HIPS HIPS HOORAY (Rko Radio, 1934) Directed by Mark Sandrich; written by Harry Ruby, Bert Kalmar, Edward Kaufman; music and lyrics by Ruby and Kalmar; dances staged by David Gould; Camera, David Abel; NY premiere, Roxy. 70 min. With: Bert Wheeler (Andy Williams); Robert Woolsey (Bob Dudley); Ruth Etting (Ruth Etting); Thelma Todd (Miss Frisky); Dorothy Lee (Daizy); George Meeker (Armand Beauchamp); James Burtis (Mulligan); Matt Briggs (Sweeney); Spencer Charters (Mr. Clark) and Dorothy Granger, Lee Shumway, Jean Carmen, Stanley Blystone, Bobby Watson.

It has been some sixteen years since we last showed this Wheeler and Woolsey comedy; it hasn't shown up again in the interim, and the brace of other W & W comedies that we've shown since haven't exactly created a cult for their work. Nevertheless they were extremely popular in their day, at their best when their scripts were really pungent or when they punctuated their films with well-honed vaudeville routines, at their weakest when the films relied on their persona alone, which meant relying primarily on Wheeler who was by far the more talented and appealing member of the duo. "Hips Hips Hooray" remains one of their best films however, and certainly one of the best introductions to their brand of comedy. It is far slicker than most of their films, dressed up with high production values and glossy production numbers. There are none of those long pur-filmed dialogue exchanges which slowed and dated their earlier films, and a greater emphasis on the kind of near-surreal slapstick with which the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields punctuated their films. Quite often, the dialogue takes second place, too, with the same kind of dispassionate logic as that which was periodically responsible for the phenomena of the productions of Coogan's Bluff. In short, there should be special insurance rates for undertakers who have to live longer than other people in order to bury them! Produced in late 1933, the film is early enough to escape the full impact of the revised Production Code, and its spectacularly undressed chorine costuming and near-kneuckle dialogue are still audaciously amusing.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

NICE GIRL? (Universal, 1941) Directed by William Seiter; produced by Joe Pasternak; Screenplay by Richard Connell and Gladys Lehman from a play by Phyllis Duganne; Camera, Joseph Valentine; 90 mins. NY premiere; Paramount. With Deanna Durbin (Jane Dana), Franchot Tone (Richard Calvert), Walter Brennan (Homer Titus), Robert Benchley (Oliver Dana), Robert Stack (Don Webb), Helen Broderick (Cora Foster), Ann Gillis (Nancy Dana), Anne Gwynne (Sylvia Dana), Elizabeth Risdon (Martha Peasley), Nana Bryant (Mary Peasley), George Billings (Finky Greene), Tommi Kelly (Ken Atkins), and Marcia Mae Jones, Ray Milland, Ken Howell, William B. Davidson, Frank Sully, Robert Scott, James Finleyson, William Ruhi, Henry Roquemore, Kathryn Adams, Maris Wixon, Selmer Jackson, Edmund McDonald.

The first of the Durbin films to get panned (albeit mildly, and with plenty of praise to generate generally positive reviews) "Nice Girl?", on the strength of some mildly suggestive material in its latter portions, was somehow equated with Garbo's "No莫斯 Woman" as an unhealthy attempt to tamper with a wholesome image. (Critics had worse memories then than now, the far-from-wholesome image of Garbo's early talkies was only a few years into the past). Also, censors and pressure-groups at that period seemed unusually alert to any tentative attempts to revive pre-Code sexual sophistication, as witness the semi-scandal that erupted around the same year's Russell-Douglas vehicle "This Thing Called Love", which now plays as a totally harmless farce. Publicity for the film centered primarily around a risque pair of pajamas worn by Deanna, but seen today the film has the same delightful quality of charm and innocence that characterised all the early Pasternak Durbins. It is generous in its song content (though missing "There'll Always Be an England", added solely as a wartime morale booster for the British market), handsome in its production mountings, and in its approach to war, still in the Girl Scout stage, not yet fired in the flag-waving quicksands of such later Universals as "Follow the Boys". Worthy of note: erstwhile Tom Sawyer star Tommy Kelly reduced to a bit only a few years after his initial triumph, the role of the last appearances of Laurel & Hardy's old nemesis James Finleyson, and a co-writer credit for Richard Connell, author of "The Most Dangerous Game". Also, though officially based on a play, the film also seems to be a very casual reworking of William Seiter's 1932 "Hot Saturday", with Durbin and Tone in the Nancy Carroll and Cary Grant roles.

Program ends approx. 10.20

--- Wm. K. Everson

Note: as I will be away in Europe for most of this series (possibly making a dramatic entrance for the last show), programs will start without intros promptly at 7.30. Projection will be in the expert hands of Rick Kraemer. I don't anticipate any mechanical problems or failures, but if we do get a repeat of the equipment failure that caused the cancellation of "Behold my Wife", be assured that, in that case, a free later program will be added to repeat unshown material.