Films made here on the East Coast were not necessarily better than those made in Hollywood, though sometimes they were. The facilities might be less elaborate—but the lack of supervision from front office executives was often a major advantage! Regardless, they often have added interest for those of us who live in the East. Movies from here, even those of the lower order, though Hollywood became the centre of activity from about 1916. So many varied and interesting films have been made here in the East (and of course many of them have been shown here in the past) that there is no attempt with this program to provide any sort of comprehensive coverage. Rather we are showing you films made in four different areas—New Jersey, Rhode Island, Long Island, and New York City and upstate New York. This link also allows us to show four quite diversified and interesting films of admittedly not-outstanding production quality, that are worth showing but might be difficult to accommodate otherwise.

I am particularly sorry I won’t be on hand tonight to monitor the program, as I imagine there may be a number of questions. However, at out-of-the-country archival assignment interfered at just the wrong time. So save any questions until next week’s discussion session.

THE EXPLOITS OF ELAINE (Pathe, 1915) Directed by Louis Gasnier and George B. Seitz; adapted by Charles Godard from the stories by Arthur B. Reeve; an initial serial of 14 two-serial episodes, followed by a sequel with 10 episodes; with Pearl White, Arnold Daly, Creighton Hale, Shaidon Lewis; ep. 5, "The Poisoned Room," American silent serials are on the whole rather disappointing today, offering marvellous moments, but rarely living up to either memory or legend. The Exploits of Elaine was made largely in Jersey, and the source material. It's not particularly exciting or emotional, but it has a nice sense of mystery and imagination, and is perhaps the one American serial that shows definite signs of having been influenced by the classic (and far more elaborate) French serials of Louis Feuillade. It was remade (after a fashion) as a surprisingly enterprising independent talkie serial, although this time around Elaine was out of it (though detectives Craig Kennedy and his assistant L. J. Bixby). and the title was given over to the villain—"The Amazing Exploits of the Clutching Hand."

THE HOMEKEEPING OF JIM (American Films, 1921) Directed and written by Charles Seyy Camera; Frank Kirby; produced in conjunction with The Youth's Companion; 2 rls. With Phil Sanford, Ray Allen, Alice Walsh, Andy Clark.

This curious little Rhode Island-filmed short is an interesting example of the many economically mounted films produced around the country by civic, religious or other groups. It is often seen in conjunction with newspapers or magazines. Its moral uplift story is neither tense nor heavy-handed, so it plays well as a solid little dramatic film rather than as a propagandist work. Of primary interest today of course are its unwitting documentary values of real interiors and exteriors, and its sense of how small-town people dress, live, and behave.

MARRIED? (Herman F. Jans Productions, 1925) Directed by George Terwilliger; story by Marjorie Denton Cooke; Ast. Director, Ben Silvey; scenario by Jean Conover; titles, Harry Chandler; Camera, Lewis Dunmyre; Walter Blakely, 60 m.; The Cast: Marcia Huntington (Constance Bennett); Dennis Shaw (Gwen Moore); Joe Pinto (Nick Thompson); Madame du Pont (Julia Hurley); Chuck English (Antrim Short); Harry Williams (Frank Walsh); Judge Tracey (Jean Costello); Mary Jane Paul (Betty Kilburn); Kate Pinto (Evangeline Russell); Clark Jessup (Gordon Standing); Sister-Mother Sadie (Helen Burch); Maid (Rafaela Ottino).

"Married?" is a fast-moving, "fun" programmer from the 20's, a sort of mating of Eliza Gunn and James Cagney Curwood, with a running Pearl White climax—one of the few things that make the old tie-up-the-buzzsaw chestnut has used been straight, and not a burlesque of old theatrical melodrama. Incidentally, at least once in this sequence one can be thankful that it's a silent—the villain's announced intention to "sav Shaw into shingles" is enough of a tongue-twister to read, but imagine an actor like Fred Kohler having to speak it! And in its usual talk about marriage and divorce it would hardly be more typical of what was considered smart and sophisticated society chatter of the period.

There's nothing quite as bad or boring as a really cheap silent quickie—these with no real stories, no stars, no action, cheap sets and a plethora of lengthy titles to put out the few scenes and independent companies turned them out by the dozens in the 20's. They were cheap to make, cheap to rent, and served a purpose—but how they damage the cause of silent film today. But Herman Jans was one producer who evolved a neat formula for making cheap pictures that didn't look cheap, and which in terms of surface production values could often hold their own with the major studios. The New York-filmed "Married?" is an example, and a good one of this kind of picture. Jans was concerned only with audience and exhibitor appeal, not with prestige or the critics. He always used at least a
couple of fairly big name stars usually on the way up or the way down, never at their peak, but competent players and popular ones. (Edmund Lowe, Bela Lugosi, Margaret Whiting, La Monte, Johnnie Walker and Anna Pennington are further examples) and he always used good cameramen — a picture that is good to look at visually can stand shortcomings elsewhere. And "Married?" is certainly a handsome photographic job, using some excellent and rugged exteriors, including one location of cliffs and rapids that saw a lot of the film shot in a studio, but splendidly done action scenes as the serial "Hurricane Match." Most of the budget then went into elements that would show up on the surface and on the screen — photography and production. All film adaptation, experienced, workmanlike directors such as Ferrelligen on this film, and George Archainbaud, never the expensive (and often slow) prestige names. And if this policy didn't result in any masterpieces, there weren't any duds either. Audiences were well satisfied with little bread-and-butter films like this, "The Mad Dancer" and "Madonna of the Men.

Curiously, in his corner-cutting, Jans pre-dated some of the tricks that the New Wavers picked up and hailed as new techniques thirty years later. You'll notice that there are a few real transitions in the film. Characters turn up hither and yon without notice; no shots of them arriving or departing, getting in to cars or on to horses. There is a cunning depiction of a journey from New York to the Northwoods by train; all we get are a couple of titles, some moving shadows against a window, and Mr. Jans is spared a taxi to the station, the station itself, a locomotive and the station at the other end! And we're not even too aware of it either, since in essential things the film doesn't cheat. The extras aren't skimpy. The action scenes are not played for all they are worth, and the night scenes are aptly shot and not done in the daytime with filters, common practice with most major features even today. (However, this may also have been economics rather than integrity, since shooting at night would shorten the overall schedule!) All in all, it's an enjoyable jazz-age romp, with an 18 year old Connie Bennett looking slim, sleek and lovely rather than sultry. I'm glad that there's no sound track to betray his rather "Maureen"ishness, as it did in such early talkies as "What A Widow" and "As You Desire Me." Our print is from the original 35mm negative and is sharp and clear, but it was one of those negatives that was stored in some 150 different roles. The print had to be literally pieced together like a jig-saw, but all of the pieces seem to be there except (presumably) a title card to introduce the actress (Evangeline Russell) playing Kate.

— Ten Minute Intermission —

HIS WOMAN (Paramount, 1931) Directed by Edward Slioman; Screenplay by Melville Baker and Adelaide Heilbron From "The Sentimentalist" By Dale Collins; Camera, William Steiner. 78 mins.

With Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Averill Harris, Richard Spio, Douglass Dumbrille, Raquel David, Harry Davenport, Henree Harrington, Sidney Easton, Charlotte Wynter, Joan Blair, Herschel Mayall, Barton MacLane, Joseph Calleia, Lon Hascal, Preston Foster, Donald MacBride, John Doyle, Edward Keane.

"His Woman" is not so much a lost film as an abandoned one. A remake of a late silent melodrama, "Sal of Singapore," no great shakes in its day and less so in the sound era, it is an old-fashioned romantic melodrama of the type that has little nostalgic value today in the revival houses that specialise in early talkies. And a rather likeable pair of black semi-classic types, personified by the story that they could not easily befiled and gentlemen enuf to keep the film off television. No great cultural deprivation is involved perhaps, but still it's an interesting film in a number of ways. Firstly, although there are some New York waterfront location shots, most of the film's atmospheric milieu (of foreign ports as well as New York) is created within the Astoria-Lang Island studio, in a very colorful von Sternbergian manner, evocative rather than realistic. Secondly, it's interesting to see any number of Hollywood names turning up in small roles and bits, earning a few extra dollars with movie work which hit the big time on the New York stage. Slioman is always an interesting director, and Colbert, in her ninth film is sensitive and most appealing, though miscast and not always flatteringly photographed. What a contrast one sees in "Tonight is Ours" (showing here on April 24th). It was made only a couple of years later, but with all of the glossy Hollywood rent resources behind it, and Maugham's sophistication and beauty realised to the髓, not only with some stunning gowns and bright dialogue, but most sensitively with some of the lushest photography ever lavished on her, the work of the great Karl Struss. "His Woman" is the kind of film that needs patience and an understanding of its period, its studio limitations and the awkwardness of that transition to sound era. It's perhaps of greater academic than pure entertainment value, hence its positioning in a slot like tonight's, but it's certainly entitled to this one re-emergence into the sunshine (?) of the eighties.

William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 10.45