THE NIGHT HAS EYES (Associated British-Pathe, 1942) Written and directed by Leslie Arliss; Produced by John Argyle; Based on the novel by Alan Kennington; Camera, Gunther Krampf; Music, Charles Williams; released in the United States as "The Old Dark House"; 7 reels
With James Mason, Wilfrid Lawson, Mary Clare, Joyce Howard, Tucker McGuire, John Fernard, Dorothy Black, Amy Daley.

Although Pathe was one of the most conservative of British companies, specialising in genteel and usually outdated romance and comedy, they very occasionally let themselves go with an all-out, full-blooded thriller, Bela Lugosi's "Dark Eyes of London" was one, and "The Night Has Eyes", a mating of "The Old Dark House" and "Jane Eyre" was another. Although its horror content is limited to key sequences, it is still a powerful and quite grisly thriller, fairly obvious in its plotting perhaps, but no less effective for that. Gunther Kramph, who had also photographed Karloff's 1933 "The Ghouls", makes more than the most of the handsome but eccentric setting in an earlier sequence of two girls trapped on a bog-ridden moor at the height of a thunderstorm. The dialogue is crisp and well-written (except for one moment when the heroine turns on the villain and gasps, 'Why, you're evil!') and the film also boasts two of those standbys of wartime British movies - the piano concerto theme music, and the disillusioned, Mr.Rochester-derived hero. Since any patriotic Englishman would naturally be in the Armed Forces and there was quite a spate of heroes who were either going blind, possessed fortuitous but invaluable injuries, or were cynical through experience in prior wars. James Mason has in a more broadening-blood-brother to Nelywn Douglas in "The Old Dark House". The sets are effective in the stylish if studio-bound manner of the 1939 "The Hound of the Baskervilles", and the film's only real drawback (a minor one, and less jarring than in "Dark Eyes of London") is its insistence on pseudo-"American" comedy relief. However, this is quite offset by the macabre humor provided by the delightful and openly dirty-minded villainy of Wilfrid Lawson.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

THE MIRACLE MAN (Paramount, 1932) Directed by Norman McLeod; Screenplay by Waldemar Young and Samuel Hoffenstein from a book by Frank L.Packard and Robert H. Davis, and a play by George M. Cohan; Camera, David Abel NY Premiere: Rivoli Theatre, April 1932. 8 reels
With Sylvia Sidney, Chester Morris, Irving Pichel, John Wray, Robert Bosworth, Ned Sparks, Virginia Bruce, Boris Karloff, Lloyd Hughes, Robert Coogan, Florine McKinney, Frank Darien, Lew Kelly.

Those who recall the original 1919 silent version have no hesitation in stating that it is much superior to this sound remake, and there's no reason to doubt those opinions. Although George Loane Tucker's directorial career was short and ill-represented today, evidence exists to indicate that he was both a superior and instinctive craftsman. It was the kind of emotional film ideally suited to the silent medium; moreover it was a film that the cast (Chaney, Thomas Meighan, Betty Compson, Lila Lee) all wanted to make, and in some cases worked for practically nothing in order to make it possible. However, the initial reviews for the 1932 remake - when the original was still well-remembered - were good, and did not make unflattering comparisons. With the original now apparently lost (though we do have a few minutes of key excerpts that we'll run afterwards tonight) the original can be seen on its own terms, and it's a quite surprisingly good film. It has much of the visual style of the silent film, it isn't ashamed of its own emotion or sentiment, and even uses an evocative score much in the tradition of the silent. Both film versions were based essentially on the book, not on George Cohan's rather uninspired stage adaptation. And the 1919 version clearly copies many scenes identically. The original film prompted many imitations, so it's all the more remarkable that this 1932 version still seems quite fresh. With its good sets, mobile camerawork and Malibu locations, it's a good film to look at, more polished than most of its era (it is after all, essentially a 1931 production, though released in 1932) and is surprisingly well directed by a man who was normally a specialist in comedy. Since its plot involves both religious faith and religious cynicism and exploitation, it has something for both sides of the ecclesiastical fence, and offers some excellent performances. Sylvia Sidney is particularly attractive, Robert Coogan (Jackie's less famous but perhaps more talented brother) is most touching, and John Wray does very well in the old Chaney role. One would have liked, of course, to have seen Karloff doing it, but his obnoxiously lecherous gangster is enjoyable - and an astonishing illustration of how he could turn on the ham to grab attention in a minor role like this, and then the same year turn in a really subtle and underplayed performance in "The Mummy".

--- Wm. K. Everson ---