Although interesting, neither Flood nor Nugent were major directors, and their presence in this series is largely their teams on this particular film affords an interesting contrast with the work of today's two other directors on a similar type of film. Flood was a veteran and versatile director whose career started in 1922; Nugent was a writer-actor-director whose more outstanding work was done in the theatre.

"THE MOUTHPIECE" (Warner Brothers, 1932) Directed by Flood & Nugent; Screenplay by Earl Baldwin and Joseph Jackson, from a story by Frank Collins; Camera: Berney McGill.

Openly plagiarised from Gene Fowler's "The Great Mouthpiece" (although Fowler's forebearance was rewarded by Darryl Zanuck with a lucrative place on the payroll), "The Mouthpiece" is one of several movies based on the career of Bill Fallon, and played by John Barrymore in "State's Attorney". It has also been remade twice: by George Brent in the 40's as "The Man Who Talked Too Much", and by Edward G. Robinson in the 50's as "Illegal". The American courtroom film is a genre apart; the British Jove's (for example, "Jailbirds") is usually concerned with the principles of justice, whereas the American counterpart tends to concentrate on the mechanics of justice. In this respect, and especially for a 1932 Warner film, "The Mouthpiece" is surprisingly sober and restrained. The courtroom fireworks are less exploited than one would expect, and too the film is longer and more carefully made than the average film of its type and period. It is thus probably a less of a "fun" film than you're expecting, but conversely a better one. Warren William, less dynamic than Barrymore perhaps, gives his usual first-class performance, and leading lady Sidney Fox is rather better than usual, though not up to the one really big dramatic scene she has, Aline McMahon merely repeats her "Five Star Final" performance, Paulette Goddard is in briefly as a hard gangster's moll, and that excellent actor-director Ralph Ince is once more in fine fettle as the head of an imposing collection of gangsters, all of whom, in the tradition of the 30's, seem wholly Italian.

BEN HECHT & CHARLES MacARTHUR Superb writers, among Broadway and Hollywood's best, Hecht and MacArthur decided to turn director/producers in the early 30's with a quartet of films for Paramount. Reputedly shooting was totally disorganised, bearing all the earmarks of a combined binge and orgy. When serious work was done, it was largely under the guidance of cameraman Lee Garmes -- who acted as "co-director" on such later Hecht films as "Spectre of the Rose". Hecht and MacArthur, so brilliantly caricatured by the Spewaks in "Boy Meets Girl" (and played by James Cagney and Pat O'Brien in the movie version) remain brilliant writers, and fascinating if erratic and bizarre "directors".

"CRIME WITHOUT PASSION" (Paramount, 1934) Written, produced and Directed by Hecht & MacArthur; Camera: Lee Garmes; Sets by Albert Johnson; Montage & Special Effects: Slavko Vorkapitch With Claude Rains, Margo, Whitney Bourne, Stanley Ridges, Paula Trueman, Leslie Adams, Greta Granstedt, Esther Dale, Charles Kennedy, Fuller Kellish and, as extras, Helen Hayes and Fanny Brice.

A spectacular mixture of literary and filmic fireworks, always aware of its own genius, sometimes as good as it thinks it is, "Crime Without Passion" is a well-knit melodrama hampered only by the minor limitations of shooting in Paramount's Long Island studio, and by opening with such a dynamic slice of Vorkapitch montage that nothing else in the film can quite equal it. Another minor drawback is Margo, always difficult to understand, but here employing a mumbled self-pitying whine throughout which must provoke gasps of admiring delight from contemporary "Method" advocates. It's a self-indulgent film all the way, with Ben Hecht clearly the dominating influence of the duo, but far better a film with too much style and cleverness than one with no style at all. In any event, its flamboyance and theatricality make an interesting contrast with the equally cynical but far more realistic approach to similar material employed in "The Mouthpiece".

--------------- William R. Everson --------------