"ORCHIDS AND ERMINES" (First National, 1927) Director: J. Fred Santell
Presented by John McCormick; photographed by George J. Folsey;
story and scenario, Carey Wilson; comedy construction, Mervyn LeRoy; 6 reels
Starring Colleen Moore with Jack Mulhall, Sam Hardy, Gwen Lee, Mickey
Rooney, Jack Duffy, Hedda Hopper, Fred Kelsey, Frank Hagney, Kate
Price, Brooks Benedict.

"Orchids and Ermine" is a typically gay Cinderella story of the
flapper era, with few surprises in plot, but plenty of surprises in
terms of incident. Few things date quite as much as the wisecrack
subtilites of 20's comedies; many of them have seemed impossibly
labored even at the time, but even here, "Orchids and Ermine" is a
delight. The title is the tip-off, and witty, and have all that
sly, unselfconscious flavor of the spoken word. The film is one of the last of the gentle and
sophisticated comedies of the silents, and is also one of Colleen
Moore's best vehicles. ...part from its fast pace and inventive gags,
it is constantly appealing and charming... of the characters - even the
cheats and the money-grubbers - are rather likeable, and the film
has none of the underlying hardness of such recent "gold-digging"
comedies as "How to Marry a Millionaire" or "Kiss Me Stupid"...an added bonus to New Yorkers are the long sequences shot in and around
the Plaza Hotel and stop an open-top...vivacious bus; whether it if the
studio-filmed "matching" inserts don't match! The film effortlessly
catches a certain milieu of the 20's, and if it's an escapist milieu
it's no less valid, for there is as much truth in daydreams as in
realities. The film was made during director Santell's peak period,
when he was deftly turning out such diverse works as "The Little
Shepherd of Kingdom Come" and "The Patent Leather Kid". Although it
calls largely because of the charm and personality of its star, one
should mention in passing the remarkable film debut of Mickey Rooney,
playing an ultra self-confident midget!

-------intermission of 10 minutes -------

"THE SCOUNDREL" (Paramount, 1935) Written, produced and directed by
Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur; cameraman and associate
director, Lee Garmes; 7 reels
Starring Noël Coward, with Julie Haydon, Stanley Ridges, Martha
Sleep and Ernest Cossart, Josita Moreno, Lionel Stander, Eduardo
Cinnelli, Emyr Gregor, Richard Bond, Alexander 'Lococo, Helen
Strickland, Frank Conlin O.Z., 'Bitehead', Raymond Bramble, Harry
Davenport, Hope 'Williams, 'William Ricciardi, Uhei Hagawa, Carl
Schmidt, Isabelle Foster, Miss Shushinka, and Ben Hecht as an extra
(The "Professor" in the doss-house).

Unseen theatrically since the late 1940's, and never released to tv,
"The Scoundrel" is a "lost" film that more than lives up to both
meritorious and expectations. The best and most disciplined of a quartet of
films that Hecht-MacArthur made at Paramount's Long Island Studios
in the mid-30's, it is wholly independent in thought, personal in
conception, and totally self-indulgent in execution. Since the
Hecht-MacArthur modus operandi was apparently thoroughly chaotic, with
the expert team of writers quite at sea as directors, and happy to
spend most of the day drinking and playing cards, leaving much of the
direction up to cameraman Garmes, it is quite extraordinary that
such a consistent kind of film could emerge. It is flamboyant,
thriller, suddenly and unexpectedly sentimental, yet within quite
wonderful in its own bizarre way. Pliantly, unusual for its day,
when such pretensions were usually not tolerated, it is now both
dated and fresh at the same time. Once more it is the fashion for
the Writer-Director to be King; once more films are spectacularly
self-indulgent, although alas the majority of today's directors have
much less to be self-indulgent about - or with. What a pleasure to
sit back and listen to such literate dialogue again! Recalling the
film Noël Coward has this to say: "I agreed to do it because I
thought the idea was good and most particularly because I was
promised that Helen Hayes, whom I love and admire, would play
the young poetess. At the last minute she was unable to get out of some
contract and the part had to be re-cast. The picture was made quickly
and efficiently; most of its speed and efficiency being due to Lee
Garmes, the cameraman. The direction of Hecht and MacArthur was
 erratic and I, who had never starred in a picture before, was con-
 fused and bewildered from beginning to end. It was hailed with
critical acclaim. I made a success in it and so did everyone concerned
but I still wish that it and they and I had been better."
Julie Haydon, happily, is far better than the mannered Miss Hayes
could ever have been, despite Coward's charge!... Mr.K.Eversen...