As those of you who have attended the last couple of sessions will know, we are not at all happy with the print of "Journey's End". It was scheduled after it had been confirmed from Europe that the print had been made up for USA projection and was a good print. We cannot, alas, either. A full, complete print is available, and major efforts were made to acquire it, but the red tape was considerable and while it will come through eventually, we were stuck for tonight with the necessity of either cancelling out, or making do with what we had. We decided to go ahead, mainly because interest in the film is very great, and the disappointment at not showing it would probably be greater than the disappointment in the film's condition. A bad, poor-sound copy of "The Front Page" at Lincoln Centre some years back was still of major interest, and this. "Journey's End" is concentrated in one area. So we hope you'll bear with us and regard tonight's presentation as a gesture towards academic study.


The fascinating story of the writing of "Journey's End" and its transference to the screen as an early Anglo-Hollywood sound co-production, and its importance as James Whale's first sole feature, containing many of the roots of his directorial style, deserve far more space than we can possibly give them here, as does a detailed comparison between tonight's print and the full print. I was able to devote all the necessary time and space to such a discussion in the January '75 issue of "Films in Review", and the current, March, issue, has some valuable back-up comment from the AFF's Tony Slade. I would therefore recommend referral to those two issues. Just very briefly let me summarise the reasoning that the new material of "Journey's End" is still powerful and valid, but filmically some distortions have been created by the cutting. It's a surprisingly smooth job; all of the key speeches are there, and it may well be a more acceptable version for the average 1975 audience. But the pace is quickened, and the sense of fear and boredom thereby reduced; the faster pace also suggests that Whale was already by 1930 a much slicker director than he in fact was; motivations and careful character build-ups are minimised, and Stanhope's dread of showing fear to the new, untired officer - the brother of the girl he hopes to marry in the present almost lost in the editing. For Whales students, however, it is still a major rediscovery; for the others, a stop-gap until the full print is available.

Ten Minute Intermission

Our short tonight, SPIRIT AND CHILLS, can serve as an unofficial trailer to next week's Robert Youngson program, a complete listing of which is on display. Hardly one of his best - those we're keeping for next week - it is nevertheless typical in its respectful yet light-hearted use of great old newsreel material.

MEN IN WHITE (MGM, 1934) Directed by Richard Boleslawsky; screenplay by Waldemar Young from the play by Sidney Kingsley; camera, George Folsey; score with Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Jean Harlow, Elizabeth Allan, Otto Kruger, C. Henry Gordon, Rock Hudson, Grace Ford, Bertha Poppert, Samuel S. Hinds, Bertolot Churchill, Frank Puglia, Leo Chalet, Don Douglas, Wallis Clark, Sara Padden, Gelene Bratt, Fairy Irving, Larry Steens, Robert Fraser, Mary MacLaren, Dorothy Petersen, Edward Hearme.

Although a commendably brisk and pretentious film, "Men in White" does somewhat suffer from having to live up to an MGM image, and somehow Sidney Kingsley's characters and dialogue have a tendency at times to be reduced if not to, then in the direction of, a similar and less important MGM soap opera like "Between Two Women". Both the Production Code and Louis B. Mayer's own morality are brought to bear too, and there is virtually no information about Elizabeth Allan's sexual encounter and subsequent abortion; as the picture shows it, merely taking off her nurse's cap leads directly to her death on the operating table! Clark Gable's performance is surprisingly good, and the similarity, in some cases of "It Happened One Night", he clearly tries hard - and largely succeeds - in submerging his normal personality beneath the requirements of the role. But he can't altogether right MGM's insistence on a star image; he is given too much makeup, and appears entirely too well groomed for a penniless, struggling doctor. That, plus the slick montage work and the glossy, ultra-stylised sets, give the film entirely too elegant a look, when what it needs is a closer concentration on drama that, for example, Universal and RKO allow at "Law and Order". If "Men in White" were to misfire, it's a gallant and entertaining one, and does at least avoid typical MGM lushness of scoring by eliminating music altogether.