slight uneventful quality may also date from the fact that it's a late 1935 film based on an early 1933 novel, and attitudes about the depression had changed somewhat. The depression had been a hard reality for too long for the lyrical, almost escapist route of "Man's Castle" to be acceptable. Things were getting a little better, but not enough to call for unique optimism. Much more so than "My Man Godfrey", which has somehow fallen into a memorized niche as the "definitive" depression comedy, while "One More Spring" might well be considered the definitive Hollywood look at the depression. It is far enough along to have a certain perspective, realistic enough not to hide all the tragedy of the period under a cloak of comedy, and honest enough to stick to a climax which is hopeful and certainly, within the context of the story, a "happy ending"; but at the same time is clearly only a stop-gap, stepping-stone kind of "solution" awaiting the prosperity that is still elusively just around the corner.

Well reviewed at the time, it has been almost forgotten today for no apparent reason other than that there never seemed a valid reason for its commercial revival, and the loss of the original negative has prevented its inclusion in TV packages. It does try to preserve the former screen image of Janet Gaynor - rapidly becoming out-of-date and perhaps accounting for her lessening popularity - even to the extent of transforming her from a prostitute in the novel to an at liberty actress here. (Although one sequence does summingly suggest an adoption of the more obvious way of making a living - and then later slaps us and the heroine on the wrist for thinking so ill of her that we could even contemplate the possibility.) The film is also a welcome addition to the list of "American" themes which have always proven to be Henry King's greatest strength. The rest of the cast has some particularly notable performances: Walter Woolf King (never a very interesting screen personality, but admirably always misused and wasted) here has his most solid role, and grabs it with both hands, even though it is not always an attractive role. Grant Mitchell is excellent as the banker, even though one is reluctant to accept his humanity in the face of the more obvious ways, and some bankers given us by W.C. Fields and Preston Sturges. And best of all there's Stepin Fetchit's magnificent sequence as the zoo keeper; not only is it one of the definitive Fetchit performances, but for once his dialogue is really funny and you can understand what he says!!

"Hooah!" (Fox, 1933) Directed by Frank Lloyd; Screenplay by Bradley King and Joseph Moncure March from "The Barker" by John Kenyon Nicholson; Camera, Ernest Palmer; 9 reels. NY premiere: December, Roxy Theatre. With Clara Bow, Preston Foster, Richard Cromwell, Herbert Mundin, James Gleason, Minna Gombell, Roger Imhof, Florence Roberts.

Although a very careful remake of the 1926 "The Barker" (dir: George Fitzmaurice, with Milton Sills, Douglas Fairbanks Jr and Dorothy Mackaill), "Hooah!" (like Bigler Shark) has the kind of plot that has been re-made, officially and otherwise, a dozen times with audiences and, coming on top of Clara Bow's equally unsuccessful "Call Her Savage", and saddled in between a couple of nervous breakdowns by the star, it spoiled a total hit to her career. Today it's hard to see why, apart from the fact that Bow is playing straight the kind of role that Mae West was kidding, and too the fact that sleazy carnival stories were fairly commonplace then. But it's still a good solid film, well-mounted, peppered with good performances and dialogue (Florence Roberts especially, Preston Foster possibly miscast and unconvincingly made up by Clara, who acts well and looks great, if just a teeny bit chubby in her climax) certainly there's nothing there to suggest a fading talent; just the opposite in fact after her disappointing later Paramounts. With its message-a-trode climax, it's morally a little odd in its solution - but not more so than many a pre-Cod era