Next program: March 21st: A J.B. Priestley double-bill, LET THE PEOPLE SING (1941, dir: John Baxter), an edited but still substantial version of a British wartime comedy-drama, with Alastair Sim, Fred Emney and Patricia Roc; followed by DANGEROUS CORNER (1934, dir: Phil Rosen), a melodrama with an interesting gimmick; Virginia Bruce, Melvyn Douglas, Conrad Nagel, Betty Furness, Ian Keith.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

March 14, 1977

Two British films: one unknown, one under-rated.

FAKE (Herbert Wilcox Productions-General Film Distributors, 1936) Directed by Leslie Hascott; Scenario by Michael Barlow, R.P. Weston, Bert Lee and Jack Marks from a story by John Harding and William Hargreaves; Camera, Henry Harris; Music by Geraldos and His Orchestra. 6 reels


Sydney Howard was an immensely talented but somewhat unclassifiable comedian who made some 22 films in Britain between 1929 and 1945 (he died in '46), and is known in this country mainly for his performance as the amiable drunk in "Transatlantic Merrygoround". His pre-screen background was in Music Hall and Revue, and he remained a fairly big name on the London stage, starring, for example, in "Anything Goes". There's something of Charlie Ruggles, W.C.Fields, Oliver Hardy and - in matters of body pantomime, stance and gait, Lloyd Hamilton - in his screen character which, however, was never completely consistent. He was a good actor and pantomimist, and some of his best performances were in films where he did not necessarily have the lead - as, for example, the photographer in a mid-'40's version of J.B. Priestley's "When We Are Married". Many of his films were more slapstick than plot and thus pleased the younger; others were essentially situation comedies for the adults, and bored the kiddies - so that there wasn't a constant audience for his British comedies, as there was for those of Will Hay or Jack Hulbert. Nevertheless, he was considered one of the best of the second echelon of British comics, though he is all but forgotten today. "Fake" is a typically off-beat Howard comedy: a rather bitter-sweet little comedy about a mumpsy husband who almost becomes a movie star, but muffs it. Never terribly funny, but never predictable either, it's a curious little film, with some interesting location work in the Blackpool area. Virtually a lost film even in England, this rather well-worn print was discovered last Summer residing in the very studio where it was made - not filed there archivally, but tucked away in a dressing room, the studio now being devoted entirely to television production.

BLANCHE FURY (Cineguild-General Film Distributors, 1947; US release by Eagle-Lion-Rank, 1948) Directed by Marc Allegret; produced by Anthony Havelock-Allan; Screenplay by Audrey Lindop and Cecilia McEvedy from the novel by Joseph Shearing; Camera, Guy Green and (exteriors) Geoffrey Unsworth; Production Design by John Bryan; Art Director, Wilfred Shingleton; Music, Clifton Parker; Camera operator, Oswald Morris; in Technicolor. 9 reels


The best of three consecutive British films made by a noted French director, "Blanche Fury" was sold as another in a long line of "Man in Grey" type period romances. It could be considered easily the best of that long and profitable cycle, but it came late in the day and was too austere and lacking in romantic escapism to please the audience for that kind of film. Actually, like Hollywood's "Duel in the Sun" and "Leave Her to Heaven" of the same period, it was - regardless of its Technicolor - essentially an entry in the film noir grouping, and followed most of the stylistics and plot requirements of such a group, even though the color and period setting made it somewhat of a maverick. Production design, sets and color all seem to have been aimed at giving an unusual sense of depth, and the deep focus compositions are enhanced by a flawless original Technicolor print.