PEG OF OLD DRURY (British and Dominions Pictures for United Artists release, 1935) Produced and directed by Herbert Wilcox; Camera: Freddie Young; Screenplay by Miles Malleson, based on the play " Masks and Faces" by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor; NY premiere, Bijou Theatre, through Paramount release (1936). 76 mins.

With Anna Neagle (Peg Woffington); Cedric Hardwicke (David Garrick); Jack Hawkins (Michael O'Taaffe); Margaretta Scott (Kitty Clive); Hay Petrie (Mr. Rich); Maire O'Neill (Peg's mother); Arthur Sinclair (Father); Robert Atkins (Dr. Johnson); Stuart Robertson (Singer); Leslie French (Pope); Tom Heskwood (Will); Christopher Steele (Oliver Goldsmith); Aubrey Fitzgerald (Big H); Eliot Makeham (Dr. Bowdler); Sara Allgood (Irishwoman); Polly Emery (Martha).

One of the most elusive of all the Anna Neagle vehicles — and one of the most requested — this good condition (Canadian) print is a surprise in many ways. The NY Times, in a very generous mood, termed it one of the finest pictures to come from Britain, or anywhere else for that matter — high praise indeed in view of the standards prevailing in 1936. Well, it isn't that good, but it is much superior to "Nell Gwyn", which immediately preceded it, and was a huge hit. With that earlier film, Wilcox was clearly trying to duplicate the success of Korda's "Private Life of Henry the 8th", and its bawdiness caused it considerable censorship problems over here. "Peg" is much toned down and a far more sober film, carefully avoiding most of the pitfalls that the David Garrick-Peg Woffington relationship might create for American censors. Too, in "Nell Gwyn", probably recognizing it as a star-making role, Anna Neagle went over the top more than once. Here her performance has more dignity and restraint, and if she doesn't convince us that Woffington was a great actress, she makes her popularity understandable. Surprisingly, this was the only British film about Woffington, although the same play provided the basis for a 2-reel comedy in 1912. Cedric Hardwicke presents a very different David Garrick from the one portrayed by Brian Aherne in "The Great Garrick"; he plays him in the same manner as his King Charles in "Nell Gwyn" — quite understandably, since Garrick was royalty too in the theatrical world — and substantial excerpts from Shakespeare and Ben Johnson give him the chance to validate Garrick's stature as an actor. There are of course some inevitable "showmanship" divergences from history — Peg did not on the occasion of her collapse on stage, but some three years later, she'd probably have preferred the Wilcox version if she'd had her choice. All in all, "Peg" remains one of the best of the earlier Wilcox-Neagle films; after three more programmers, "Victoria the Great" (1937) would establish her as one of the major prestige stars of British cinema, a position she would hold for some 20 years.

-- Ten Minute Intermission --

TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN (Ealing Studios-United Artists, 1941) Directed by Marcel Varnel; Produced by Michael Balcon; Screenplay by Austin Melford from the play "As You Are" by Wells Root and Hugh Miller; Camera, Gordon Dines; edited by Robert Hamer; 81 mins. (Unreleased in the U.S.; last shown at the New School in 1972).

With: George Formby (George Pearson); Peggy Bryan (Lydia Pearson); Edward Chapman (Policeman); Don Sharp (Mr. Pearson); Mackenzie Ward (Gerald Dawson); O.B. Clarens (Mr. Dawson); Ronald Ward (Nelson); John Salew (Large); Wilfred Hyde-White (removal man); Hay Petrie (Attir); Michael Rennie (diner); MacDonald Parke (businessman).

Britain's top money-maker for years (and inexplicably also very popular in the Soviet Union), George Formby was the least exportable of Britain's many comics of the 30's and 40's, and U.S. audiences knew him mainly from a brace of films released at the beginning of World War 2, when their comedic tiltings with the RAF and Nazi spies made them topical. Surprisingly "Turned Out Nice Again" makes no reference to the war at all, and its plot is in many ways a forerunner of the latter Ealing comedy "The Man in the White Suit." It was the last of Formby's comedies for Ealing before he moved to Columbia, far from typecasting but also not out of style. The critics, never too happy with his broad slapstick, thought it quite one of his best because it avoided action and chase comedy and concentrated on a good plot and characterisations; audiences, though they flocked to it as a matter of course, generally were disappointed and much preferred Formby's immediately prior film "Spare a Copper", in which he repeated all the things he had done before, but tied up in a topical tale of Nazi saboteurs. For once the critics (usually wrong when dealing with matters of public taste) were right. The film is probably the only one he ever did, and if the slap stick is missing, the Langdon-like pathos is still there and the end of the film is somber and some of the entendre dialogue. All in all a most enjoyable diversion, enhanced by the charm and beauty of leading lady Peggy Bryan, who made even fewer films than her look-alike Hollywood counterpart, Jane Bryan (despite the name, there was no relationship).

--William K. Everson

Program finishes approx. 10:35. Short discussion period follows IF delayed start of class doesn't extend beyond 15 mins. NOTE: inadvertently these notes were printed in the wrong order; the Formby film plays FIRST as originally announced.