MURDER IN TRINIDAD (Fox, 1934) Directed by Louis King; screenplay by Seton I. Miller from the novel by John W. Vandercook; Camera, Barney McGill; Musical director, Sam Kaylin; NY premiere, Mayfair Theatre; 74 mins. With: Nigel Bruce (Bertram Lynch); Heather Angel (Joan Cassell); Victor Jory (Sutter); Douglas Walton (Gregory Bannister); Richard Arlen (Robert Castlet); Humphrey Bogart (Col. J. A. Somerset); Patric Knowles (Inspector Henley); Francis Ford (Devanean); J. Carrol Naish (Duvail); John Davidson (Moah); Harvey Clark (Getchel); Noble Johnson (Quechio); Allan Squire, Paul Panzer (Hunters); Ivan Simpson, Perry Ivins (Doctors); Stanley Price (native); Arthur Shirley (Customs Officer). 1934 was a popular year for movie murders; quite apart from Charlie Chan, "Doctor" Philo Vance, "Bulldog Drummond and other busy detectives, we had "Murder at the Vanities", "Murder in the Museum", "Murder in the Private Car", "Murder in the Clouds", "Murder on the Blackboard", "Murder at the Inn" and of course tonight: tropical murder. It was the first and easily the best (admittedly not too hot a feast!) of the three versions of the Vandercook novel, which later saw more standardised usage as the basis of "Mr. Moto on Danger Island" and later "The Caribbean Mystery". Although the mystery is not very profound and the killer's identity fairly easily divined, the direction is smooth and somewhat subdued, with almost no production, well mounted and especially well cast. Nigel Bruce is particularly good in a welcome change from his later Dr. Watson stereotype as a unique kind of detective hero, slovenly and untidy, both in his manner and sometimes in his thinking, yet within quite shrewd. At a time when movie sleuths were usually slick and debonair, it was quite a departure. TV's much later Columbo was cut from the same cloth but more formalised pattern, and there's a good deal more warmth and humanity in the Bruce performance. Louis King's career (1931-36) spiralled upwards in the early 40's to lesser "A" pictures, but he was at his best with slick little British mysteries and thrillers in the 30's, doing many of the Paramount FBI and Bulldog Drummond movies.

-- Ten Minute Intermission --

SHINING VICTORY (Warner Bros., 1941) Directed by Irving Rapper; Produced by Jack Warner and Hal B. Wallis; Assoc. Producer, Robert Lord; Screenplay by Howard Koch and Anne Froelick from the play "Jupiter Laughs" by A.J. Cronin; Camera, James Wong Howe; Music, Max Steiner; 80 mins. With: James Stephenson (Dr. Paul Venner); Geraldine Fitzgerald (Dr. Mary Murray); Barbara O'Neill (Miss Leeming); Donald Crisp (Dr. Drewett); Montagu Love (Dr. Blake); G.F. Hultley jr. (Dr. Thornton); Sig Rumann (Prof. van Reiter); Frank Reicher (Dr. Esthervzy); Herbert Sterler (Miss Hoffman); Richard Ainley (Hale); Bruce Lester (Bentley); Leonard Hude (Foster); Doris Lloyd (Mrs. Foster); Billy Breuler (Chever); Mary Anderson (Dora); Charles Caged (Kent); Wolfgang Zilzer (subordinate); Robert O. Davis; Hans von Morhart (Police officers); Ian Wolfe (Bank manager); Barlowe Bowland (Old man); Tempe Pigott (Mrs. Weatherby); Claire du Brey (matron); Bette Davis (nurse).

Although not a major Warner production, "Shining Victory" was a relatively ambitious showcase for three new talents. It was the first solo directorial assignment for Irving Rapper, who had been a stage director and then from the mid-30's on an overworked dialogue director at Warners. Creating an instant impression with this film, he followed up (within a year) with "One Foot in Heaven", "The Gay Sisters" and then the Bette Davis vehicle that really established him, "Now Voyager". James Stephenson (like Errol Flynn and Patric Knowles before him) came to Warners from their British studio; from the mid-30's on they gave him more exposure and billing in "B" movies (one of the later Philo Vances), good support roles in "A" movies and even gave him added exposure in shorts ("The Monroe Doctrine" etc.). Clearly an unorthodox but useful "type" with excellent diction, he had the potential for major stardom and attracted real attention in Bette Davis' "The Letter". "Shining Victory" was his first big starring vehicle, and augured well; a co-starring role in "International Squadron" followed and then tragically, he died suddenly, just as all the hard work and talent was paying off. Geraldine Fitzgerald had likewise come over from England, but with little fame at all. In the shadow of Davis, Crawford and Humphrey, she did establish herself - perhaps more as an actress than a star - and of course is still going strong. The film was also one of the last in a ten-year dalliance with the medical novels of A.J. Cronin (although the non-medical "The Keys of the Kingdom" and "The Green Years" did renew interest in his work in the mid-40's). With an already off-beat story and the need for a popular success to showcase their three new talents, Warners didn't take too many chances with the film. It's never as emotionally subtle as it might be, and Barbara O'Neill's and Donald Crisp's work make it all the more palatable. It's not give much production, with the best of the Warner team (Howe and Steiner especially) pitching in with a vengeance. Trying to tie its story in to the contemporary mood, Hungarian police of the 30's are made to look and sound exactly like Gestapo men, Bette Davis' bit role, carefully "leaked" for publicity at the time, was a good luck gesture to Irving Rapper with whom she had worked on stage, and who would direct a quartet of her later movies. Interesting ramifications of this will be discussed pre-screening. --- Wm. K. Everson

Program ends: 10:25 Discussion follows. NEXT WEEK's program starts promptly at 7:30 without introduction.