A TRIPLE BILL OF ROBERT FLOREY CRIME MELODRAMAS

This is the last of our periodic triple bills of slick, superbly crafted Robert Florey "B" thrillers ... the last only because we have now exhausted the supply of these films which each run only about an hour, and thus can lend themselves to this kind of programming. Actually by this time we have also played off the very best of all the Florey films, but there are still a few left, of longer footage, which will lend themselves to traditional double-billing, and these we will certainly get to in time. (One of them, Barbara Stanwyck's "The Woman in Red", is scheduled for the Spring).

DISBARRED (Paramount, 1939) Director: Robert Florey; Assoc. Producer, Stuart Walker; Screenplay by Lillie Hayward and Robert Presnell from a story by Harry Sauber; Camera, Harry Fischbeck; 58 mins.
With: Gail Patrick (Jean Carroll); Robert Preston (Bradley Kent); Otte Kruger (Tyler Cradon); Sidney Toler ("Hardy" Mardeen); Helen MacKellar (Abbie); Virginia Dabney (Miss LaRue); Edward Marr (Harp Harrigan); Charles D. Brown (Jackson); Clay Clement (Attorney Roberts); Frank M. Thomas (D.A.Blanchard); John Hart, Harry Worth (reporters).

The first of Florey's quartet for 1939, "Disbarred" early uses a stock-shot explosion from one of the earlier films in the series, but that is the only real sign of economy. This time it's more of a suspense story and character study than an all-out actioner, but is unusual in that one has somewhat less sympathy for the G-Man than for the likable villain as played by Otte Kruger, always one of Hollywood's slickest shyster lawyers. Virginia Dabney, by the way, was Mrs Florey and appeared in a number of his films.

-- Five Minute Intermission --

WOMEN WITHOUT NAMES (Paramount, 1940) Director: Robert Florey; Assoc. Prod. Eugene Zukor; Screenplay by William R. Lipman and Horace McCoy, based on a play by Ernest Booth; Camera, Charles Lang; 62 mins.
With: Ellen Drew (Joyce King); Robert Paige (Fred MacNeil); Judi Barrett (Peggy Athens); John Miljan (John Marlin); Fay Helm (Mildie); John McGuire (Walter Ferris); Louise Beavers (Ivy); James Seay (O'Grane); Esther Dale (Head Matron); Marjorie Main (Mrs Lowry); Audrey Maynard (Maggie); Kitty Kelly (Countess); Virginia Dabney (Ruffles); Helen Lynch (Susie); Mae Busch (Rose); Frank M. Thomas (Warden Hynex); 62 mins.

Although our last two films tonight were also Florey's last two at Paramount (followed by three interesting "B"s at Columbia and then a series of much bigger films at Warners) and were undoubtedly made on smaller budgets than such earlier films as "King of Gamblers", still the slickness, fancy cutting and overall speed hide any economy. The prison is often more of a matter of careful lighting than big sets, yet it serves as well anything in "White Heat". The film is a fairly close remake of the Sylvia Sidney "Ladies of the Law House". The original film was much longer, slower, and concentrated more on the expected tribulations of Sylvia. Recognizing that the plot is not a very convincing one, Florey allows it to get even more outlandish at times, but rushes it all through so fast, with a bang-up escape and chase climax, that one never has time to notice.

-- Five Minute Intermission --

With: Robert Paige (Steve Eddison); William Henry (Scott Britton); Virginia Dale (Enid Casserly); Marjorie Gateson (Mrs Casserly); Jack Carson (George Mattison); Anthony Quinn ("Big Boy" Bradmore); Richard Denning (Bruce Eaton); Fay Helm (Mrs Mattison); Lyle Talbot (Ross Waring); Harvey Stephens (Hartley Haefner); Richard Carle (Kalkus); Paul McGrath (Tyler Cradon); Gertrude Michael (Colette Mentehe); Harry Shannon (Randall Porter); Louise Beavers (Aunt Linty).

Paramount more than got their money's worth out of Hoover's semi-documentary book "Persons in Hiding", and this one notably mixes documented case histories with Hollywood fiction. Hoover himself (unshaven, his presence indicated at the other end of a telephone) is presented as a wise and sympathetic father figure, an image later somewhat disputed, but the film does have an underlying documentarian quality, despite the occasional Hollywood hokum such as presenting agent Jack Carson as a happy family man, thereby sealing his doom immediately. One fight scene is particularly well done, tough, realistic, yet without the stuntmen-choreography which often make such fight extremely exciting but somehow not very convincing. All three films tonight are testimonials to what Florey's films could do even with short shooting schedules - and also to his loyalty to his own stock company of both newcomers and old-timers, that he used as often as he could.

--- William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 10:53.
No discussion session.