Both of today's films arrived literally at the last minute, a day past the normal delivery time for the printing of these notes, so there has been, unfortunately, no time to re-screen them and these notes are thus based on older memories of the films. "Night Court" was screened in New York immediately between "Surface" and "Night World", emphasising the pre-Code tendency towards concentrating on crime and colorful underworld figures rather than on the law enforcement bodies brought to bear against them. After seeing Walter Huston as a pillar of integrity in those other 1932 releases "Law and Order", "Beast of the City" and "American Madness", it's quite a change of pace to see him as an entirely corrupt official. However, 1932 was an exceptionally busy and varied year for Huston: the nine films he made that year also included his stint as the Rev. Davidson in "Rain!" "Nightly Follies" is in the same easy and even unpleasant form as Joseph Calleia and not always too logical in its motivations or coincidences, but it is dashed off with his usual speed and style by W.S. Van Dyke, and gives Anita Page another chance to show that she was more than just another pretty blonde alternative to Jean Harlow.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

PUBLIC HERO #1 (MGM, 1935) Directed by J. Walter Ruben; Produced by Lucien Hubbard; Screenplay by Wells Root from an original story by Root and J. Walter Ruben; Camera, Norbert Brodine; NY opening, Capitol Theatre; 85 mins. With Lionel Barrymore (Doctor); Charles Morris (Jeff Crane); Jean Arthur (Theresa); Joseph Calleia (Sonny); Lewis Stone (Warden); Paul Kelly (Duff); Sam Baker (Nose); Paul Hurst (Rufe Parker); George E. Stone (Butch); John Kelly (Truck Driver); Selmer Jackson (Simpson); Lawrence Wheat (Andrews); Cora Sue Collins (Little girl); Lillian Harmer (Mrs Higgin). 1935 was the year that the new-style gangster film got off the ground with a vengeance, the stance now being to de-glamorise the underworld, to glorify the FBI, its scientific efficiency and its clean-cut representatives, and, for the most part, to present the criminal as a hoodlum and near-illiterate who stood no chance against such an array of crime-busting elements. "G Men" especially, and its near rip-off "Let 'Em Have It", followed this pattern to the letter. "Public Hero Number One" ("Nightly Follies") is in the same easy, even unpleasant genre that Joseph Calleia (still a relative newcomer to film, and his performance here well acclaimed) is at least presented as a criminal of some intelligence. Actually the film was trying very hard to follow the basic story of Dillinger's last days - but making sufficient changes so that it couldn't be considered an attempt to glorify him. (Both "G Men" and "Let 'Em Have It" had also incorporated incidents drawn from the Dillinger career). Essentially an action film, it is (like so many MGM films) sometimes a little too stylish for its own good. While it's always a pleasure to see Jean Arthur, her role is sometimes an intrusion into the story, and in general the film proceeds on to a second climax, as though stopping after the first one would have made the film too short and pushed it back into the "B" category. However, the second climax can certainly be justified in a story sense, since it is here that the closest parallel to Dillinger's final tracking-down can be found. Calleia's "disguise" is hardly convincing however.

Although Chester Morris had starred in some major MGM films in the earlier part of the 30's ("The Big House" etc.) his star was waning somewhat in the eyes of MGM, and this film (and the interesting "Three Godfathers", which we played a few years back) marked the end of his MGM contract. The following year he embarked on a series of "B"s and programmers at both Columbia and RKO, which though sometimes very good, were also so prolific that they automatically removed him from the list. Perhaps "Nightly Follies" is somewhere between the "cooking" period and the "hard-boiling" period. However, Morris remained extremely active both in films and on stage until his death, and while his later films certainly didn't realise his full potential, they were nothing to be ashamed of either.

Although they didn't play the game as energetically as Warners, MGM did remake several of their 50's melodramas as quite elaborate 40's programmers. "Public Hero Number One" turned up again in 1941 as "The Getaway", with Robert Sterling, Donna Reed, Charles Winninger and Dan Dailey in the four key roles. --- William K. Everson

Program Ends approx. 10.45 No discussion period tonight.