Monday next, April 10: THE ROYAL BED (1930, dir: Lowell Sherman, from a Robert E. Sherwood play) with Lowell Sherman, Mary Astor; and (probably the U.S. premiere) LORNA DOONE (1934, dir: Basil Dean) with John Loder, Victoria Horner, Margaret Lockwood, Roger Livesey, Jack Hawkins, George Curzon.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

A FEATHER IN HER HAT (Columbia, 1935) Directed by Alfred Santell; produced by Everett Riskin; screenplay by Lawrence Hazard from an original story by I.A.R. Wylie; Camera, Joseph Walker; 70 minutes (Cast: see bottom of page)

Hollywood often did extremely well by British-located stories in the 30's, frequently much better than the British themselves, and - as in this film - they certainly made the most of Hollywood's British acting colony. Alfred Santell's taste prevents this film from being the total soap opera it might have been (and as a parallel Columbia film, "Whom the Gods Destroy", certainly was) and the cast is first-rate. The English milieu is warm and evocative, if not always completely accurate. (Hyde Park's political agitation took place in daylight hours, not at night!) Rathbone, as always, is not given to too much British restraint, but it's good to see him in an off-beat and sympathetic role, and it's also interesting to see David Miven and Wendy Barrie at the beginning of their Hollywood careers, already (respectively) self-assured and very lovely.

THE MAD DOCTOR (Paramount, 1941) Directed by Tim Whelan; produced by George Arthur; Screenplay, Howard J. Green; Camera, Ted Tetzlaff; Music, Victor Young; Special effects, Gordon Jennings; 90 minutes.


Despite a modicum of graveyard philandering, "The Mad Doctor" is ill-served by its lurid PROC-type title. Indeed, the original working title and the British release title of "A Date With Destiny" is both more dignified and more appropriate, but Paramount were making a limited contribution to the new horror cycle and may have wanted the film to have been sold along those lines. (They were also over-producing at the time, and release of this film was delayed by a year). Well mounted and photographed and written with wit and style, it is much in the genre of Rathbone's earlier "Love From a Stranger" and later "Fingers At the Window". Though leisurely in its pacing and underplaying the physical menace, there is no padding. In one of his best performances, Rathbone, badly wasted since his superb cameo villainy in "David Copperfield" and "Captain Blood", gives a beautifully polished performance, though admittedly his thespic competition is not strong. He makes the most of every line, effortlessly mixing urbanity, menace and even pathos. Like Joseph Cotten in "Shadow of a Doubt", he is obviously so much more interesting than, and intellectually superior to, all of the dull males and empty-headed females who flutter around him, that his wife-murdering career seems perfectly justified.

The NY locations are a bit sketchy and a murder on the 79th St and Broadway subway station seems too easily accomplished, although a cop who blazes away at a suspect's back without even a warming shout sounds a contemporary note. A long sequence in the public library is reasonably well done, Ralph Morgan asks for it and gets it, his usual fate when he isn't playing the murderer, Kosleck is a delight, and the psychiatric dialogue superficial and amusing. On the whole, a good and enjoyable example of a vanished genre. -- Wm. K. Everson

A FEATHER IN HER HAT: The players: Pauline Lord, Basil Rathbone, Louis Hayward, Wendy Barrie, Billie Burke, David Miven, Victor Varconi, Mydia Westman, Thurston Hall, Nana Bryant, J. M. Kerrigan, Lawrence Grant, Doris Lloyed, John Rogers.

You are welcome to stay and see the Academy Awards on the big screen - although if Richard Dreyfuss wins anything, the Academy sins will be extra-magnified!