SCOTLAND YARD (Fox, 1930) Directed by William K. Howard; Produced by Ralph Block; Screenplay by Garrett Fort from a play by Denison Clift; Camera, George Schnaitterman. 73 mins.
With: Edmund Lowe (Dakin Barcolles and Sir John Lasher); Joan Bennett (Xandra, Lady Lasher); Donald Crisp (Charles Fox); Georges Renévant (Dr. Dean); Lumsden (Sir Clive Heathcote); David Torrance (Capt. Graves); Barbara Leonard (Nurse Cecilia); Halliwell Hobbes (Lord St. Arran); J. Carrol Naish (Dr. Remur); Arnold Lucy (McKillop).

William K. Howard's third talkie shows him to be still having some difficulty in adjusting his exciting visual style to the demands of talkative scripts usually based on plays. He tends to play the visual elements to the hilt -- in the tense opening sequence -- and then to let the dialogue elements take over since that, after all, was what the paying customers wanted then. By his fifth sound film, "Transatlantic" he'd overcome the problems of sound thoroughly, and was off into a long series of beautifully crafted films: "Surrender," "Sherlock Holmes", "The Trial of Vivienne Ware" and "Mary Burns, Pugitive".

The title is something of a misnomer, for although Scotland Yard does figure in the story, it is not the usual cops and robbers affair. Lowe's dual role, with the wife wondering whether the somewhat changed man is really her husband, is the same kind of role that he did a few years later in "The Great Impersonation" with Valerie Hobson in a like predication. Incidentally, "Scotland Yard" was fairly faithfully remade by Fox in 1940, under the same title, with John Loder, Nancy Kelly, Edmund Gwenn and Henry Wilcoxon. Clearly this original version is now of primarily academic interest, but its plot is an enjoyable one in its own nontelevision way, and the director and players are all worthy of our respectful attention.

-- Ten Minute Intermission --

I LOVED YOU WEDNESDAY (Fox, 1933) Directed by Henry King and William Cameron Menzies; Screenplay by Philip Klein and Horace Jackson from the play by Molly Ricardel and William du Bois; Camera, Hal Mohr. 60 mins.
With: Walter Pidgeon (Philip Fletcher); Elissa Landi (Vicki Meredith); Victor Jory (Randall Williams); Miriam Jordan (Cynthia Williams); Laura Hope Crews ("Doc Mary" Hanson).

Frankly, this film is somewhat of an enigma -- although the title portion of that enigma can be explained readily enough. Fox bought the rights to what had been a successful play, but were unable to negotiate the rights to reproduce a stanza from a poem by Edna St. Vincent Milley which inspired the title, and which had been quoted in the theatre playbills. Even apart from a now virtually meaningless title, the film has other quixotic elements, among them the fact that it is impossible to classify it. It's too serious to be a comedy, too witty to be a straight romantic drama, it has musical numbers yet is by no means a musical, and it is constantly introducing elements (the Boulder Dam sequence for example) which suggests that it is going in a direction that is that. The trick is to turn its own indecision into a virtue, and enjoy it for its very unpredictability. Certainly it's a highly glossy production, with a wide range of locations and elaborate sets, all superbly photographed by Hal Mohr. Possibly my own lack of enthusiasm for it, apart from expecting too much from a film co-directed by King and Menzies, was occasioned by the fact that I always ran it alone, while pondering how to use it. Last January I ran it at Berkeley, where the film suddenly came alive with an audience, and this experience was repeated only last weekend at a seminar in Toronto. Obviously it is a film that needs an audience -- and indeed, had a big and apparently well-satisfied one when it originally opened at the Radio City Music Hall.

One of the more surprising elements of the film is the way it, at times, switches to being "The Women" in reverse, with Victor Jory and Warner Baxter exchanging vitriolic comments about women in general, along with barbed thrusts at each other.

As you all know by now, our "Archive Night" heading is a kind of warning that while the films may be fascinating for their purely historic value, or may be extremely rare, these are their main attributes. "Scotland Yard" probably does justify that self-protective shield, but we may have been a little off the mark with "I Loved You Wednesday", since it was booked into this slot before we had a chance to see it with those enthusiastic Californian and Canadian audiences.

William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 10.22.
Discussion period follows.