Tonight's two films provide a fairly reliable indication of what "Archive Night" will continue to be all about. The print of "The Christian" is below what we would normally consider "acceptable" standards. "Rebound" is, in a relative sense, a "primitive" early talkie. Both films deserve a showing, but both are perhaps of a more specialised nature, intended more for serious students of film history than for casual entertainment-seekers. We hope that this format will prove a useful showcase for films that might otherwise not get shown.

THE CHRISTIAN (Goldwyn Productions, 1922; rel: 1925) Directed by Maurice Tourneur; Based on the novel by Hall Caine; Scenario and editing, Paul Bern; Camera, Charles Van Eiger; Art Director, Cedric Gibbons; Cast With Richard Dix, Mae Busch, Philip Hale, Ellen Drew, Constance Talmadge, Joseph Dowling, Aileen Pringle, John Hardman, Beryl Mercer, Robert Boldar, Milla Davenport, Alice Hesse, Harry Northrup, Eric Mayne, William Foran.

Piano Score arranged and played by Stuart Oderman

The more of Tourneur's films that are rediscovered, the more definite the confirmation seems to be that his best films were all pre-1920, and his later ones generally disappointing. It is known that Tourneur was dissatisfied with his later Hollywood work, but had little control over his assignments, even the least of them offered proof that his great pictorial virtuosity never left him. Indeed, one of his films - the superb "The Devil's Hand", made immediately after the German occupation - was almost a throwback to his best silent pictorial story-telling. "The Christian" is admittedly a disappointment, though one must make allowances for the near-aburd story-line. It had been filmed before, and very successfully, by Vitagraph in 1914. Tourneur's version was also a critical and popular success, a review even dismissed its religious theme, no churchmen could be offended due to its overall taste and good story-telling sense. And one must also admit that an inadequate print like this is NO way to judge the work of a director who was a painter with light rather than a dramatist. Just because it wasn't a major film, the preservation work was very slipshod. The deteriorating 35mm print wasn't cleaned before copying, and instead of fusing with damaged sections, to salvage as much as possible, in many cases frames were merely clipped out, resulting in major jumps. A major pity, because the film was probably never great, it must have been extremely handsome with its (originally) crystal clear photography and tinted stock. The location work on the Isle of Man and in London is often quite exciting, and the sheer pictorial beauty of the original must have done much to offset the dramatic shortcomings of what the main titles refer to redundantly as "a classic masterpiece". Certainly its story is as colorful as its morality is inexplicable, and the excess of retribution that comes to the hero of this, in climax, to Stroheim at the end of "Blind Husbands". Quite incidentally, the film seems to be a blood-brother to "Splendour in the Grass" in suggesting that celibacy leads to wild-eyed madness. A reflection on the rapidity with which the communications media have overtaken us in the sequence in which Dix, anxious to repudiate the "end of the world" stories attributed to him, listens to radio and newspapers, although one wonders why he had to keep track of it all. Although perhaps a less successful adaptation of Hall Caine than Hitchcock's subsequent version of "The Manxman", it is still, thanks to its bizarre story-line, well-handled mob scenes, extensive location work and interesting cast, quite a fascinating oddity.  

— Intermission —

REBOUND (RKO-Pathe, 1931) Directed by Edward H. Griffith; Screenplay by D onald Ogden Stewart and Horace Jackson from the play by Stewart; a Charles Rogers Production; Camera, Norbert Brodine; Associate Producer, Harry Joe Brown; 8 rls With Ina Claire, Robert Williams, Myrna Loy, Robert Ames, Hale Hamilton, Walter Walker, Louise Closer, Hale, Leigh Allen.

Although a "primitive" stage adaptation when compared with such earlier, glossier and more cinematic stage-to-screen transfers such as "Bulldog Drummond" (29) and "The Devil To Pay", "Rebound" is somewhat above the average standards of such films made by Rko-Pathe, a studio then specializing in filmed plays. The direction of Griffith was praised at the time but really isn't up to the demands of his material. However, it still denied the elegance that a Cukor would have given it, still denied the style and well - thanks to the pungent and often witty script, and some excellent performances. Ina Claire (in the role Hope Williams did on stage) is quite fine and a master of timing; Myrna Loy is so good in a sophisticated role (and not an easy one) that one wonders anew why her talents were appreciated so late. Robert Williams, whose career might have been at Bert Wheeler, is extremely good if typecast, but both he and Robert Ames died not long after making this talkative, but it's good talk, and a useful filmic record of the play produced by Arthur Hopkins, as well as a fine showcase for Claire. For posterity, we must record the remark made by Miss Clayton when first meeting the relatively unknown Miss Loy, cast as the vamp: "No woman like THAT could EVER steal a husband from a woman like ME!"

William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 11:10.