Bob Hope was absolutely at his peak (and his freshest) in the 1940-42 years at Paramount, each film a hit, and each one sufficiently different from his immediate predecessor to retain an aura of originality even though, ironically, the three films in this period were remakes. Nothing But the Truth (1941) directed by Elliot Nugent; produced by Arthur Hornblow Jr.; screenplay by Don Hartman and Ken Englund from an original play by James Montgomery and Frederick Isham; camera, Charles Lang. 90 mins. NY premiere, Paramount Theatre, October 1941.

With: Bob Hope (Steve Bennett); Paulette Goddard (Gwen Saunders); Edward Arnold (R. R. Ralston); Leif Erickson (Van); Helen Vinson (Linda Graham); Willis Best (Samuel); Glenn Anders (Dick Donnelly); Rose Hobart (Mrs. Donnelly); Grant Mitchell (Mr. Bishop); Catherine Douret (Mrs. Van Dusen); Mary Forbes (Mrs. Ralston); Leon Balsako (Dr. Zarek); Whittaker Chambers (Fritchard); Lee Shumway (Cop); Rod Cameron (sailor); Rory Calhoun (elevator operator); and Catherine Craig (Edward McWade; Keith Richards, James Elaine.

Bob Hope's earlier "Never Say Die" had started out as a stage vehicle for Colliar too. There had been two previous film versions, one in 1920 starring Taylor Holmes, and a 1929 talkie with Richard Dix. And before its stage incarnation, it had been a novel. Yet despite its familiarity it was, together with the like. The first talkie "Browser's Millions," the kind of story that aged well and in fact usually improved as its story seemed to work better in the increasingly frenetic and dishonest world of big business. Hope is ideally suited to the lead, and his writers updated it beautifully - the original Long Island locale became Florida, and the police as well. The film made it totally contemporary. There are few visual set pieces that are as usual with Hope - only a couple in fact, and those hardly exploited to the full - which means that it depends rather more than usual on the Hope patter. It's difficult to estimate its effectiveness when seen alone; it doesn't quite as funny as when I last saw it, but audience reaction may well remedy that. Right complications involving the original novel and play have kept it off tv and out of theatrical reissue. Edward Arnold, always a delight, plays essentially the same role in both film and the co-feature, "Johnny Apollo," and one of Hope's best supporting parts. Paulette Goddard, plays a more scatterbrained heroine than usual. Only Glenn Anders, such an excellent villain in "The Lady from Shanghai," is out of place and too heavy in a comedy role that should (ideally) have been played by Roland Young. It's a little too talkie at times, the stage set-ups and manipulations a little too artificial and forced, but there's always the slick art deco design, a peppery musical score (making use of the now almost forgotten "Dolores") and a cast of old favorites to divert attention away from its theatrical origin.

-- Ten Minute Intermmission --

JOHNNY APOLLO (20th Century Fox, 1940) Directed by Henry Hathaway; Associate Producer, Barry Josephson; screenplay by Rowland Brown and Philip Dunne from an original story by Samuel Engel and Hal Long; camera, Arthur Miller; 95 mins. NY premiere, Roxy, Theatre, April 1940.

With Tyrone Power (Bob Power); Dorothy Lamour ("Lucky" Dubarry); Edward Arnold (Robert Cain); Lloyd Nolan (Ricky Dyer); Charles Grapewin (Judge Brennan); Lionel Atwill (Jim McLaughlin); Marc Lawrence (Hates); Jonathan Hale (Dr. Brown); Harrison Action (Police Chief L Planet, Larry Risck (District Attorney); Fuzzy Knight (Ormer D.); Jack L. Harvey (Charles Towbridge (Judge); Edwin Stanley (Stock exchange broker); Edward Maloney (Detective); Tom Dugan (Tom Dugan); Millburn Stone (Mr. Askew); Jack Kiser (Detective); Stanley Andrews (Capt); Bess Flowers (Secretary); George Irving (employer); Al Ferguson (cop); Anthony Caruso (hunchman); Edmond Pawley (Paul); Dick Rich, Robert Romanis (guards); Charles D. Brown (Police sergeant); Ernest flavin, Willam Hasde (cops); Ernest Vogan (radio announcer); and James Elaine, Louis Jean Heydt, Eric Wilton, Gary Tyler, Gary Breckner, Eddie Marr.

Unlike its co-feature, "Johnny Apollo" is a fairly frequent visitor on television - but hasn't been seen theatrically since the 50's, and it is so superbly photographed and designed that its visual qualities alone, quite apart from its very solid entertainment values, need occasional exposure on the big screen for full appreciation of its style. The film was director Hathaway's first for Fox, after a decade with Paramount. Over the previous three years, he had made only one film per year - albeit good ones; now he was to be more prolific, with some of his best films ahead of him. This was also a period when the big romantic idols of the day tried to change their image somewhat by venturing into tougher roles, usually a western or a prize-fight picture (or both) followed by a gangster role. It was to work for both Robert Taylor and Tyrone Power. Fox's version of "Johnny Eager" was much superior to Taylor's version on longer role. The credit of the film went to "Johnny Eager." For many years, "Johnny Apollo" was seen only in an edited form on tv, but now has happily been restored to its original length. Nearly as in its visual style, it also has some good action sequences and most of all a nice sense of humor. With four writers involved, it's difficult to pinpoint exact credits, but one can fairly safely assume that the bantering, business-like cameraderie of the gangsters can be traced back to writer Rowland Brown, a former crime reporter. Blacklisted as a director after only three films, all of them gangster, Brown did continue to write tough yarns for the screen, and the kind of dialogue was a trademark of his. Well-paced, acted by a superb cast of reliable veterans (especially among the villains!) and beautifully photographed by Arthur Miller, excellent sets helped out by cunning use of light and beautifully photographed on location. "Johnny Apollo" is altogether an excellent example of the kind of quality that came out of the old studio system, and that we all took so much for granted at the time.

Program finishes 10:50 approx. No discussion tonight.

Reminder: next week's program at the ground floor theatre, 66 5th Avenue.

-- M. K. Everson --