RARE EARLY BOGART: Quantity before quality.

A DEVIL WITH WOMEN (Fox, 1930) Directed by Irving Cummings; Screenplay by Dudley Nichols and Henry M. Johnson from the novel "Dust and Sun" by Clement Ripley; Camera, Arthur Todd; 61 minutes


A HOLY TERROR (Fox, 1931) Directed by Irving Cummings; Screenplay by Ralph Brand; Alex Cohn and Byron Fagan from the story "Trailln" by Max Brand; Camera, George Schneiderman; 50 minutes


ISLE OF FURY (Warner Brothers, 1936) Directed by Frank McDonald; screenplay by Robert Andrews and William Jacobs based on "The Narrow Corner" by Somerset Maugham; Camera, Frank Good; 61 minutes

With Humphrey Bogart, Margaret Lindsay, Donald Woods, E.E. Clive, Paul Graetz, Gordon Hart, Georges Regas, Sidney Bracey, Tetsu Komai, Mikl Morita, Frank Lackteen, Housey Stevenson. (THERE WILL BE A SHORT INTERVAL BETWEEN EACH FILM)

Although this is our first (but not last) triple bill, the combined running time is still no longer than our average double-bill. The common denominator of all the films is that they are early Bogarts that just never got shown, the first two because they are otherwise not available, and the third for reasons which will become readily apparent by the end of the evening.

Like many fine actors, Bogart was a poor historian, and has told biographers that he tested for the Ronald Colman role in "The White Sister", didn't get it, and "almost immediately" secured a Fox contract instead. That "almost immediately" covers a minimum of seven years! In any event, A DEVIL WITH WOMEN was his first film - and it's interesting that while he should be playing a romantic lead it is already a somewhat abrupt one. The film is typical of the kind of fare knocked together every so often to provide a vehicle for McLaglen - his "Laughing At Life" two years later was remarkably similar. It's not a very good film; Irving Cummings was not a particularly talented director, and made his (superfactically) best films later on when he had more money to spend on them. But he never had the ability to inject style into a property, as for example Robert Florey did. However, A DEVIL WITH WOMEN is short, and because it's not the kind of story nobody makes any more, probably seems less cliched and predictable now than in 1930.

A HOLY TERROR was Bogart's sixth film, and the best of today's trio. It's again directed by Irving Cummings, on more than "one - a good plot, and George O'Brien - whose personality could (and frequently did) 'live up' routine material. A modern Western, it's a remake of the silent Tom Mix TRAILIN'; the Fox film was gutseral, and spent more time exploring the various off-beat story elements, but A HOLY TERROR does follow the original story quite well, and the major changes are those involved in making it a breezier, slightly modernized vehicle for O'Brien. Bogart is surprisingly good as one of the traditional types - and it's interesting that of his many movies he hasn't enjoyed manners are there from the beginning of his career that it is quite incredible that Fox didn't recognize his talent and build him up right away -- especially as the transition to sound was a commercial boon to the stage actor, and Hollywood signed several off-beat players who might not have made it so easily in another period: Muni, Cagney, Tracy, Lee Tracy, Pat O'Brien, etc. Possibly the fact that Fox already had Tracy under contract was the answer. Except for the fact that its mild climax allows the villains, Bogart included, to go unpunished, A HOLY TERROR is a very satisfying if not particularly actionful modern Western.

It's not difficult to see why ISLE OF FURY, though available, never shows up! Presented as part of a Bogart cycle it would undoubtedly frustrate any audience, and there is no other reason for showing it. In fact, it's only justifiable exhibition is on a rather specialised program like this, where expectations do not run too high. The fifth of Bogart's films under his new contract with Warners, it is a shameful example even on the pretext of getting a new star better known through a barrage of varied roles because he has already proven itself via "The Petrified Forest" etc. It is not only Bogart's worst film, but probably one of Warners' worst ever. One doesn't expect too much from a "B", but the Warner Bs were usually slick, fast and mechanically expert, if nothing else. This one is cheap and lack-lustre in every respect, and even its octopus is a fiasco. It may well be the only Warner Bs of sub-Hollywood standard except for "The Enchanted Island". "Isle of Fury" seems a major and serious work by comparison. It was the second and last of Bogart's Bs for Warners, the earlier and better one being "Two Against the World", a remake of "Five Star Final". "Isle of Fury" is ostensibly a remake of "The Narrow Corner", an excellent 1933 film that we've shown earlier, but it bears only the most casual relationship to it, and the Bogart role is in fact an amalgamation of the Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Ralph Bellamy roles in that film. See it in cross it off your list, and forget it - but at least you won't be taunted any more by the thought of a missing Bogart "classic"!

-- W.K.Everson --