THE ARIZONA KID (Fox, 1930) Directed by Alfred Santell; story and screenplay by Ralph Block; Camera, Glen MacWilliams; Art Dir., Joseph Wright; 85 mins.
With Warner Baxter (The Arizona Kid); Mona Maris (Lorita); Carole Lombard (Virginia Hoyt); Theodore von Eltz (Nick Hoyt); Arthur Stone (Snakebit Pete); Solidad Jimenes (Pulga); Walter Lewis (Sheriff Andrews); Jack Harriek (The Hoboken Hooker); Willard Lucas (his manager); Hank Mann (Bartender); James Gibson (stage driver); De Sacia Mooers (Molly); Larry McGrath (Homer Snook); and Frank Rice.

Clearly this was originally intended to be a direct sequel to "In Old Arizona", until, immediately prior to shooting, Fox found that their rights to the Cisco Kid character did not extend beyond that one picture. While those rights were being renegotiated, this picture went ahead anyway, the Cisco character renamed but unchanged, and the Edmund Lowe cavalryman eliminated. Presumably much advance publicity had already been issued, since many original wire-service releases in newspapers, unalterably, refer to it as a Cisco Kid picture. It's a big advance on the original, and also a spectacularly better film than the Baxter-Santell "Romance of the Rio Grande" which preceded it (very dull, and an especial disappointment from the talented Santell). However, "The Cisco Kid" which followed in 1931 (and which we showed a few seasons back) was the best of the lot. Considering the relative paucity of spectacular action, "The Arizona Kid" does keep nicely on the move. The outdoor locations are excellent, the saloon and other interiors big and colorful, and full of busy extras. Scenes never run too long so that the stress on dialogue doesn't slow it down, and it does move steadily towards a good climax. It's a handsome film, and the only disappointing aspect is the miscasting of Carole Lombard, and her resulting rather pallid performance.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

FOUR FRIGHTENED PEOPLE (Paramount, 1934) Directed by Cecil B. deMille
Screenplay by Bartlett Cormack and Leonore Coffee from a novel by E.Arnot Robb. Recorded; Location: Chicago.
With Claudette Colbert (Judy Jones); Herbert Marshall (Arnold Ainger); Mary Boland (Mrs Mardick); William Gargan (Steward Corder); Leo Carrillo (Montague); Nella Walker (Grace Ainger); Tetsu Komai (Chief Semang); Chris Pin Martin (Boatman); Joe de la Cruz (Witch Doctor).

"Four Frightened People" was made in 1933, but before the Production Code was imposed, which accounts for it being such a surprisingly uninhibited movie for a 1934 release. deMille often called the film his only flop. In a boxoffice sense, that isn't strictly true, since more than one deMille film never regained its negative cost. It's also almost universally regarded as being his worst film, and that is debatable too, since it is certainly far more entertaining than several deMille films regarded as being "successes". deMille also attempted a Stroheim on us, trying to evade much of the blame. It was taken out of his hands, he claimed, and out by someone who just didn't understand it. While one can accept that kind of story for a "Greed" or a "Red Badge of Courage", one can't shed too many tears here for a "ruined masterpiece"! Perhaps by this time deMille had become too reliant on studio conveniences (much of the film was shot on location in Hawaii) and second-unit directors to be totally self-confident with a smaller, non-spectacle film made under his own steam, the kind of film that he had done before and well, with some regularity. Indeed, only the year before his small crimes and youth film "This Day and Age" was quite surprisingly powerful. In any event, "Four Frightened People" was considered all below par for him, although luckily "The Plains" was along in the year to compensate for this mild blemish on both his and Colbert's career. Off-beat it certainly is, wavering between comedy and drama, here and there thrusting more than just an echo of his silent "Male and Female", but it is also a vastly entertaining film in its own way. Karl Struss' excellent location camerawork gives it all a classily look, and Marshall and Colbert are always enjoyable to watch and to listen to. The opening, and certain other scenes, have a stately, larger-than-life, silent-day style to them. But most of all is the film in its over-brought and unexpected dramatics: the nude love scene, the hysteria when Colbert and Marshall are trussed up by the natives, the expected cliches that arrive on cue but explode with such vigor that obviously nobody involved believes that they are cliches. (Once again, school-teacher Colbert removes her glasses permanently, thus transforming herself into a radiant beauty, her unleashed libido presumably compensating for the loss of eyesight). The jungle lull (with Donald Cook, Evelyn Knapp and James Bush?), for taken in the right spirit, and without expecting too much, it's still a most enjoyable piece of nonsense.

william e. eyerson

Program Ends approx. 10:25.