

Next program: Monday next, May 1: WE FROM KIONSTADT (USSR, 1936) and DAYS OF GLORY (1944, dir: Jacques Tourneur) with Gregory Peck, Tamara-Toumanova; IMPORTANT NOTE: the screening will take place in room 402, one flight up, on this occasion only because of conflicting usage of the auditorium.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

April 24 1978

A Pot-Pourri of Silent Shorts, 1906-1929

Piano Accompaniment by Stuart Oderman

Due to the number of shorts involved, these notes can obviously only be cursory, little more than an identification and a comment or two. Also, to our regret, the print of "A Sea Dog's Tale" had been loaned out to a tv producer for reference, has not been returned, and as of Monday morning had been mislaid by them. If lost, it can be replaced - but not before showtime. If it turns up, we'll add it of course. The chances are that it won't however, for which we apologise, and in that event we'll add it to the beginning of our British comedy program on May 8. Since the show is already quite long, I am not replacing it with another film. Also, a last-minute addition would be somewhat unfair to Stuart Oderman, who already has to cope with scoring films that have been described to him but that he has not seen. We are most grateful to him for adding a touch of class to what would otherwise have been a rather rough-and-ready scoring-by-records procedure tonight.

PARIS UNDERWORLD (Pathe, France, 1906) 1 reel

Sometimes those purveyors of "old-time movies" in the 30's and 40's came up with little gems without knowing it, and this is one of them. There's an almost Feuillade-like quality to the way that a kind of lyricism seems to exude quite naturally from the melodrama and the picturesque locations. It's not known whether the title suggesting that the "capture of the Montmartre gang" is authentic newsreel footage was carried on the original French prints, or added in the U.S. But audiences gullible enough to accept miniatures and New Jersey-staged Boer War scenes as the real thing might well have swallowed the claim at the time.

THE VENTURES OF MARGUERITE (Kalem, 1915) 1 reel: this episode "The Lurking Peril" Directed by Robert Ellis; Written by Howard Irving Young; with Marguerite Courtot.

Not yet involved in the War, America nevertheless had very definite ideas where its sympathies lay, and while the villains in the spy serials were often not identified with any given countries, it wasn't hard to figure out where they hung their helmets. In this one, "The Wolf" has set himself the formidable objective of overthrowing the U.S. Government. Like all Kalem, it's snappy and extremely well paced. This is probably the earliest film available of that very graceful actress, Marguerite Courtot, best remembered of course for "Down to the Sea in Ships".

A TOUR OF THE INCE STUDIOS (Ince-Associated Exhibitors, 1922) Directed by Hunt Stromberg; photographed by Henry Sharp; Supervised by Thomas Ince; 2 reels The usual rather excessive Blackhawk introductory titles in this instance usefully fill in some of the background information we have no space for. One of the best films of its type - even though the product covered is hardly momentous - it's a fascinating little film, obviously designed to promote Ince and cater to his ego as much as to plug new product. Stars featured are Lewis Stone, Euid Bennett, Lloyd Hughes, Florence Vidor, Douglas MacLean, Louise Glaum, James Kirkwood, House Peters and Hobart Bosworth.

THE WOMAN IN GREY (Sericeo Producing Co., 1922) Ep.10, "House of Horrors"; 2 rls Directed by James Vincent; scenario by Walter Richard Hall from an original story by C.M. and A.M. Williamson; with Arline Pretty, Henry G. Sell.

We've run odd episodes of this serial before, and this chapter is well up to standard, though it appears to have been abridged slightly, giving it perhaps a somewhat faster pace than originally.

REUNION - OUT OF THE INKWELL series (Max and Dave Fleischer, 1921) 1 reel

This series never ceases to amaze with its skill and imagination, and this one is all the more impressive for being so early.

THE HOUSE THAT DINKIE BUILT (Bray Studios, 1925) Directed by, and starring Walter Lantz. 1 reel.

Inadvertently, this is listed in the wrong order. It will be shown immediately following the Ince short, and prior to Intermission. We originally announced this as a British short, perhaps understandably since it was given to us by a director of the British Film Institute who assured us that it was. Small wonder that we were impressed with its combination animation/live action, and couldn't find any trace of it in the British reference books! Leonard Maltin immediately spotted its origins and we are most grateful to him for its identification. (But don't be too hard on the BFI; the AFI fondly lists Australian films as American in its 20's catalogue!)

SUNDOWN LIMITED (Hal Roach-Pathe, 1924) Director: Robert McGowan; 2 reels

We removed the credits from this antique print as they were unrunnable, and the rest of the film is in bad shape too, though it is a toned original. We may have some problems with it, but it'll be worth the effort as it's one of the very best Our Gangs, silent or sound. It's also a perfect example of the frankly impossible yet relatively realistically presented wish-fulfillment stories that made these films so popular.

TWO MASTERS (Paramount, 1929) From the "Great Stars and Authors" series; 2 reels
Directed by Edmund Lawrence; presented by Daniel Frohman; produced by Eugene Spitz; Scenario, Adeline Leitzback; Titles, Sidney Skolsky and Sam Marx; Camera, Lester Lang; with Mary Eaton, Guy Bates Post, Rex Cherryman, Minnie Dupree, Frederick Worlock, Paul Harvey, Robert Williams, Tammany Young.

If this is a sample of the series as a whole, then it seems a bit presumptuous to refer to "great" stars and authors. Nevertheless, it's another interesting example of East Coast production and East Coast talent -- some of which did finally make its way to Hollywood. There's some interesting location work and not a bad little vignette of a story, although it might have helped had it gotten to the climax sooner and stayed with it longer. The idea of an actor giving an appalling performance yet saving the show - and his reputation - by finding inspiration for the very last scene, is a little hard to swallow!

LOOKING FOR SALLY (Hal Roach-Pathe, 1925) Directed by Leo McCarey; 2 reels
With Charley Chase, Noah Young, Leo Willis, Bynanski Hyman.

Our only repeat tonight is a very old Huff favorite, one we haven't shown for some 20 years. Dupe print or not, it's an excellent Chase, a wild combination of sophistication, slapstick and surrealism, full of unexpected twists and satiric jibes.

Wm. K. Everson