"SWORD POINTS" (Educational, 1926) Directed by Mark Sandrich
With Lupino Lane, Wallace Lupino; 2 reels
Lupino Lane, member of the far-flung acting clan that also includes Ida Lupino, is best known as a star of the London stage, primarily of the 30's and 40's. His movie activity in Britain both as director and as song and dance comic, did but little justice to his talents, and his really interesting film work took place in this country in the 20's, when he worked for both Lubitsch and Griffith, and made a whole series of extremely funny 2-reel comedies, of which "Sword Points" is very typical. Maximum enjoyment depends on a familiarity with Douglas Fairbanks' "The Three Musketeers", since Lane is here playing gentlemanly D'Artagnan, and many individual scenes in that film. But even without that familiarity, the precise timing, speed, and acrobatic gags make this a most enjoyable satire.

"DON JUAN" (Warner Brothers, 1926) Directed by Alan Crosland
Written for the screen by Bess Meredyth; photographed by Byron Haskins and Gordon Hollingshead; Art Director, Ben Carre;
Bachenalian Art Dancing - Marion Morgan; 13 reels
With: JOHN BARRYMORE (Don Juan and Don Jose); Mary Astor (Adriana); Willard Louis (Pedrillo); Estelle Taylor (Lucrezia Borgia); Warner Oland (Cesare Borgia); Montague Love (Donmati); Nyma Loy (Mia); Helene Costello (Adriana's maid); Jane Winton (Beatrice); John Roche (Leandro); Phyllis Haver (Imperia); Hedda Hopper (Marquise Rinaldo); Gustav von Seyffertitz (Nehri the Sorcerer); June Marlowe (Trucia); Yvonne Day (Don Juan at 5); Phillippe de Lacy (Don Juan at 10); John George (Hunchback); Helene D'Aigly (Mereduss of Jose); Josef Swickard (Duke Della Varnese); Lionel Brahaim (Duke Margonii); Nigel de Brulier (Marquis Rinaldo)

"Don Juan" is usually thought of just as the film that was used to introduce Vitaphone -- just as "The Jazz Singer" is too often dismissed as a sentimental piece of corn that gained fame only because it ushered in talkies. Thus have two of Alan Crosland's best works been almost eradicated as films; small wonder that this vigorous and stylish director is almost unknown today, while the hacks - the Niblos and the DeWilles -- are revered for the laurels usually won for them by their made-to-measure vehicles, their starlets, or their second-unit directors. (Note: those of you who missed the beautiful "Beloved Rogue", another Barrymore-Crosland collaboration, when we showed it earlier, should try to catch it in the current Museum of Modern Art cycle). "Don Juan" is, in its own way, quite wonderful stuff -- expertly staged and directed, lush, elegantly mounted, and done with just the right tongue in cheek approach. Barrymore's performance is superbly sardonic, quite one of the best of his career though less seriously conceived and executed than many other contrast to the more solemn and noble "Beau Brummel". "Don Juan", despite a dearth of physical action until the closing reels, vibrates with life from beginning to end. The original "Don Juan" was written by a Spanish monk, one Gabriel Tellez, and was intended to sway one's sympathies towards a spiritual life. Lord Byron later took a somewhat different tack. Bess Meredyth's scenario is supposed to combine elements of both, but what comes out is sheer Barrymore "vehicle" from first scene to last; here you'll see familiar and bizarre bits repeated from earlier Barrymores, as well as bits that were themselves to be re-used. For example, the prison scene between Juan and Lucrezia Borgia in "Tempest". Barrymore personally has a field-day, and many scenes were clearly written in at his suggestion -- as for example, one of his favorite ploys, that of impersonating (convincingly) Satanic-faced Gustav von Seyffertitz. (As Sherlock Holmes he had also done this to Seyffertitz's Moriarty).

"Don Juan" is a masterpiece of style and hokum. Perhaps it is not a film that stands up well to repeated viewings (mainly because of its length) but that of itself is hardly critical. Wonderfully satisfying as many films are on repeated viewings (especially classic comedy, or emotional subjects such as "Sunrise") films are, after all, designed primarily for those who see them once. It is the initial impression that counts, and in this respect "Don Juan" really succeeds. It is an eye-popper of a production, and the original score by the New York Philharmonic lovely, full and sweeping. Its duel scene is still the best of its kind, and - despite the later Fairbanks's and Flynn - Barrymore is still the "definitive" Don. If there is a complaint at all, it is only that the mechanically expert camerawork is still rather uninspired. With those sets and Crosland's direction, one hardly notices the drawback; but what (visually) Charles Rosher or Wong Howe could have done!

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