An evening with Constance Bennett

SIN TAKES A HOLIDAY (Pathe, 1930) Directed by Paul Stein; produced by E.B.Derr; Screenplay by Horace Jackson from a story by Robert Milton and Dorothy Cairns; Camera, John Nescall; 80 mins.


Although officially a Pathe film, "Sin Takes a Holiday" was made just about the time that Pathe became Rko-Pathe, very shortly thereafter to become the more familiar Rko Radio. It's extremely typical of the kind of film that the company made at that time. Rko was unique in being a company without much of a historic background or tradition; it was formed by bankers and business-men whose only interest was in making money, and who therefore promoted the mass production of the kind of films currently popular. Thus Rko, more than any other company in those early sound years, concentrated on films that talked and in many cases were stage or novel derivations. And in its first years, prior to the arrival of people like George Cukor, Alec Milner, Lionel Stander, Violet Kemble-Coooper, Minor Watson, Tyrrel Davis, Virginia Howell, Walter Walker, Harold Entwistle.

If Paul Stein (director of "Sin Takes a Holiday") is typical of the older and unimaginative breed of Rko director, then Cukor was certainly typical of the new.

"Our Hatters" may be resolutely filmed theatre still, but it has a fine elegance to it all. The play was from an earlier day, and doesn't translate too convincingly to the 30's -- any more than Oscar Wilde would have done. There are some anachronisms in the casting too, and Gilbert Roland's Latin gigolo is very out-of-place in London society. But on the whole it's intriguing to watch how Cukor takes a play that could be quite tasteless, keeps it decidedly non-explicit, yet makes the immorality of the immoralities taking place off-stage, and yet still comes up with a film that is mature and appropriately "nasty", without any need to revert to the shock tactics that would be applied if the film were to be made today. In one way, the film is something of a dry-run for Cukor's later "The Women" -- and while it can't compete with that film in gloss or star-power, in many ways it is a better film. Certainly it isn't forced to tone down its bitthiness to satisfy both the Production Code and Louis B. Mayer, a toning-down that removed a lot of the bite from "The Women". There are some very pleasing supporting performances, especially from Violet Kemble-Coooper in the role done on stage by Constance Collier, and there's a rather likeable camaraderie between these women which makes them rather more human (if not more admirable) than their counterparts in "The Women".

The print by the way, has a mysterious defect -- an occasional flickering and momentary light-loss. It isn't serious, and we mention it only to alleviate suspense, since it makes it look as though the projector is having problems and is about to give out!

William K. Everson

A reminder of a program change. For program #5 on July 12th, "THE UNKLY GARDEN" has been substituted for the unexpectedly unavailable print of "YNARA". "The Unholy Garden" is a 1931 film directed by George Fitzmaurice, written by Hecht and MacArthur, starring Ronald Colman with Fay Wray and Estelle Taylor.

** Since tonight's program has such a maritonal flavor, it will open with an appropriate short.