Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

SKID PROOF (Fox, 1923) Directed by Scott Dunlap; Scenario, Harvey Gates from a story by Byron Morgan; Camera, Don Short. 6 reels.
With Charles (Buck) Jones, Laura Anson, Fred Eric, Jacqueline Gladsen, Peggy Shaw, Earl Metzval, Claude Peyton, Harry Tracey, Lon Poff, Fred Kelsey.

First we must apologise for coming a cropper regarding the synopsis. The "official" synopsis that we had turned out to be from a totally different film! Not too dismayed, we turned to the always-reliable exhibitor review magazine, "Harrison's Reports", which made a point of providing detailed synopses: only to discover that they considered the film too chaotic and full of unnecessary characters to be worth synopsising! And the short API synopsis tells no more than one can assume just from looking at the film! Most of the confusion is in the opening reel, where a great deal of time is spent establishing that the villain is a philanderer who plays around with other men's wives. When Buck appears, as a mechanic who takes over half-way through a race, it becomes easier to follow. He loses the race - sabotaged from the air! - but wins a Hollywood contract, becomes a movie actor, saves Nadine - the studio's leading actress - from marrying the rotter, and of course wins the second, climactic race. We think if you ignore the titles, you'll find it a straightforward little action yarn. It's about the most complete of the usually somewhat battered Czech prints, and has some good action sequences - the aerial stuff in the first race is especially well done. Much use is also made of the old Fox Western Avenue Studios, including the exterior -- with a car discreetly parked to obliterate the word Fox on the outside fence! Scott Dunlap was a prolific director in this period, but actually his real forte was as producer, and a good one. He did Buck's last series for Monogram in the 40's.

LET 'ER GO GALLEGHER (DeMille-Pathe, 1927) Directed by Elmer Clifton; scenario by Elliott Clason from the stories by Richard Harding Davies; Camera, Lucien Andriot; Titles by John Krafft; Costumes, Adrian; Art Director, Stephen Gosson; edited by Harold McLernon; 6 reels.

Some 11 years ago Disney did these Davies stories as a tv-three-parter, and restored them to their original turn-of-the-century setting. But it's understandable than in 1927 there would have been less nostalgia for a period only a quarter of a century earlier, and thus a contemporary background was used. It's breezy action-plus-comedy format isn't so far removed from those cheap actioners that Kane Richmond and Frankie Darro did in the 30's, but Elmer Clifton doesn't let its negligible dramatic content stop him from alaming it over with all that he's got. Everything that he learned under Griffith - as actor and then assistant director - in terms of building suspense and excitement he has remembered and put to good use. Fast cutting, mood lighting, well-varied angles, the comic vignettes at just the right moment -- all these things give the film a little extra style, and while they can't make it any more important than it is, they certainly make it much more entertaining than it might have been with a Paul Sloane or a Howard Higgin at the helm.

Wm. K. Everson