Both of tonight's films are, in a sense, museum pieces. In earlier years in those film series they would have been relegated to an "Archive Night" slot if such had then existed. But they do complement one another rather well in illustrating how valuable the movies can be in reflecting contemporary moral, social and other trends. Too, I think that by now our audiences are accustomed to occasionally bizarre programming. Tonight's films are neither entertainment blockbusters nor artistic milestones, but they are fascinating films in their own way, with enough literary, acting and directorial talent on view to compensate for the rather archaic attitudes presented.

SON OF INDIA (MGM, 1931) Directed by Jacques Feyder; Screenplay by Ernest Vajda, John Wexman and Claudine West from "Mr. Isaac" by F. Marion Crawford; Camera, Harold Rosson; 72 mins. With Ramon Novarro, Madge Evans, Conrad Nagel, Marjorie Rambeau, C. Aubrey Smith, Mitchell Lewis, John Miljan, Nigel de Bruijer.

"Son Of India" seems never to have been revived in this country, and I am unaware of any television showing, though because of its racial theme it is the kind of film that might well be automatically withheld from TV. It may even be a "lost" film in this country, though frankly that seems unlikely. (Our print tonight is from a European source.) Hollywood, in its pre-Production Code era, was still immersed, as it had been from its beginning, in "whitewashing" Indians. They were regarded with considerably more sympathy than Orientals, they were still tarred with the same Eastern brush when it came to marriage with girls from Boston. Even the wholly sympathetic whites in the film blanche still further and reveal dormant bigotry when such issues arise. Not having read the source novel, I cannot comment on the movie's fidelity to it - though its title, "Mr. Isaac", suggests that other racial issues might be involved, and that MGM surely strove to provide a more exotic locale to provide a better vehicle for Ramon Novarro. However, author Crawford - who also wrote "The White Sister" - did seem to have a thing about love being thwarted by either racial or religious barriers, and "Son Of India" is suggesting at least to its own prejudices, and doesn't cop out at the end by intriguing if patently artificial mountain (glass shot) effects in the opening scene. There are also a few marvels of the camera which gave the obligatory Holy Man, Ramon Novarro isn't an entirely convincing Indian, but Madge Evans, as always, is a graceful and beautiful delight. The film was Jacques Feyder's last American film. (A Belgian director, he had worked in French films in the early 20's, and returned there in the early 30's. He was married to actress Françoise Rosay.) His best American films at MGM were the two Garbo vehicles, "The Kiss" and the German (but Hollywood made) version of "Anna Christie". While of his later films back in Europe he is best remembered for "Carnival In Flanders" ("La Kermesse Héroïque") and "Knight Without Armour".

- Ten Minute Intermission -

UNFAITHFUL (Paramount, 1931) Directed by John Cromwell; Screenplay by Eve Unsell and John Van Druten from the play by John Van Druten; Camera, Charles Lang; 90 mins. With Ruth Chatterton, Paul Lukas, Paul Cavanagh, Juliette Compton, Donald Cook, Emily Fitzroy, Syd Saylor, Bruce Warren, Leslie Palmer, Arnold Jance, Dennis D'Auburn, Ambrose Barker, Stella Moore, George Jackson, Eric Kalkhurst, Douglas Gilmore, Jack Richardson, Donald Mackenzie.

This period of the early thirties was positively awash with "confession" stories and tales of actual or pretended marital infidelities. Chatterton had done two films immediately before this one, "A Lady of Scandal" and "Anybody's Woman" - and nobody could have been blamed for confusing this "Unfaithful" with Tallulah Bankhead's "A Face in the Crowd" where the mailer has to add her weight to the marital onslaught too. "Unfaithful" has quite a lot in common with the Cukor/Bennett "Our Betters", including a London high society milieu. (So many of the confession films, like "Ladies Man" were set in New York that Hollywood was probably glad of the chance to use European locales and stress that all this depravity was not limited to the U.S.). Even if the film's marital morals are somewhat outdated, it still retains a certain theatrical pomposity, some very witty and pungent dialogue, helped along by first-class performances and Cromwell's usual skilled direction. Critics were much impressed by the camerawork too - rightly so, since Charles Lang was one of Paramount's best - but the NY Times was perhaps unduly excited by the "magic" of the back-projection process, which it clearly neither know nor understood.

For the record, "Son of India" opened at the Capitol with an All-Girl Stage Show; "Unfaithful" opened at the Paramount with a stage show that included animal acts. Since you're getting two first-runs for the price of one we can't duplicate the stage shows - although who knows what may crop up in the Discuss ion period afterwards?

- William K. Everson -

Program Ends approx. 10:20 (Short discussion period will follow)