ST. LOUIS KID (Warner Brothers, 1934) Directed by Ray Enright
Screenplay by Warren Duff and Sotom Miller from "A Perfect Weekend" by Frederick Hazlitt Brennan; Camera, Sid Hickox; 6 reels
With James Cagney, Patricia Ellis, Allen Jenkins, Hobart Cavanaugh, Robert Barrat, Spencer Charters, Addison Richards, Arthur Aylesworth, William B. Davidson, Charles Middleton, Guy Usher, Charles Wilson, Dorothy Dare, Gertrude Short, Harry Woods, Joan Barclay, Milt Kibbee, Russell Hicks, Eddie Fetherstone, Madee Boteler, Gordon Elliott, Bess Flowers, Harry Tenbrook, Clay Clement

"St. Louis Kid" was Cagney's last "little" picture, little in this case referring not so much to boxoffice importance, which was considerable, as to size, stature of the surrounding cast, and running time — a mere 67 minutes. It was the last of Cagney's five 1934 releases, being preceded by "Lady Killer", "Jim the Gent", "He Was Her Man" and "Here Comes the Navy". There were another five due in 1935, but all of them bigger and longer films: "Devil Dogs of the Air", "G Men", "The Irish in Us", "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Priston Kid". The latter due for a screening here at the Strand on September 13, 1934 (1934/35 represent the last of Cagney's Warner production years; thereafter he was more selective, exiled himself from Warners for a year, and never again made more than three films a year, and often less. "St. Louis Kid" is illustrative too of Warners dilemma in how best to use Cagney at this time, with gangster films frowned on by the Production Code and virtually abolished, and the streamlined FBI films, exemplified best by "G Men", not yet established. It's a brief, economical production, designed to keep Cagney busy and not much more, though it was well if not rapturously reviewed when it opened at the Strand. It starts out in a relaxed, breezy mood, playing mainly on the Cagney elements but for a dearth of the punchy, pithy lines of dialogue that so distinguished "Jim the Gent". Cagney and Jenkins make lines funny, but the writing itself is humdrum, midway through, it threatens to turn into a social melodrama, but then finally opts for a typical Warner Brothers crime/underworld story, with the cars and garages, trucks and low-key lighting so typical of its genre. It's a lot less than it could have been, but a lot more than it might have been. It entertains and satisfies, these days no minor asset; Oddly enough, in the early 50's, before Warner product hit tv, some bright spark at Warners decided that a Cagney-Robinson-Bogart release combination would do big business, which they couldn't have bothered to screen in lieu of the much stronger Cagney material available) with "Bulletts or Ballots" to reasonable success. At least, that showmanship was superior to that of Warners in England who, in 1934, released "St. Louis Kid" under the misleading original source-material title of "A Perfect Weekend".

Ten Minute Intermission

THE GREAT O'MALLEY (Warner Brothers, 1937) Directed by William Dieterle
Screenplay by Milton Khas and Ted Reed from an original story by Gerald Beaumont; Camera, Ernest Haller. 7 reels

Like its co-feature, "The Great O'Malley" is something of a transitional film with "The Petrified Forest", "Bulletts or Ballots" and "Black Legion" immediately behind him, the size of the role and the importance of the vehicle were comedowns for Bogart, although the immediately subsequent "Marked Woman", "Kid Galahad" and "San Quentin" (a similar relationship with Pat O'Brien!) somewhat made up for it, and undismayed, Bogart does play his role to the hilt, wrapping up the beginning and end of the film neatly, and looking suspiciously at his role already, in a brief prison scene, Director Dieterle, with this film and the following "Another Dawn", was saying goodbye to the programmer, and would henceforth concentrate only on "A" product. When it opened at the Strand, the Times rather uncharitably remarked that it was made with great economy ... especially of ideas. Actually it's a good-looking production, well cast, lavishly supplied with extras, and making maximum use of standing street sets. The Bogart-Inescort-Sybil Jason family relationship is a little hard to accept, true, and interestingly the Bogart character didn't appear in the silent version ("The Making of O'Malley" starring Milton Sills) at all. That film stressed underworld melodrama rather more, and though the lame child is a prominent plot factor, she is orphaned except for an aged grandmother. When the film was released in England in 1937, a number of scenes were cut; these were not from choice, but because it was such an ideal "family" film that it turned up constantly when exhibitors needed a "neutral" film with something for all tastes. It still fills those requirements quite neatly, a pleasant, enjoyable, sometimes unintentionally funny film, but always brisk and workerlike.

— Wm.K.Everson —