Our next programs:
"The Gangsters and the Girl" (1914), Charles Ray in a good Ince melodrama; "Two Stones with One Bird" (1925), ep. 4 of the "Fighting Blood" series with George O'Hara, directed by Mel St. Clair, photographed by Leecomma; and "Barbara Frietchie" (1924, dir: Lambert Hillyer), an Ince forerunner to "GWTW", stunning toned original print, with Edmund Lowe, Florence Vidor.

"La Crise est finie" (1934, dir: Robert Biodmak), literally a French equivalent to "42nd Street"; untitled, but easy to follow and synopsis provided with Danielle Darrieux, Albert Frejus, and "Macao l'Enfer du Jeu" (1939, dir: Jean Dellancy) - edited and dubbed (well) into English, but that's all that's available; lavish von Sternbergian melodrama, with von Stroheim and Hayakawa.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

November 29, 1976

Two off-beat musicals that deserve the same bill

"Moonlight and Pretzels" (Universal, 1933) Directed by Karl Freund; dialogue director, Monty Brice; story and screenplay, Monty Brice, Si Herzig, Arthur Jarrett; camera, William Miller; dances staged by Bobby Connolly; songs by E.Y. Harburg, Jay Gorney, Herman Hupfield, Al Siegel, Sammy Fain; 8 reels With Roger Pryor, Mary Brian, Leo Carrillo, Herbert Rawlinson, Lillian Miles, Bobby Watson, William Frawley, Jack Benny's Orchestra, Alexander Gray, Bernice Claire, Mary Lange, Max Stamm, James Carson, John Hildebrand, Richard Keene, Doris Carson, Frank and Milt Britton Orchestra, The Four Eton Boys, Geraldine Dow.

First things first: "Moonlight and Pretzels" does not add to Freund's reputation, though in its own way it's as much of a horror film as "The Mummy" or "Mad Love". Presumably a technician-director was needed because the film was to be shot in a small New York studio -- in itself, somewhat of a nutty idea. One doesn't know whether to applaud the film for its courage in attempting so much on so little, or to laugh at the devil-may-care attitude which prompted Universal to release the finished film in direct competition with so many bigger and better musicals, or to be amazed that they weren't sued by Warners and Bussy Berkeley for their astounding plagiarism of the "My Forgotten Man" number from "Gold Diggers of 1933", released three months earlier. Either way, all these conjectures will keep your mind occupied if the songs and plot don't. If nothing else, it's a real curio, but not without its compensations -- among the latter, a fine, traditional, "decent gangster" portrayal by Herbert Rawlinson.


Few novelty songs have ever had quite the impact of "The Music Goes Round", which in the thirties was almost a way of life, almost causing mass insanity since even those that loathed it found themselves humming it! "Nairy Dote", "The Lambeth Walk" and all the other novelty songs of the following decade paled in insignificance beside it, and the surprising thing is that it wasn't snapped up by a bigger company for film immortality. One suspects that Columbia merely added it to an already in-work project, but they remained faithful to its spirit; taunting the audience with hints of it throughout the film, and then submerging one in it like a non-ending Chinese water-torture! However, the film was a huge success, and at the time I remember thinking that Herman Bing's rendition of the song was the funniest thing I'd ever seen! (A reasonably astute conclusion for a seven-year-old, and still perhaps quite debatable.) The film itself is cheaper and cornier than memory suggested, but lively, full of familiar Columbia faces, typical casual racism in its songs, Roselle Hudson as charming as ever, and Harry Richman wading through everything with his best Al Jolson bombast.

W.E. Everson