The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

November 18, 1974

STREET OF FORGOTTEN WOMEN (Independent, c.1925/26; 4 reels; no credits available)

Like "Q Ships", "Street of Forgotten Women" can be classified as a semi or pseudo documentary, but there the relationship definitely ends! And just as many of today's porn movies, with titles that vary from area to area, will prove extremely tough to track down in terms of source and credits 40 years hence, so many of the cheap sex exploitation movies of the 20's are difficult to identify today. In both cases, no matter how sublime is one's dedication to film history, the effort is hardly justified. There are no clues within the film, but the 25/26 date seems viable since the film does contain a couple of shots lifted from the German "Diary of a Lost Girl" (the first version, prior to the Babes), said footage appearing in a number of American quickies in 25/26, most notably "Little Girl in a Big City".

If nothing else, the film is a perfect example of the ultra-cheap, ultra-hypocritical quickie which makes great claims to teaching a valuable moral lesson while it is merely catering to a fast-buck market. Its ultra-simple narrative thread resembles today's porn movies in trying to personalize, and add significance to, the most familiar and common-place kind of material. But its sleazy cheapness is somehow appropriate to its subject matter, and there is some interesting location work in San Francisco. Mostly it's ludicrous and even hilarious, but one rape scene does - unwittingly I'm sure - have a certain amount of conviction.

Either the heroine was suddenly afraid that it was the real thing, or the villain was applying "Method" theory, but suddenly it comes to life and descends into the clumsy, graceless, difficult wretchedness of groupings and flailing limbs that rape probably is. Decidedly non-exotic, it certainly makes rape look like entirely too much hard work to be worthwhile. It never reaches the "X" stage however, and cute away in time. Nevertheless, for audiences conditioned to quickies like this that promise much and deliver nothing, it must have been a jolting sequence originally. People seem to have been employed for their type-cast shoes rather than their acting ability, and none of the players impress. The heroine is a tenth-rate imitation of Margarete Fischer (even being an original Fischer is a dubious achievement) and is so naive, talentless and unattractive that she deserves all she gets, and without being crude, is perhaps lucky to get such attention anyway. It's certainly a minor work, but in its own way a definitive one too, and is quite brief - though there does seem to be a blank missing towards the end (the starting of the bordello fire). Incidentally, the print contains the most appalling and totally unconnected musical score - consisting mainly of organ-placed religious themes (redeeming social value?) which we will not be using!

Q SHIPS (New Era Films, Britain, 1928) Directed by Geoffrey Barkas and Michael Barringer; produced by Gordon Craig; written by Michael Barringer and Capt. Harold Auten; reissued in 1952 with sound as "Blockade"; 6 reels; NY premiere, Cameo Theatre, Sept. 1928


Very typical of the brief but popular cycle of reconstructed World War One battles and campaigns that Britain made in the late 20's (Aquith's "Tell England" might be considered a climactic offshoot) "Q Ships" is less jingoistic than most. The title is partially a misnomer, since it is really a study of the anti- U-Boat campaign, and the Q-ship angle (already well covered at the Huff in Ford's "The Seas Beneath" and Rogell's "Suicide Fleet") occupies only the closing reel or so. The official footage is fine stuff, well matched-up, though there's not too much showmanship involved and the one use of trickery and miniatures doesn't convince. Using actors with interesting faces and theatrical presence doesn't always work either, since one becomes interested in protagonists as individuals, and then, casually, they disappear. The one attempt at a comedy interlude is jarring too, especially since it introduces three racial Allers in as many titles!! Nominal hero Capt. Auten later became a 7th Avenue independent film distributor; Admiral Jellicoe, appearing as himself, has about as much footage and animation as Berkeley's police chief, August Vollmer, did in the silent serial "Office 444"...