IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE (Paramount, 1930; rcl: 1931). Directed by Frank Tuttle. Screenplay by Arthur Liver and Ethel Doherty from the play by Roy Custer, Magrue and Walter Hackett. Camera, Archie Stout; 65 mins.


Paramount's ill-tempered farewell to Louise Brooks was presumably intended as both an insult and a nail in her commercial coffin, via a supporting role limited to the first reel. However, it rebounded. Director Tuttle, who had worked with her before and was an old friend, sees to it that she is stunningly photographed in her few scenes so that she virtually takes over the film. She is sorely missed thereafter, and a still ungroomed Carole Lombard as the heroine doesn't in any way compensate for her sudden banishment. Otherwise, even if not exactly an American comedy, it is sprightly and sprightly comedy, starting off with a bang and maintaining a much slicker pace than was common in 1930 comedies. Also, considering that it is based on an old play (that was filmed back in 1919) it is remarkably adept at adapting its plot to a much later period, and is quite unique in naming all the brands in its satire of advertising. Another major asset is Helen Johnson who plays the French countess; a much under-rated actress with a near Brooksian allure herself, who later changed her name to Judith Wood, and whose career was disappointingly brief. Due to expiration of rights to the play, the film hasn't been in circulation for years, and so far as I am aware has never had television exposure.

Ten Minute Intermission —


For lengthy background information on Luitzi Trenker we refer you back to our notes on "Der Kaiser von Kalifornien" which we played last year, and of course to earlier notes on such Trenker films as "The Challenge" and "The Doomed Battalion". Although Universal had an excellent 35mm print which was included in the MFAA Universal cycle a few years back, it now seems to have disappeared from their vault, and 16mm prints are very hard to find. Since this is one of Trenker's best films, we have been looking for it for a long time. I must admit that in one sense it is now slightly disappointing; since I first saw the American version, I have become far more familiar with the German original - which is longer and better. Universal had a strange knack of cutting these German co-productions into the form of straight action films, and somehow losing the mystical element in the process. "SSO Iceberg" was severely damaged in that respect; "The Rebel" much less so in that most of the key action scenes remain intact. But it now moves too fast and loses something dramatically; when Trenker and Banky first meet they are casual strangers; in their second scene together they are already old acquintances. At Trenker's request, the film's original score was cut entirely, not only lessening the impact of the climax, but by shortening it, reducing its suspense too. However, these are carping criticisms. The superb photography and the reusing action sequences are so exaltingly presented that the shortcomings of the American version are soon forgotten - except for the inexplicable dubbing of Trenker's voice, since he had shown in the previous year's "The Doomed Battalion" that he could handle English perfectly - or at least considerably more than adequately — and his musical voice was very much a part of his character. As Trenker's original voice, the German version of the film was coincided with the Nazi rise to power, and the mood of the film suggested to Nazi propagandists that Trenker might be a useful filmic ally to them. The overlapping martial tone was accidental however, Trenker flatly refused to cooperate and indeed included subtle anti-Nazi elements in several of his films.
thereafter. Since support by the Nazis was virtually essential to any film-maker in Germany under their regime, Trenker was hurt by their antagonism. Money that had been promised towards budgets was mysteriously yanked at the last minute, and several Trenker films would have been suppressed in Germany entirely had not their prestige outside Germany, especially at the Venice Film Festival, made their release unavoidable. Nevertheless, the Nazis were able—eventually—to prevent his working as a writer and director, and only permitted him to appear as a star in the films of others.

After the war he returned to his beloved mountains and the genre of film he loved best, and also made many documentaries on mountaineering and winter sports. Still a handsome and athletic figure at 51, he is very much of a folk-hero in his Dolomite home town (and elsewhere in Europe for that matter) and is still remarkably active, writing constantly (the number of his published books and novels is quite staggering) and also owning and operating a ski-lift.

Apart from being one of his best films, "The Rebel" is also one of Trenker's most typical, filmed with his usual crew of outstanding mountain cinematographers, and with a magnificent score by Beace (who also did "The Blue Light" and "Extase" as well as most of Trenker's films) that works on an emotional level as well as lending excitement to the mountain thrills. In this regard one might mention that while there's never anything faked about Trenker's mountain footage (except for the occasional studio closeup insert of an angle or sustained dialogue scene that would be impossible to obtain under conditions of actuality) realism for its own sake was never an essential part of his work. There's a prolonged chase at the mid-way point in which Trenker and his pursuers run virtually non-stop up and down mountainsides at an altitude where just walking for a few minutes would be exhausting. Only at the climax does Trenker pause to take breath—and one wonders just how long this sequence actually took to shoot, and how long the rest periods had to be between the quick shots of extreme exertion. There's also no logical reason for a medical student returning home to carry an enormous pistol strapped to his waist, and to prove to be a crack shot with it into the bargain! But again, one shouldn't carp—there's an operative quality to all of the Trenker films, and one doesn't look for accuracy in points essential to the narrative, in an opera.

In concluding one might mention that Trenker was one of the major honorees at the Telluride Film Festival in the Colorado Rockies last September, and scored a major hit with the ladies of the town as he doffed his Tyrolean hat and beamed happily at them. He quite effortlessly stole all of the limelight away from Russian director Tarkovsky—although admittedly, that was not a particularly difficult feat!

--- William K. Everson ---

Program finishes approx. 10.10., followed by discussion period.

A confirmation: the print of the 1933 Jessie Matthews/Ralph Richardson FRIDAY THE 13th is on hand, and though an old print and not in perfect condition, is quite acceptable, so there will be no problem with it for our showing on Friday April 13.