Piano accompaniment arranged & played by STUART ODERMAN

THE RETURN OF DRAW EGAN (Triangle-Kay-Bee, 1916) Directed by William S. Hart; Produced by Thomas H. Ince; Scenario, C. Gardner Sullivan; Camera, J. Edward West. Cast: John informally as Cluff Shannon, with William S. Hart (Draw Egan), Margaery Wilson (Myrtle Buckton); Louise Glau (Poppy); Robert McKim (Arizona Joe); J. P. Lockney (Matt Buckton); Bob Kortman (cowpuncher).

Although not one of the very best or most elaborate William S. Hart westerns, "The Return of Draw Egan" is almost classic in its simplicity, has fewer sentimental or evangelical excesses than many of the Harts, and in many ways is almost the definitive "good badman" vehicle for him. It's austere, realistic, well-paced but never uses action just for its own sake, and while it's restrained in its use of film technique, Hart (as director) knew it well enough to know when to cut and when to move the camera for maximum effect -- witness the use of the tracking camera at a moment when Hart has made up his mind, and moves into the street to meet his adversary. More about Hart, his working methods and his exploitation by producer Ince in our introductory comments.

Quite incidentally, when Bill Elliott -- one of the sound Western stars most resembling Hart in person and style -- was at Allied Artists in the 50's, seeking to bring a Hart touch to his films, this is one of the films he looked at. His subsequent "Topeka" was virtually a remake. Although this is not an original print, the excellent camerawork by Joseph August (later John Ford's favorite cameraman on "The Informer," "They Were Expendable" etc.) is still impressive, though one should note that a painted insert of a sunset was somehow put into the reissue negative upside down; it would be possible to flip it right side up but then it would be out of focus, so we've left it as is.

FIVE MINUTE INTERMISSION

THE PRARIE PIRATE (Pathe-PDC, 1925) Directed by Edmund Mortimer; Produced by Hunt Stromberg; Scenario by Anthony Dillon based on the W.O.Tuttle story "The Trapper's Veil;" Cast: Tom Mix (Tom Kenor); Grace Valentine (Madame Delaney); Harry Carey (Brian Delaney); Trilby Clark (Teresa); Lloyd Whitlock (Howard Steele); Fred Kohler (Aguilar); Jean Dumas (Ruth Delaney); Robert Edeson (Don Esteban); Tote du Crow (Jose); Evelyn Selfie (Madre).

Together with Buck Jones, Harry Carey was one of the western stars who most resolutely followed the Hart tradition, and "The Prairie Pirate" also has one of Hart's favorite plot elements -- the hero's revenge-search for the killer or seducer of his sister. Spectacular action is not its main thrust, but it does keep nicely on the move and frequently on horseback, with an interesting river sequence climax in which Fairbanks' double, stuntman Richard Talmadge, seems to be doubling for Carey (even though by now Talmadge was a star in his own right in independent actioners). Hunt Stromberg's westerns were often surprisingly short - this one was a mere 4600 (35mm) feet - but he gave customers their money's worth in production values. This is a very glossy little film, with good sets, lots of extras, well-done miniatures and glass-shots, and excellent camerawork which shows off to advantage in this duo-toned original print. There are probably a few seconds missing in the death of Carey's sister -- it is never made too clear whether it is suicide or murder (though there's NO doubt that Fred Kohler was responsible!) and this small trim was probably made for the non-theatrical release, which at the time included churches and schools among key bookers, and their sensibilities were sometimes over-protected.

FIVE MINUTE INTERMISSION

SKY HIGH (Fox 1921, rel. 1922) Written and directed by Lynn Reynolds; Camera, Ben Kline; Asst. Director, George Webster; 52 mins.

With Tom Mix (Tom Newburg); Eva Novak (Estelle Halloway); J. Farrell MacDonald (Hallway); Tom Dabor (Dr. Ford); William Bucyck (Wallace Castle); Adele Warner (Marguerite); Wynne Mac (Patterson); Pat Chrisman (Pasquale).

One of the earlier Fox Mixes, and not quite as elaborate as the mid-20's ones, "Sky High" is nevertheless typical in every respect: full of action and stunts, but also quite funny. The criminal activity (smuggling Orientals into the U.S.) is initially played for laughs, nobody gets hurt despite much rugged action, and the head villain is quite a decent sort. Though not yet photographed by Dan Clark, who soon became Tim's permanent cinematographer, the film, photographed almost entirely in the Grand Canyon, is visually splendid, even in this dupe print. Like all Mix westerns, it stresses speed, with horses, cars and a plane brought into play. The stunts are very rugged, and one apparently unplanned horse-fall clearly shows Mix taking the fall and getting right back up against some of the hectic running and leaping along Grand Canyon ledges is minimised in a 16mm print, where detail is lost, but it must have looked breath-taking in the original 35mm prints. More Mix coming up in the Fall.

--- William K. Everson

Program ends 10:30; Question and Discussion session follows.

Next week is Good Friday, so no class. We resume March 31st.