A part of the spectacular new gangster cycle spearheaded by "G-Men", "Show Them No Mercy" indicates quite clearly where it stands by the title alone. Other contemporary gangster films suggested an exhausted patience with, and a lack of sympathy for the gangster via such similar titles as "Let 'Em Have It", "Mass 'Em Up" and "Don't Turn 'Em Loose"! However, the increased violence of the titles was compensated for by considerable shifts of emphasis within the films themselves. For the most part, action replaced violence - although the climax of tonight's film is packed quite a punch in its day. As in all the other post-Production Code gangster films, the emphasis is off the law-breaker himself and on the idealism and efficiency of the FBI, then enjoying its peak of good public relations. The criminal was no longer a magnetic and often intelligent leader, but merely a hoodlum; the FBI man conversely was not only clean-cut and altogether admirable, but backed by a barrage of scientific aids which made successful crime virtually impossible! Like the Red Indian, the gangster was now little more than a convenient mass villain. Its running time and production credits (if not its dialogue) in "Show Them No Mercy" is in the off-beat film, far more of a suspense piece than standard cops-and-robbers stuff. The mood is carefully created and sustained by excellent sets and lighting, and it is quite a raw little picture, even though much is left unsaid and the drug habit of one of the villains is conveyed by that old device of the itchy nose. There is no individualised police hero this time, and in fact the FBI crew seem a rather heartless bunch. Unintentionally, the crooks garner quite a lot of sympathy for themselves, not least in a railroad station sequence where a suspect is mown down by machine-gun fire even though - for all the cops knew - his crime might have been no more heinous than cheating on his fare. It's a tight movie, with plenty of humor along with its suspense, and Rochelle Hudson, as always, a most appealing heroine. Some of the footage in the stock-shot montage comes from John Ford's earlier gangster movie "Born Reckless". And incidentally, among the many titles linking the Gangster film and the Western is the fact that many gangster epics were remade as Westerns ("The Last Parade", "The Asphalt Jungle", "The Kiss of Death", "High Sierra"); tonight's film was remade by Fox in the 40's as "Rawhide" (with Tyrone Power and Susan Hayward). Its director was Henry Hathaway who, like George Marshall, tonight's director, was equally at home in either genre.

— Ten Minute Intermission —

DEVLIN DOGS OF THE AIR (Warner Brothers, 1935) Directed by Lloyd Bacon; Produced by Lou Edelman; Screenplay by Malvin Wayman, Boylan and Earl Baldwin from a story by Gerald Caeiro, Arther Edeson; 8 reels With James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Margaret Lindsay, Frank McHugh, Helen Lowell, John Arledge, Robert Barrat, Russell Hicks, William B. Davidson, Bill Elliott, Ward Bond, Peter George Lynn, Matt Willis, Dennis O'Keefe, Selmer Jackson, Samuel S. Hinds, Buddy Roosevelt, Joseph Creshan, Dale Van Sickel.

It's not too often that we get to play films that have been repeatedly requested by the audience — almost always because the films most requested either have been shown here earlier, or are just not available. However, "Devil Dogs of the Air" has been requested a great deal — probably because it has escaped other revival outlets, and is invariably badly trimmed on its two outings. It's easy to see why it could have inspired fond memories from four decades ago: while it isn't as good as earlier aviation films such as "Air Mail" or "Hell Divers", it is not the sloppier sort, as "The Kings of the Street", and that the production, is a combination guaranteed to give memories intense in legend over the years. The aerial stuff is still good, if no longer novel, and there's plenty of it. What it most sorely lacks is a plot. There really isn't any; in fact, even after the climactic aerial thrill, one still somehow expects some kind of a plot to start rolling, even if only to provide an off-beat fadeout. Still, it's a most enjoyable early (actually the 2nd) entry in the group of eight Cagney-O'Brien co-starring films. All of them were varied success, but "Devil Dogs of the Air" is surely on my own personal favorite, based largely on its delightful black-humor bantering between the two stars, would be the 1940 "Torrid Zone". In any event, "Devil Dogs of the Air" offers the two stars on top form, the icy hauteur and beauty of Margaret Lindsay, Arthur Edeson's stunning camarawork, and a pleasant assortment of Busby Berkeley tunes tossed into the scoring. The total lack of plot makes it a relaxing if not exactly stimulating experience to sit through, and is an ideal unwinding antidote to "Providence" or "Network".

— William K. Everson —