FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE (Harold Lloyd Corp.-Paramount, 1926) Director: Sam Taylor
Story: John Grey, Ted Wilde, Clyde Bruckman; Titles, Ralph Spence; Camera, Walter Lundin, assisted by Henry Kohler; 6 reels
With Harold Lloyd, Jobyna Ralston, Noah Young, James Mason, Paul Whelan, Constantine Romanoff.

THE KID BROTHER (Harold Lloyd Corp.-Paramount) Director: Ted Wilde
1928; released 1927
Story: John Grey, Tom Grimes, Ted Wilde; Camera, Walter Lundin; 8 reels
With Harold Lloyd, Jobyna Ralston, Walter James, Leo Willis, Olin Francis, Constantine Romanoff, Eddie Borden, Frank Lanning, Ralph Tearle.

Piano Scores for both films arranged and played by Stuart Oderman.

Grateful thanks are extended to the Time-Life Corp., for permission to show these two films.

It was never intended of course that Harold Lloyd features ever be double-billed; commercially it would have been wasteful, and aesthetically it could have been harmful. However, these two films do work together rather well and complement one another nicely in a number of ways. "For Heaven's Sake" is short and relaxed; "The Kid Brother" longer, more substantial. In the first film, Harold plays a Howard Hughes-type of super-millionaire; he already has it made, and the plot, such as it is, calls for Harold to justify that kind of existence and prove himself to his girl. In "The Kid Brother" he is more typically the down-trodden potential All-American-Boy who succeeds - physically, emotionally, romantically - just because he's a nice guy who deserves to succeed.

"For Heaven's Sake" is the kind of deliberately light-weight film that Lloyd tossed off occasionally between much more ambitious and expensive projects (in this case, it was bounded by "The Freshman" and "The Kid Brother") just as John Ford would relax with a "The Sun Shines Bright" after a blockbuster like "The Quiet Man". Very often these unassuming, not overly ambitious films turned out to be among the best work of their creators, and if "For Heaven's Sake" isn't absolutely top-notch Lloyd, it's at the head of his second plateau. The gags flow smoothly and easily, and even the least gagged scenes provide more than just a framework for good gags than out of any real narrative need.

"The Kid Brother", virtually forgotten until a few years ago, is quite probably Lloyd's finest film, though it's far from being his most typical. ("Safety Last", which we'll be showing in the fall, would assume that role). It's an odd comedy for Lloyd to have made late in the 20's, when most comedians were more concerned with aspects of contemporary life; e.g., both Lloyd and Keaton made collegiate films. It's much expanded from a lesser Hal Roach comedy with Glen Tryon, and is also virtually a comic homage to "Tellable David", which it closely resembles in many ways. It may well be that in late '26, with the sound revolution imminent, that Lloyd realised it would have to be made or not at all, since it certainly wouldn't have worked as a sound film. Although it's fast and has excellent sight-gag material, it's much warmer than the usual Lloyd comedy, and needs an audience far less than his other films. Lloyd - and this is no criticism - was very much of a mechanical comedian. He couldn't be funny on his own, without gags or props, and had none of the panoptic talent of Keaton or Langdon. Seen without an audience, his films can seem heavy and labored, the mechanics of setting up gags, establishing situations and props, both transparent and obvious. For example, in "For Heaven's Sake", the careful setting up of audience information is so that the perfume gag will move on into the sponge and powder puff gag. Yet Lloyd knew audiences, and with an audience the (apparently) most labored gags would come howlingly to life. "The Kid Brother" while it benefits (like any comedy) from audience reaction, is warm enough to be appealing and funny without an audience, probably the only one of his films for which that claim can be made. The mechanics are still there of course, and like all Lloyd films, it isn't really directed but assembled by a group. Ted Wilde, the official director, appears merely as a writer on other Lloyd films, and his own later films as a director away from Lloyd were routine. So while "The Kid Brother" is a classic, it's clear it wasn't Lloyd's first choice - and we can't assume that Wilde is a great, undiscovered genius. Much remains to be said about Lloyd and how his methods that we'll leave for the opening talk, but in passing it is worth stressing the importance of silence to this film. It is an incredibly violent film, full of pain and punishment, with Harold positively sadistic in the climactic treatment that he metes out to the villain. Yet the prevailing atmosphere is definitely one of charm; the pain here is genuinely funny because it is removed from reality. Add sound effects, grunts of pain and exertion - and with that not to realism, another inevitable one in the addition of appropriate blood - and this would be a much less funny film, and Lloyd's character MUCH less ingratiating. - Wm. Kwerson