WILD MONEY (Paramount, 1937) Directed by Louis King; Screenplay by Edward T. Lowe; Marguerite Roberts and Eddie Welch from an original story by Paul Gallico; Camera, Henry Sharp; Musical Director, Morris Stoloff, 70 mins.


As New School audiences are doubtless realising by this time, Paramount "B"s and programmers of the 30's were often both superior in production values and originality to many of their major contemporaries, and "Wild Money" is further proof of this. In fact, its merits were recognised by the daily press even at the time. ("Wild Money" tended to be dismissed rather quickly), and at least one NY critic complained that this film was good enough for a NY first-run, instead of being shunted into a Brooklyn opening.

While Edward Everett Horton was of course an invaluable support comedian, especially in the Lubitsch and Astaire/Rogers films, he did have a long and successful stage career under his belt, and was a better actor than he is often given credit for today. Many of his now-forgotten starring vehicles of the 30's, mainly for Paramount and Fox, while they were all essentially "B" products, did give him far more opportunities to show his versatility, if not his comic talents, than the "A" films in which he was usually type-cast. "Wild Money", essentially a melodrama about a kidnapping, is light (and rather warm) in tone because of the Horton presence, but it doesn't sell out to slapstick and keeps its thrills serious. Supporting Horton is a particularly good cast, and it's hard to believe that a team seemed romantically in a serious vein - this time with the graceful and charming Louise Campbell, an actress under-used by Paramount while she was under contract to them. (Incidentally, over the past few months I have been running a large number of these Paramount "B"s from the thirties, some of which will surface next season, and one of the major surprises has been how many times Billy Lee showed up, often unbilled, doing everything from good, naturalistic acting to hoofing and clowning. We all knew of the best child actors around in fact, but these additional glories, almost back to the toddler stage, have been revealing and rewarding. Maybe - one day - a Billy Lee festival!). Director Louis King was never as much of a stylist as his Paramount contemporary Robert Florey, but he knew how to make his films look slick and keep on the move.

Tonight's film was one of seven he made in 1937, a total that also included the best of Paramount's Bulldog Drummond series, "Bulldog Drummond Comes Back", Like "Buy Me That Town" with which we opened this series, we think you'll find "Wild Money" surprisingly and entertainingly satisfying.

— Ten Minute Intermission —

THE AMAZING MR. BLUNDER (Hemisphere Productions-EMI, 1972) Directed by Lionel Jeffries; Produced by Barry Levinson; written by Lionel Jeffries, from a novel by Antonia Barber; Camera: Gerry Fisher (Eastmancolor); Production Designer, Wilfrid Shingleton; Music, Elmer Bernstein; 94 mins.

With Lynne Frederick, Niall MacGinnis, Barry Duff, Dorothy Alison, Diana Dors, Patrick Macnee, Mike Davison, David Lodge, Madeline Smith, James Villiers, Rosalyn Landor, Marc Granger, Graham Crowden, Benjamin Smith.

The huge success of the Lionel Jeffries-directed "The Railway Children" prompted this similarly structured but in contrast quite different Gothic follow-up. Unfortunately, "The Railway Children" did not duplicate its British success in America, so the follow-up was given no U.S. release ... a pity, because it would seem to be ideal for the sparsely-populated Disney/Christmas market, while providing a little stronger meat than the average Disney film. It's a ghost story and also a film very Dickensian in spirit ... but it also has an intriguing time warp/third dimensional theme. Since the film was clearly intended to appeal to children, the horror angles are rather neatly minimised but, apart from some slightly protracted comedy sequences, the strong dramatic values of the ghost story itself are not messed about with. However, bearing in mind that there are no compromises, The rather jolly title for one (which suggests a Cecil Parker comedy); the caricaturing of the villains so that their menace cannot be taken too seriously; and most obvious of all, a post-ending epilogue in which all of the characters, good and bad alike, appear on screen to wave goodbye cheerfully to the audience, in a sense reminding them it's all a show (and providing a convenient way of identifying the players with their roles at the end of the film). And why not? There are plenty of "Poltergeists!" around for those that want their ghosts and goblins, and those of us who appreciate the old-fashioned charm that works very well, and the story does have its surprises. Incidentally, is the tragic, the film's young heroine, later married and became the widow of Peter Sellers. The sound is not always as crystal clear as one would like, but it's more than satisfactory, and the pleasing Eastman color has not yet begun to fade. All in all, this is as close as we could get to a typical Christmas double-bill of a bygone movie era without departing from the format of our programs or descending into undue sentiment.

— William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 10:20