THIRTEEN WOMEN (RKO Radio, 1932) directed by George Archainbaud; produced by David O. Selznick; cameraman, Leo Tover; screenplay by Bertlett Comnick from a novel by Tiffany Thayer; music, Jack Steiner; 6 reels.

With Ricardo Cortez, Irene Dumme, Myrna Loy, Jill Esmond, Florence Eldridge, Kay Johnson, Julie Hayden, Mary Duncan, Wally Albright, O. Henry Gordon, Edward Pawley, Blanche Frederici, Edward Le Saint, Lloyd Ingraham.

Although such was not the intention, both of tonight's titles, linked side by side, would look rather good on a 42nd Street marquee — and indeed both are linked in being wild and somewhat extravagant murder melodramas. "Thirteen Women" is somewhat of a mystery in itself in that when originally shown to the trade it was some ten minutes longer than at present. Trade sources, compiled while the film was in production, list a number of names — Lorraine, Kenneth Thomson, even from one source, George Bond — who ultimately got to turn in their work, for all we know. However, they are not listed in the casts supplied to, and reprinted by, The New York Times — so presumably they were deleted before release. Certainly, as far as it can with such a plot, the film makes sense; it gets under way amazingly quickly, and is far less lethargic than most RKO films of the period. It is a little difficult to account for all thirteen women of the title (without cheating by including Blanche Frederici) and one suspects that any cuts that were made occur during the early exposition sequences. The film is one that has been flogged, retitled, recut, rescored, and relaid, and no one knows whether or not it was ever laid up to the box office. The film was not listed as a box-office failure, but its unwatched box-office entertainment that it's not likely to be a great disillusionment either. Considering her standing following "Cimarron", Irene Dumme's role is a surprisingly nondominant one, and far too many of the other ladies — especially Kay Johnson — are killed off far too quickly. Myrna Loy has a grand time however, especially in her climactic scene. Ricardo Cortez, despite his star billing, arrives quite late in the proceedings, well into the second half. All of the supporting artists are fine too (and, therefore, one of the most RKO films of the period is hardly one of his major ones, but is particularly interesting in one respect. His "King Kong" score was later re-used (by others as well as by himself) for other movies, but here we have a snatch of "King" music used before the event. The unique, tense combination of notes that accompanies the shot of the train in one sequence is identical with the theme that he used just prior to King's attack on the NY Elevated.

Incidentally, preservation materials on lesser RKO films are notably poor, and this print — like many others of a similar ilk — is from a 16mm dupe negative. Textual quality is a little soft and difficult to get into really sharp focus; the further back one sits, the better it will look.

THE MINUTE INTERMISSION

FOUR MEN AND A PRAYER (20th Century Fox, 1938) Directed by John Ford

Produced by Darryl F. Zanuck; Associate Producer, Kenneth O'Dowd; scenario by Richard Shcron, Sonya Levien and Walter Ferris from a novel by David Loewer; cameraman, Berton Chapin; music, Alfred Newman; with Loretta Young, Richard Greene, George Sanders, David Niven, C. Aubrey Smith, Alan Hale, Reginald Denny, "I'llian Henry, J. Edward Bromberg, John Carradine, Berton Churchill, Claude King, John Sutton, Barry Fitzgerald, Cecil Cunningham, Frank Beker, Frank Darrow, Line Quagmire, William Stack, Lionel Pape, Harry Hayden, Winter Hall, "I'll Stanton, John Spee, Brandon Hurst, C. Outrage Shaw.

Ford's two 1938 films for Fox (the other was "Submarine Patrol") though both are big productions, now must be regarded as interesting marking-time pieces before his finest and most productive period began in 1939. They are also good examples of the kind of "job-of-work" productions that he liked to dismiss as mere studio assignments. While they certainly aren't exactly personal productions, they still show more care and pride in craftsmanship than they would if Ford actually had approached them as casually as he professed. "Four Men and a Prayer" — his only real who-dun-it? — is certainly one of his least typical productions. A professional Irishman to the last, he has suggested that he handled this linguistic tale of British military honor as a tongue-in-check romp — but actually, while there is some intended (and effective) levity, the story is also told with some dignity and respect. Basically it is a little more than a good "B" picture script glossed up with some big names, excellent camerawork, and an effective usage of many impressive standing sets as possible — rather like the content and mood operandi of Fox's "B" photo thrillers. It certainly covers a great deal of ground, moves constantly and successfully combines the adventure genre with the essentially civilized thrillers. It's certainly major and is one of the finest films that Fox has completed on many occasions (often with less justification) — the presence of a "name" star leading lady, Loretta Young often looks quite stunning and is certainly beautifully photo roched, but as a star she is...
projected into too many scenes, brought arbitrarily into a story that is moving along very nicely without her, and often brings it to a grinding halt. With a Lynn Bari or a Dorothy "Doll" Linnson in her place, Ford could have kept to a snappier pace and shaved both the length and the budget. Another curious flaw is the minimal use of a musical score in the kind of melodrama where music could really have helped to heighten tension and excitement. Nevertheless, it's a "class" production all the way, and a most enjoyable minor Ford.

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FILM SERIES 39 Fuller details of our upcoming series will be found in the soon-to-be-issued Spring Bulletin. With a collective heading of "Larger than Life" it concentrates on films that are star vehicles (or director showcases) of essentially (though not exclusively) Entertainment fare between 1919 and 1939. Films will be shown in the order listed, full notes will accompany all showings and Stuart Clereen will arrange and play piano scores for the silent films:

1. Feb 8: THIRTEEN FOR SALE (1928) Cedric Gibbons last film, a mystery with Robert Young, Henry Hull. This TIP TO TO (1926) is a beautiful but neglected essay in Gothic melodrama, based on Stevenson's "The Suicide Club," with Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Frank Morgan, Gertrude O'Connell.

2. Feb 15: THE KING ON MAIN STREET (1925) A charming comedy directed by Monte Blue and starring his own "Blue" an an "in" kids of the era with Adolphe Menjou, Bessie Love; THE FRONT PAGE (1931) an entirely different Menjou (with Pat O'Brien) in Lewis Milestone's stylized production of the Hecht-Leachburn newspaper satire.

3. Feb 22: THE IMPATIENT WIDEN (1932) One of the last remaining unknown James Whale films, with Lew Ayres, Ida Clarke; second-string Whale, but fascinating; FRENCH WITHOUT TEARS (not yet positively confirmed, but we do not anticipate a problem) - 1939 - one of Anthony Asquith's best.

4. March 1: An evening of silent melodrama: THE WIFE (1921), a powerful non-western with William S. Hart; an excellent charcter from the Eddie Polo serial CAPTAIN KIDD (1922) and THE ORIN CALE (1919), easily the best of Harryoudin's exhilarating stunt thrillers.

5. March 8: A twice-told tale: James Whale directs an original classic, and a five-yearers return. Despite the same plot, differences in public taste and censorship make this a fascinating study of a rapidly changing Hollywood, pre and post Production Code. A MISS ENTOLE THE LIE (1923) with Nancy Carroll, Frank Morgan, and "YES UNDER SUSPICION (1931) with Errol Willian, Gail Patrick, Ralph Morgan.


7. March 22: LOVE EM AND LEAVE EM (1926) dir: Frank Tuttle Louise Brooks and her most bewitching in a New York-filmed romantic comedy, with Evelyn Brent, Virginia Valli, comically hindered in Cograd Perkins; MADAM (1926) dir: Victor Fleming; probably the very best Clara Bow vehicle, Paula Aseyes, and sense of fun are as fresh as ever in this adaptation from Sinclair Lewis; with Perry Vonmack, Ernest Torrence, Eugene Palette.

8. March 29: HEART OF THE SEINE (1935) On a slightly higher plane, Richard Tauber and Benignino Gigli were to European audiences what Jolson was to Americans. This sentimental Tauber is one of his most typical, and he seldom stops singing long enough for the cranky plot to intrude.

9. April 5: Scop operas - style - RICH TO BE R-D (1934), dir: Lowell Sherman with Cary Grant and Loretta Young; BETWEEN TWO WORLDS (1937) dir: George B. Seitz, Based on a story "General Hospital" by Erich von Stroheim, and in-between all the Glass and glitter, some remnants of his original work still make themselves felt; with Franchot Tone, Laureen O'Sullivan, Virginia Bruce.

10. Aprill 19: BIG BOX (1930) dir: Alan Crosland. Easily the most obscure of all the Jolson films - and the most bizarre, yet not without audacity and charm. JESSE KUTKIN (1932), dir: Lloyd Bacon, a very Robert Hinehart story used both the detective and horror cycles then at their peak; airy, funny and thrilling, with Joan Blondell and George Brent. Thanks to the brevity of both films, we will be adding a selection of first-rate animated cartoons from the early 30's to this program.