ANNOUNCEMENT regarding Program #5 on July 17th. The print that we originally expected to run of "Cynara" is no longer available, and since I am commuting back and forth to Sydney, and may not have time to line up and guarantee another "Unholy Garden" film, and a less familiar one: "The Unholy Garden" (1931) by Faye Wray, Estelle Taylor. Directed by George Fitzmaurice, its story - by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur - is a rather surprising precursor to "Pepe Le Moko" and "Algiers.


Arliss' historical/biographical pieces tend, on the whole, to be less interesting and less "alive" than his gentle contemporary comedies. Somehow the awe in which Wellington and Dizraeli are held gets in the way, and that quality that Arliss has, in films like "The Last Gentleman", of somehow dissolving the screen and setting up a rapport with the audience almost as though it was a live performance, is not present. Perhaps Arliss himself realised this, and made his biographical films only to provide an infrequent change of pace. However, among the "historical" group, "Alexander Hamilton" is most enjoyable: it is far less a biography than it is an homage, dealing with only one specific phase of Hamilton's life, and climaxing in triumph rather than going through to Hamilton's tragic end. It was also written by Arliss for himself, so not surprisingly Hamilton is somewhat reshaped into the Arliss mould, with a typical and rousing speech for the finale. It's quite a handsome if unnecessarily theatrical film, but also quite a brave one, devoid of unnecessary sub-plots. The cast is full of old friends from the silent days, all of them struggling valiantly to sneak in a scene, a word or a look when Arliss' eagle-eyes are directed elsewhere. Incidentally, an extremely good glass-shot in the opening scene (Washington's farewell to his troops) manages to extend a few extras into a mass army seemingly reaching for miles. One wonders, from Washington's quiet conversation with any of the troops - except those in the first row or two - heard anything of their chief's farewell. Still, that was Washington's problem rather than Arliss' (if Arliss had played the role, they would certainly have heard him!) and the scene does get the film off to both a spectacular and historical start. Our print by the way is brand new, fresh out of the lab only this week, and thus in A-1 condition.

10 Minute Intermission

I AM SUZANNE (Fox, 1933; released 1934) Directed by Rowland V. Lee; A Jesse L. Lasky production; written by Rowland V. Lee and Edwin Justus Mayer; Camera, Lee Garmes; Music and lyrics, Frederic Hollander and Forman Brown; starring Lillian Harvey, Gene Raymond, Leslie Banks, Georgia Caine, Hallwell Hobbs, Geneviève Mitchell, Tom Ricketts, Murray Kinnell, Edward Keane, Lionel Belmore, Lane Chandler, Tammany Young, Ed Fié, Podrecco's Piccolo Marionettes.

"I Am Suzanne," although not a film of major reputation, has a considerable following on two counts. One, it is one of the best showcases (and one of too few available) for the English star Lillian Harvey, who became best known via German musicals. Her talent was never formulable, but her charm was quite unique, and even managed to survive the penchant of directors who frequently posed her in close-ups that made the most of a slight resemblance to Garbo. Secondly, the film is fascinating as a curiously parallel forerunner to that surprise hit of the early 50's, "Lili." It is, in its own right, a thoroughly charming film, but it is perhaps too big for its own good. Earlier in 1933, director Lee, cameraman Garmes and star Raymond had collaborated on the lovely, simple and pretentious "Zoo in Budapest." "I Am Suzanne" is clearly an attempt to recapture that charm, and all too long is. The film is too big for too long a time, too long for its own good. It is exquisitely photographed by Garmes, but its size constantly leads one to expect more than it can deliver. Even its final production number doesn't really follow the story-line by which it is described earlier on. It's a strange criticism perhaps, but the film would work a good deal better if it didn't work as hard. Nevertheless it's a pleasing, relaxing, gentle film - and incidentally, one of the only two films that Leslie Banks made in the United States. Through the special tinting effects which have not been captured in this copy, although the original tinted stock has been copied accurately. The slight "breathing" effect in the print had developed in the original 35mm preservation copy and is now preserved for posterity, but on the whole it is not too apparent. Geneviève Mitchell, the pretty replacement for Lillian Harvey, whose talent is somewhat scathingly appraised by Georgia Caine, went on to a rather minor career at Columbia, where she wound up as a leading lady for Ken Maynard.

— William K. Everson —