Monday next, December 1st: I PROMISE TO PAY (1937), off-beat gangster film with Chester Morris, Helen Mack, Leo Carrillo, Thomas Mitchell; and JUMP FOR GLORY (1937, dir: Raoul Walsh) with Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Valerie Hobson and Alan Hale, the complete version of the film circulated (and then infrequently) over the past 20 years in a one-hour TV version under its American title, "When Thief Meets Thief".

Please note: because of a conflict with a Robert Wise series at the SVA, there will be no showing on Dec.15th. That program will be re-scheduled for early 1976, and a mailing announcing it and other Spring programs will be made in mid-December.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society
November 24 1975

THE KENTUCKY DERBY (A Universal Jewel, 1922) Directed by King Baggott
Based on "The Suburen" by Charles T. Dazey, scenario by George C. Hull;
Camera, Victor Milner; 5 reels
The Cast: Reginald Denny (Donald Gordon); Lillian Rich (Alice Brown); Emmet King (Colonel Monroief Gordon); Walter McGrail (Ralph Gordon); Gertrude Astor (Helen Gordon); Lionel Belmore (Col. Rose Woolrich); Kingsley Benedict (Joe); Bert Woodruff (Rance Newcombe); Bert Tracy (Topper Tom); Harry Carter (Bob Thurston); Wilfrid Lucas (Captain Woolf); Pat Harmon (Jensen); Anna Hernandez (Mrs Clancy); Verne Winter (Timmy Clancy).

(Note reprinted from last Huff showing on Feb.27 1958)

Universal always gave the customers their money's-worth in the 20's under the Lassalle regime, and this: a rousing yet withal light-hearted melodrama, from a 1902 play, is no exception. There are several sub-plots running along together, action, sentiment, and two rival Southern Colonels who perennially sip mint juleps as they worry about mortgages, family honor, and the great shame of having Regina Denny, "the last of the Kentucky Gordons", married to the daughter of a stableman. Emmett King, perpetual Southern colonel on the silent screen, was one of the Old South's biggest obstacles to the path of true love, both in modern stories like this one, and in Civil War epics like "Barbara Fritchie" (occasionally also due for a Huffman revival). Denny is disgraced, shanghaied and shipwrecked. Three years later he arrives home the day before the big race, and is able to bring matters to a happy conclusion. "The Kentucky Derby" is fast, corny, typical fare from a company that still called itself The Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

King Baggott's direction has some neat little touches and makes it all seem much more important than it really is. As always with Universal, there are good sets and some really lovely photography: nicely composed interiors, fine sweeping exteriors, all in a good original print with blue-tinted night inserts. Denny, not yet established as a comedian and still specializing in action roles like this one (and "The Abysmal Brute") nevertheless has a lightness of touch that is most pleasing. There are good performances too from Lillian Rich, that old Griffith-Biograph trouper Wilfrid Lucas, and Harry Carter, one of the best-known villains of Universal's early serials.

--- Intermission ---

PAINT AND POWDER (I.E. Chadwick Productions, 1925) Produced and directed by Hunt Stromberg; Camera, Sol Polito; Story and adaptation, Harvey Gates; titles by Fredric and Fanny Hatton; Art Direction, Charles Cadwallier; 7 reels
The Cast: Elaine Hammerstein (Mary Nolan); Theodore von Eltz (Jimmy Everett); John St. Polis (Mark Kelsey); Stuart Holmes (Philip Andrews); Rusel Simpson (Dago Mike); Tom Ricketts (Old man at party); Derelys Pardus (Maizie Hull); Pat Hardigan (Steve McCordell); Charlie Murray (Cabbie); Ernest Belcher (Dancing Master); Fred Kelsey (Detective).

Like Herbert Brenon's "Dancing Mothers", "Paint and Powder" is a formula picture that lifts itself well out of the rut by unusual ingredients - in this case, some decidedly off-beat plot elements, and some really first-class camerawork. Although it is hardly a jazz-age film in the sense that many of the contemporary Bow and Moore films were, it inevitably reflects many of the more colorful elements of 20's movies. One wild, drunken party is an especial delight and leads one more of Stroheim's Viennese aperitifs than of the night-life of New York's theatrical crowd. The show-business background naturally brings in a number of typical and nostalgic dance numbers of the period, and there are some
nice shots of a clean and attractive Times Square by day and by night. The film is interesting too for its slight but imaginative attempts at symbolism; for example, it pre-dates Pejoe's "Broadway" with its impressionistic opening of a giant figure of Destiny hovering over Manhattan. It also pre-dates Murnau's "Sunrise" in the use of one gag routine, possibly not original here either, but developed a step further in the Murnau film.

No world-beater at the boxoffice, the film nevertheless did well enough, and the critics praised Stromberg's inclusion of the off-beat even at the risk of lessening popular appeal. All Chadwick Productions in the 20's (curiously, they all ran an exact 7 reels) were models of how to make really neat, expensive-looking independent films. Cast, sets, camerawork - all have a lush, "classy" look to them that is more impressive than some of the production values offered by major companies in the same period. (Chadwick's fortunes didn't last: his sound pictures were really cheap, and every dollar they didn't spend more than showed up on the screen.)

"Paint and Powder" plays its cliches for all they are worth, but every so often it'll surprise you by avoiding the expected. The main and other titles are snappy and bright, and the pacing tight. It's sometimes a little difficult to believe in Elaine Hammerstein as a combination of Sarah Bernhardt, Jeanne Eagels and Marilyn Miller, but she certainly puts her all into it. Formerly a Selznick star, she was here trying to make something of a comeback. However, she retired from the screen a year later when she married Los Angeles businessman James Walter Kays. Both were killed in an automobile accident in 1948. Hunt Stromberg, whose peak as a producer was under Thalberg at MGM in the early 30's, later fell on comparatively evil days, his post-30's films spasmodic and usually indifferent.

"Paint and Powder" was remade much later in the 20's, and on an infinitely smaller scale, as "Showgirl" with Wildred Harris. And some of the impressive establishing shots of NY theatres and dives, including the giant Destiny, were sold for stock footage and added distinction to several minor "B" films of 1927-29.

(Noyes reprinted from last Huff showing on Sept.24th 1963).

William K. Everson

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Note: One of the problems in running the Huff these days is finding the time to run it. We manage by cutting corners where possible, and one of the major corners is in the matter of musical scores. In the old days, with much more time, we often devoted several evenings ahead of a showing to working out the musical accompaniment. That unfortunately has now become a luxury. Both of tonight's films have the kind of structure, with much cross-cutting, that calls for a more carefully synchronised score than we have had time to do. So we hope you'll bear with us on this problem, and settle for Frank Sinatra musical standards rather than those of Erich Korngold! Needless to say, when we come up with something really special that is a major event in itself, then we will somehow find the time to do it justice.

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