Next program: Monday Oct.31: Hearst at Sam Simeon: silent home movies; CLINGING VINE (1926, dir: Paul Sloane) with Leatrice Joy, Tom Moore; THE SPIELER (1928, dir: Tay Garnett) with Alan Hale, Renee Adoree, Fred Kohler, particularly good print with original music and effects sound track.

Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

October 17 1977

SECRETS OF THE FRENCH POLICE (Rko Radio, 1932) Directed by Edward Sutherland; Executive Producer, David O. Selznick; Screenplay by Samuel Ornitz and Robert Trasker, based on "Secrets of the Surete" by H. Ashton-Wolfe and "The Lost Empress" by Samuel Ornitz; Camera, Alfred Gilks; Music, Max Steiner; 6 reels


"Secrets of the French Police" is an oddity indeed; it looks as though it was initially made to cash in on and borrow the spirit of "Arsene Lupin", released earlier in the year, and that some time during production someone got to hear of the plotline of "Mystery of the Wax Museum" (then in production but not due for release until 1933) and stole some of that too! All of which is decidedly odd, since it is already based on two separate stories, and the Anastasia story is strong enough in itself to sustain interest. As it is, for a 90-minute movie, so much is happening, and the mood changes so fast, that it's difficult to keep track of it all. The switch to horror film in the latter portions is perhaps in keeping with its serial-like flavor, but takes the spotlight away from the Anastasia story. It's fast and curious (rather than furious) but certainly a fascinating little film, with an exceptionally strong cast. Ratoff is fun when he sidetracks to a Lugosi-Atwill role, and Gwili Andre, in her first American film, clearly hopes to become another Dietrich—an ambition more obviously underlined in her next film, the "Shanghai Express"-derived "Roar of the Dragon". She didn't make it, but then who did? Director Eddie Sutherland knocked this one off quickly between "Mr. Robinson Crusoe" and "Murders in the Zoo".

FIRST LADY (Warner Brothers, 1937) Directed by Stanley Logan; produced by Hal B. Wallis; Associate Producer, Harry Joe Brown; Screenplay by Rowland Leigh from the play by George S. Kaufman and Katharine Dayton; Camera, Sid Hickox; Music, Max Steiner; 8 reels


While satires on political climates often hold up extremely well (e.g., "The Front Page"), the head on political satires tend to date very quickly—not only because they lose topicality and the cutting edge of the satire is blunted, but also because audiences (and for that matter, writers and filmmakers too) become more politically sophisticated (or at least, informed) with each succeeding generation. With the way that political information has been conveyed by the mass media in this particular Watergate generation, nobody today is going to buy "First Lady" either as being particularly daring or much related to reality, and its humor is much blunted. However, since the film is withdrawn due to expiry of the rights to the play, it is worth giving it this rare cut. and it's always a pleasure to see a vintage starring vehicle for the cool, elegant Kay Francis (in the role Jane Cowl did on stage), although in this case a better role and better lines go to Verree Teasdale, and not surprisingly, her performance is the better too. "First Lady" was the first directorial assignment for Stanley Logan, a former actor and stage writer and director, who had been a dialogue director for Warners since 1933, and had worked on several Francis vehicles. He made only a handful of subsequent films, including "Women Are Like That" (also with Francis), "Love Honor and Behave" and "The Falcon's Brother". His direction here is pure theatre, but under the circumstances there was no other route to follow.