Better remembered as an actor rather than a director (he was the seducer-villain in Griffith's "Ava Down East" in 1920), Lowell Sherman had a smooth and sophisticated style of acting which seemed to be automatically transferred to his films when he began directing in the early sound period. Although perhaps not originally he was at his best dealing with strong personalities and bright dialogue, his direction had elegance and style, if a rather theatrical style. However, in his few years as a director he made rapid progress, and two of his 1933 films—Henburn's "Morning Glory" and New West's "She Done Him Wrong"—indicate that he was well on his way to becoming a top-flight filmmaker. Unfortunately this new career was cut short by his death in '34.

"THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR THEM." (Sam Goldwyn-United Artists, 1932)
Directed by Lowell Sherman; adapted by Sidney Howard from the play by Zoe Akins; Camera: George Barnes; music: Alfred Newman.
With: Ina Claire, Medve Evans, Joan Blondell, Lowell Sherman, David Nanners, Sidney Bracey, Phillips Smalley, Creighton Hale, Ward Bond.

A fast-paced comedy of three girls on the prowl (it was one of the key sources from which the Fox trio "Moon Over Miami", "Three Little Girls in Blue" and "How to Marry a Millionaire" sprang), "The Greeks Had a Word For Them" was produced in 1932 and released the following year (although Reagan's performance here was still minimal, it was sufficient to cause the "It" of the original play title to be changed to "Them" for the movies!). It's typical Cinderella-depression fare, cynical enough to present its three heroines as amoral gold-diggers, yet sufficiently aware of basic public appeal to have the most attractive of the girls reform, while still permitting her to land her millionaire! In its dialogue and zippy comments on manners and morals, it literally oozes the spirit of the early 30's, partly as they really were, and wholly as the movie of the period had us believe they were. Well noted and directed by Lowell Sherman (who made effective and ironic use of the old iris-out device), lushly photographed by George Barnes, and played with spirit by the three girls (Joan Blondell in and out of lingerie again, and Madge Evans once again reminding us that she was one of the loveliest and most charming of all movie heroines), the force stands the test of time extremely well. Incidentally, in the musical score you'll recognize snatches from "Hoopoes" and "Teaching for the Moon"—and some of the decor in Sherman's apartment turned up the following year in Madge Evans' apartment in "Hallelujah I'm a Bum". (Richard Day was the art director on both pictures!)

ERNST LUBITSCH

Initially a director of historical spectacles in Germany, then a specialist in American maritl comedies in the silent period, Lubitsch came into his own with operetta and sex farces in the early days of sound. Too important a director to be dismissed in these few lines, we'll have more to say about him prior to the showing.

"TO BE OR NOT TO BE" (Alexander Korda-United Artists, 1942)
Produced and directed by Lubitsch; screenplay by Paul Jutis Mayer from a story by Lubitsch & Felchior Lengyel; Camera: Rudolph Mate; Art Director, Vincent Korda; Music: Werner Heymann.

Black comedy as an ingredient has been ever-present in American film, but as a genre unto itself it is a fairly recent development. Thus this predecessor of "Dr. Stranglove" and "The Loved One" was considered by many to be quite tasteless at the time, though this reaction may have been heightened by the emotional response to Carole Lombard's tragic death shortly after the film's completion. After a somewhat purgic period for Lubitsch—his last really good film had been in 1938—it was however up to his old top standard again, and its bite, subtlety, superb performances and hilarious lines make it seem fresher than ever. While other wartime comedies were playing it safe (Stevens' "The More the Merrier" or pulling their punches via too much sentiment (McCarey's "Once Upon a Honeymoon") Lubitsch's trenchant satire on the Nazis and their victims is quite undated, and still works magnificently.

-----William K. Everson-----