THE INDIAN MASSACRE (Thomas Ince, 1913) With J. Barney Sherry, Ann Little, and Art Acord as an extra. Our print, from a British source, titled "The Heart of an Indian"; 2 reels

Early movies tended to be influenced rather more by James Pennimore Cooper than by Zane Grey, and the Indian as a hero (though this film is not really representative in that sense) actually predated the cowboy hero. Ince's westerns were rugged, austere, realistic and often lyrical, stronger on plot and realism than in technique; just the opposite, in fact, of the Westerns of D.W. Griffith. "The Indian Massacre" is neither pro nor anti-white, and by the same token neither pro nor anti-Indian, though most of its compassion seems directed at the Indian, and his plight in the face of an advancing white civilization. Pro-Indian films were surprisingly prolific in this period, and the appeal to the patriotic feelings of the masses was really largely limited to the cheaper "B" westerns. Nor was "Broken Arrow" (1950) the first film to criticise white attitudes towards the Indian; there were many precedents, ranging from "Massacre" and "The End of the Trail" to "The Vanishing American". "The Indian Massacre" is almost Fordian in the lyricism of its photography, and one often wonders just how much John Ford might have owed to brother Francis, who worked as actor and director with Ince in this period, on films like "The Indian Massacre". Original prints from an original negative (one or two such prints existed until some ten years ago) were just as stunning in their beauty; this unfortunately is a print from a later duping negative, which inevitably reduces the pictorial beauty, but it's still impressive and quite moving.

(Our thanks to Edward Connor, punch-hitting for our regular pianist tonight.)

THE RAINBOW TRAIL (Fox, 1931) Directed by David Howard; scenario by Barry Connors and Philip Klein from the novel by Zane Grey, originally published under the name "The Desert Crucible"; Camera, Daniel Clark; 6 reels With George O'Brien, Cecilia Parker, Minna Gombell, Rosscoe Ates, J.K. Kerrigan, James Kirkwood, W.L. Thorne, Robert Frazier, Miles Welsh, Ruth Dommelly, Leslie Winters, Landaore Stevens, Alice Ward, Edward Heade.

The Indian participation in "The Rainbow Trail" is admittedly slight, but it is certainly sympathetic. The story, a sequel to "Riders of the Purple Sage", was one of Fox's western perennials; William Farnum did both stories first, then Tom Mix in the 20's, and George O'Brien in the early thirties. George Montgomery made an admirable "Riders of the Purple Sage" in the early 40's, but on that occasion the sequel was not made. "The Rainbow Trail" has far too much plot and too many characters for action to predominate, but there's enough to keep it going, and the climax is a beauty. For the rest, the good solid plot, excellent cast, handsome production values and stunning camerawork of equally stunning landscapes (by Mink's favorite cameraman, Dan Clark) more than make up for arguable shortcomings in the action department. In any case, these excellent Fox-Zane Grey-O'Brien westerns were intended for adult audiences (as witness the quite surprising nude bathing scene and occasionally sadistic action) and not for afternoon matinee kiddies fare. The film holds up extremely well, though sadly, this print apart, it has not been physically preserved.

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---

THE SILENT ENEMY (Burden-Chandler Productions, for Paramount release, 1930)

Produced by Douglas Burden and William C. Chandler; Directed by H.P. Carver; Scenario, Richard Carver; Camera, Marcel LePicard; Titles, Julian Johnson; Additional photography, Frank N. Broda, Horace Ashton, William Casel; Music by Massard Kur Zehra; 9 reels

With Chief Yellow Robe, Chief Long Lance, Chief Akawunush, Spotted Elk, Cheeka.

It's ironic that this film, lost for years, recently restored by the American Film Institute should also turn up this week at the Museum of Modern Art. We decided not to cancel our showing however since it would have been difficult to find as suitable a framework for the other two films on the program. The title of the film refers to hunger, and its producers, impressed by the Shoedass-Scoop-Cooper film "Grass" (dealing in a like manner with the nomadic Laplander tribes) wanted to use the theme as a device for recording the existence of the American Indian. The film was the by-product of an expedition sponsored by the Museum of Natural History in New York, and it must be admitted that its values reflect its academic sponsorship rather more than cinematic ones. Highlights are marvellous, but there is tedium in between - as of course there is in the juxtaposition of the old chief's death with a falling tree is a rare moment of cinematic magnificence, predating a similar scene in Rouquier's "Farrebleque". It is often lyrical, but it is the lyricism of nature rather than the movies, and the most is not always made of the material, though Marcel LePicard - who did action scenes for Griffith's "America", but was mainly limited to lower-grade "B" westerns in the 30's & 40's - does rise to the occasion surprisingly well. It's not, unfortunately, another "Nanook of the North" - but it's a valiant, and valuable, try.

William K. Everson