Next program: Sept. 27: Two thirties' quickies on KKK themes: LEGION OF TERROR (1936) with Bruce Cabot, Marguerite Churchill; and A NATION AFLAME (Victor Halperrin, 1937, from a Thomas Dixon story) with Lila Lee, Noel Madison.

Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society September 13 1976

ADRIAN BRUNEL, director, frequent co-director, and scenarist, whose career spanned 1917 through the war years was, in a very loose sense, Britain's own Edgar Ulmer. He was not a major talent, but loved film, wrote about it, kidded it, frequently brought style to cheap or mediocre material, and never really got out of the "interesting" or "promising" category. His best film was probably "The Man Without Desire", an early 20's Ivor Novello vehicle that was one of the first to transpose German fantasy and expressionism to British cinema. He also directed that odd mid-30's Buster Keaton film "The Invader", known here as "An Old Spanish Custom". Tonight's program will hardly establish him as a subject for intensive rediscovery, but since none of the films appear to have been released here, grouping them in one program seemed academically interesting if not particularly showmanlike.

SO THIS IS JOLLYGOOD, CUT IT OUT! and CROSSING THE GREAT SAGRADA (Presented by Michael Balcon for W & F Films release; written and directed by Adrian Brunel; 1923/25; 1½ reels each)

These three films are part of a series of rather broad satires on genres and business aspects of the British movie industry. Half home-movies, half comedy shorts, they have the same lack of discipline and the same occasional success as the Monty Python shows. Everything is gagged up, including subtitles and credits, and much of the humor is obtained through counterpoint between title and image. Puns are sometimes very British, and the films have some of the off-the-cuff flavor of the French avant-garde films of the period. Oddly enough, the second entry - on censorship - which should have been the most pungent turns out to be the weakest, perhaps because it is too broad and exaggerated. Interestingly enough though, much of the fabricated lampooning language of the censor exactly blueprints the style and content of the later Hollywood Production Code rulings.

A LIGHT WOMAN (Gainsborough, 1928) Directed by Adrian Brunel; presented by Michael Balcon; Scenario by Angus MacPhail and Adrian Brunel from an original story by Dale Lawrence; Camera, Claude McDowell; Titles by Reginald Berkeley; Art Directors, Alan McNab and Bert Evans; Asst. Director, Chandos Balcon; Reissued as "Debases"; 7 reels
Starring Benita Hume, with Gerald Ames, C.J.L. Hallard, Betty Carter, Donald MacArdle, Lillian Christine, Kitty Austin, Dennis Ray, Sidney Baron, Beaufoy, Milton.

"A Light Woman" was Brunel's next film after "The Vortex", which we ran a year or so ago. It's rather typical of too many late British silents when, with the new quota laws spurring production and guaranteeing exhibition, units just took off for the Riviera and enjoyed long Summer holidays built around slimy-plotted scenarios. "A Light Woman" is an incredibly bland tale, and makes one realise how superior were the German-dominated British films of the same period, such as Dupont's "Moulin Rouge" which has a very similar plot. "A Light Woman" is a handsome, well-mounted film, and the print - clearly not screened too much - is a toned original in generally good shape. Expect little, and its sunny exteriors and watered-down Stroheim and Lubitsch situations make for interesting diversion. Benita Hume apart, the cast is generally nondescript, and Hume's charm and elegance is what holds it all together. Unfortunately however, she is far too much of a lady to really convince in a Dietrich-"The Devil is a Woman" type of role! Incidentally, an American 1920 film also titled "A Light Woman" has no connection with this one, other than that both were "inspired" by a Browning poem.

William J. Strauss