"FRONT PAGE WOMAN" (Warner Brothers, 1935) Director: Michael Curtiz
Screenplay by Ben Markson and Lillie Hayward from a story by Richard Macaulay; Camera, Tom Gaudie; 82 minutes

"LADY KILLER" (Warner Brothers, 1933) Director: Roy Del Ruth
Screenplay by Ben Markson and Lillie Hayward from a story by Rosalind K. Shaffer; Camera, Tony Gaudie; 78 minutes
With: James Cagney, Mae Clarke, Margaret Lindsay, Henry O'Neil, Leslie Fenton, Raymond Hatton, Russell Hopton, Douglas Dumbrille, Marjorie Gateson, George Blackwood, William Robertson, Robert Elliott, James Burke, Douglas Goerge, John Marston, George Chandler, Herman Bing, Lue Alben, Edward Drenen, Dewey Hughes, Harry Holman, Al Hall, Harry Beresford, Olaf Hytten, Dennis O'Keefe, Clarence Wilson, Spencer Charters, Robert Ellis, Robert Homans.

(There will be a ten-minute intermission between the two films)

It has become a kind of unofficial tradition to launch these film series with a snappy double-bill from Warner Brothers in the early 30's. In a way these films rather sum up the basic aims of our series: to show films that are largely unappreciated and unknown, that display solid craftsmanship, and that more than hold their own as entertainment by standards that quite transcend rose-colored nostalgia.

"Front Page Woman" is one of the last of the programmers that Warners still insisted on putting Miss Davis into, for disciplinary purposes, while still exploiting her talent at the same time in more important properties like "Dangerous" and "The Petrified Forest". With the same studio crew, the same cameraman and largely the same cast of character actors that worked in "Lady Killer", it naturally has something of a machine-made look to it - but its efficiency is most enjoyable, if never inspired. Curtiz keeps the pace cracking, the dialogue is good, there's the inevitable Warner Brothers death-house scene played for morbid humor, and an impressive dramatic debut for singer Winnie Shaw. Only in the climax is there really a let-down; someone apparently decided that the story was just a framework for all the players and those snappy lines, and that it didn't matter a hang anyway - so it's all wrapped-up off-screen, and explained away with a couple of lines of dialogue!

"Lady Killer", one of the most enjoyable of the early Cagney vehicles, gives the impression of either having been constructed as it went along, or hurriedly scripted on the back of a studio memo. It never decides whether it wants to be a thriller, a regeneration drama, a spoof of both, or an outright comedy. Accordingly, it skids along from murder to Hollywood, and on to a gangster chase at a breathless pace, and if nothing else it's full of unpredictable surprises. The Hollywood sequences have some real bite: Margaret Lindsay, playing a movie star, has an unkind line in which she refers to herself as an actress of limited talent who has been lucky, and the directorial profession is mercilessly kidded by having Herman Bing and Lue Alben as its representatives! Snide movie critics some in for a satisfying trouncing too. Fairly restrained for a pre-Code movie in terms of sexes of our era, it comes up with a vengeance. Cagney manhandles his women, the fashions are startling and provocative, and the action - be it comedic or melodramatic - keeps in brisk gear throughout.

Wm. K. Everson

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IMPORTANT NOTICE In our nine series to date, we have never been let down with a film, or forced to make a change of program. Now we are doing so voluntarily, and we hope you'll agree with our reasons. Unavailable for 30 years, WIFE VERSUS SECRETARY (announced for October 30) is suddenly playing (until next Wednesday) at the New Yorker Theatre, and will thereafter play other revival houses. With our limited dates, it seems pointless to duplicate - especially since theatrical bookings can offer you lush 35mm prints as well. Accordingly, we have cancelled our booking of this film, and have substituted "I FOUND STELLA PARRISH" (1935, director Mervyn LeRoy) with Kay Francis, Paul Lukas and Ian Hunter.