"MISS PANE'S BABY IS STOLEN" (Paramount, 1933; released 1934)
Directed by Alexander Hall; Screenplay by Adela Rogers St.John
from an original story by Rupert Hughes; Camera: Alfred Gilks
With Dorothy Wack, Alice Brady, Baby LeRoy, William Prewley, George
Barber, Alan Hale, Jack LaRue, Dorothy Burgess, Florence Roberts,
Irving Bacon, Spunky MacFarland, Edwin Maxwell, Charles Wilson, Adrian
Rosley, Charles Melvoin, Harrison Greene, Leslie Palmer, Marcelle
Corray, Louis Nathaeus, Cullen Johnson, Carmencita Johnson, Ray Barnes.

Although certainly never regarded as a classic, and commercially too
unimportant a film to have become a boxoffice landmark, "Miss Pane's
Baby Is Stolen" is one of those "sleepers" of the thirties that made
a lasting impression on everyone who saw it, and is surprisingly high
on many lists of "forgotten" films that their compilers feel should
be seen again. Of course, its distinctive title is an easy one to
remember, and in 1933 the film had a number of elements pulling for it
which are not altogether applicable today. The tragic Limbergh kidnaping
case was still front-page news, and this film was only one
of several that were inspired by it. Dorothy Wack, who had
attracted such attention with her sensitive performance in the German
"Maedchen in Uniform", had been brought to Hollywood by Paramount
to star in the popular if commercially sentimentalised "Cradle Song",
and was still a sufficiently well-publicised "new Face" for her
presence here to create interest - even though it was apparent by now
that she would not catch on as a major star, as Dietrich had. Finally
of course, the film was a good and well-plotted suspense thriller, a
refreshing change from the crime and gangster films which still
proliferated, and were still being told primarily from the underworld
point of view, without the warm and human qualities of this film.

These factors should all be taken into consideration as you watch it,
for while the film is solidly entertaining, made with craftsmanship,
and like so many good films of the early 30's, told briefly and
without padding, it doesn't have quite the impact of novelty that it
had in 1934. Nevertheless, the list of really successful medium
budget thrillers still isn't a long one, and "Miss Pane's Baby Is
Stolen" is only entitled to rank with such other "little"
picture surprises (related only in their budget classification and
their common denominator of melodrama) as "Cat People", the British
"They Drive By Night" (with Emlyn Williams), "The Window" and "My
Name is Julia Ross".

"WINNER TAKE ALL" (Warner Brothers, 1932) Directed by Roy Del Ruth
Screenplay by Wilson Mirner and Robert Lord from "133 at Three" by
Gerald Beaumont; Camera: Robert Kurrle.
With Mary Brian, Virginia Bruce, Guy Kibbee, Clarence Muse, Alan Hownhay, Dickie Moore, Allen Lane, John Roche, Rafe Harolde
Clarence Wilson, Charles Coleman, Esther Howard, Harvey Perry, George
Hayes, Julian Rivero, Selmer Jackson, Arthur Housman, Albert Conti,
and, in cut-in stock footage from "Queen of the Nightclubs", Texas
Guinan and George Raft.

The backdrop of early 30's Warner melodramas is a rich and prolific one
that we can mine for years, and the fact that "Winner Take All" is a
trifle below standard shouldn't be taken to indicate that we've
reached too lower depths of the barrel! It has however always been the
most elusive of the old Cagney vehicles, never revived theatrically
even at the New Yorker, and scarcely shown on tv, and its total
unfamiliarity prompted its selection tonight over better - but also
slightly better-known - films of a like vintage. Its main problem is
that the Cagney character, though brash and amusing, is basically
unappealing, and that the construction is uneven. This is stressed by
the sudden flashback to the rowdy night-club scene, as though somebody
suddenly realized that it was taking too long for the Cagney "image"

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the sudden flashback to the rowdy night-club scene, as though somebody
suddenly realized that it was taking too long for the Cagney "image"

to establish itself. But no WB formula picture from this era could
be without its delights: there are good lines and situations, Virginia
Bruce displays considerable cleavage quite in contrast to her more
lady-like later screen self, Mariam Nixon is charming as always, and
there's even a blatant plagiarisation (or is it an inside joke?) from
Lubitsch's "Monte Carlo", where racing locomotive wheels are put in
rhythm to "Beyond the Blue Horizon". Expect little from "Winner Take
All" and you may be very pleasantly surprised; in any case, this kind
of roughneck picture has a habit of springing to unexpected life with
the sympathetic audiences that Cagney, Warner Brothers and an early
30's vintage usually produce for us.