Man to Man (Warner Brothers, 1930) Directed by Allan Dwan; Screenplay by Joseph Jackson from "Barber John's Boy" by Ben Ames Williams; Camera, Ira Morgan; 53 mins.
With: Phillips Holmes (Michael Bolton); Grant Mitchell (Barber John Bolton); Lucille Powers (Emily); Barbara Weeks (Alice); Charles Sellon (Judge); Dwight Frye (Van Alda); Russell Simpson (Uncle Cal); Paul Nicholson (Ryan); Robert Emmett O'Connor (Sheriff); George Marion sr. (Jim McCord); Otis Harlan (Rip Henry); James Neill (B.B.Beecham); Johnny Larkin (Bildad)

"Man to Man" is a curious film for a major company to have made in 1930, when the stress was on fast talk, transcribed theatrical works, music, noise and hard-bitten melodramatics. It is a quiet, unsensational film, with deliberately underplayed dramatics, almost a throwback to the Charles Ray vehicles of the pre-20's. One can well imagine the same story being filmed 15 years earlier with Ray and Frank Keenan, and Reginald Barker directing. Phillips Holmes has very much of a Ray role: sensitive, decent, a little weak, although the problems he faces have a little more psychological depth than those that confronted Ray. It's a most pleasing little film, with a faithful reconstruction of period and locale, a fact not ignored by the generally good reviews it received at the time. Dwan's reputation has grown somewhat in more recent years, when we have been more aware of his whole body of work, and he seems to be exhibiting far more personal interest in this film than in some of his bigger silent vehicles with Fairbanks and Swanson. The scenes of small town life - main street, barber shop, picnic grounds - are handled with both conviction and affection. Many of the compositions are quite lovely, and there is one really beautiful shot of the town. The magnificent locomotive roars by in the background to a big city that they'll probably never see.
The overall restraint extends from the sensitively underplayed scene of the father's homecoming to mere details; it's rather unusual to find a film of the thirties being realistic enough to admit that a couple of thousand dollars is still a substantial enough amount to cause serious problems. Although a short film, it does slow down towards the end, mainly because the solution is apparent to the audience long before it is to the protagonists. But even when nothing much is happening, there's plenty to watch - not least grand old Otis Harlan with his waddling walk and most of all, Grant Mitchell giving a really moving and sensitive performance in one of his biggest and best roles.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

Here to Hold (Universal, 1943) Directed by Frank Ryan; Produced by Felix Jackson; Screenplay by Lewis H. Foster from a play by John D. Klorer;
Camera, Woody Bredell; Music: Cole Porter, Georges Bizet, Jimmy McHugh, Laurence Hope, Amy Woodford Finden; 94 mins.
With: Deanna Durbin (Fanny Craig); Joseph Cotten (Bill Morley); Charles Winninger (Judson Craig); Evelyn Ankers (Flo); Gus Schilling (Rosey Blake); Nella Walker (Mrs Craig); Ludwig Stossell (Birns); William Davidson (Alfred); Irving Bacon (Dr. Bacon); Nydia Westman (Nurse Willing); Sam Hinds (Dr. Crane).
Apart from "Lady on a Train" and "Christmas Holiday", two noirs that were somehow distinct and separate from the general run of Durbin's, we've never shown any of the star's later, post-Pasternak films. Not until last year that is, when "Because of Him" proved that even second-echelon Durbin can still, especially in the 30's, offer charm and pleasing diversion. We. So we move into some of the best of the longer and more obviously of the finest, great group of ten produced by Pasternak. "Here to Hold" was #12, and while up to the older standards, was a big improvement on the first of the new group, "The Amazing Mrs Holiday". But there are still signs that the new team had lost, or discarded unwisely, some of those magic ingredients that had worked so well before. Deanna is introduced for example as a somewhat pampered society debutante, an image just at odds with the more down to earth earlier Durbin. And as though reluctant to get into the relatively serious plot matter of the later portions, far too much time is wasted on the few scenes and not enough on the story. But once that's out of the way, it settles down to a wartime story that is pleasingly sentimental and nostalgic, but doesn't go overboard on hoke. The film is a sequel to the two earlier "Three Smart Girls" movies, which gives father Charles Winninger a logical excuse to run some "home movies" culled from those films. True, he also pillages "First Love" and "Mad About Music", and has the advantage of unique angles gained by camera trucks and cranes normally denied to the amateur cinematographer, especially in the 30's, but he doesn't feel inclined to carry it. Incidentally, there's an interesting contrast in the international styles of the exteriors, especially of her husband's death is, by Hollywood standards, surprisingly restrained although anticipated. Just a couple of months later an almost identical scene in the British "Millions Like Us" was virtually spartan in its withholding of information and sentiment! Deanna sings superbly, gets more than one chance to prove what a good emotional actress she could be, and the climax, 40's war-oriented notwithstanding, is really quite touching.

--- Wm.K.Everson
Program ends: 10.30. Short discussion period.

Douglas Wood, Minna Phillips

* * *

** Names omitted from "Here to Hold" cast: Fay Helm, Murray Alper, Iris Adrian