**THE NEW SCHOOL**

**FILM SERIES 66: Program #6**

**December 7, 1950**

**WOMEN'S FILMS** OF THE 30's and Best-Selling Authors

**TWO SINNERS** (Republic, 1935) Directed by Arthur Lubin; produced by Trem Carr; screenplay by Jefferson Parker from the novel "Two Black Sheep" by Warwick Deeping; Camera, Harry Neumann; 72 mins. (No New York first-run)

With Otto Kruger (Henry Vane); Martha Sleeper (Elsie Summerstone); Milna Gombell (Mrs Fym); Cora Sue Collins (Sally Fym); Ferdinand Munter (Monte); Harrington Reynolds (Ritchie); Olaf Hyten (French judge); Montague Shaw (Mr. Grilles); William P. Carlston (Haggle); Harold Entwhistle (Pateman)

The phrase "woman's picture" is today considered both demeaning and condescending, but in the 20's and 30's it was a purely descriptive phrase for a genre that was both popular and profitable... usually based on best-selling books that women (who had more leisure time in the 30's) had read, discussed and when Hollywood versions were announced, looked forward to with keen anticipation and mentally pre-cast with their own favorites! Tonight's two films are minor but highly enjoyable films from this category.

Warwick Deeping's novels were very popular in the 20's and 30's, but were usually on the heavy side, and not too many film versions were attempted. The 20's saw a few, including "Serrall and Son", the best Deeping adaptation and so successful that it was remade as a talkie. To my knowledge, "Two Sinners" — pepped-up from its original title, "Two Black Sheep", which was retained for the British release — was the last theatrical adaptation, although very probably TV has paid him some attention. While it's a good film on its own, it is a remarkable film for a small and new company like Republic, which had only that year emerged from the congestion of its cheaper ancestor company Mascot, and had yet to find its own identity, still concentrating primarily on Westerns and actioners. It's an ambitious property for such a company to undertake, and it is so well produced that, stars apart, it has the look of a Universal production. True, its script doesn't plumb the depths of Deeping's novel, but then that was fairly standard screenwriting procedure then. Read Lloyd Douglas' "Magnificent Obsession" and then see what a facile, superficial script Universal gleaned from it for their film version, the same year that Republic made "Two Sinners". Actually the main flaw with Republic's treatment is that it fails to exploit some of the highlights: the bizarre French prison sequence would have been well worth expanding, but at least it's there. And the attention to detail and accuracy in the earlier, English portions of the story are commendable too. Well-costumed and produced, it's not only a credit to a new and small company, but also one of the more interesting films of a director who wound up at Universal directing Abbott and Costello, Francis the Talking Mule and "Phantom of the Opera".

**TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION**

**IF I WERE FREE** (Rko Radio, 1933) Directed by Elliott Nugent; screenplay by Dwight Tyley from the play "Behold, We Live" by John Van Druten; Camera, Edward Cronjager; 66 mins; NY premiere (Jan.34), Radio City Music Hall.

With: Irene Dunne (Sarah Casenove); Clive Brook (Gordon Evers); Nils Asther (Toni Casenove); Henry Stephenson (Hector Stribbling); Vivian Tobin (Jewel Stribbling); Laura Hope Crews (Dame Evers); Tammy Peggott (Mrs Gill); Lorraine MacLean (Mrs Evers) and Murray Kinnell, Mario Dominici.

With the mesdames Dunne, Bennett, Wynyard and Harding under contract, Rko had no problems in maintaining a steady flow of romantic tear-jerkers, and we'll have at least two of those ladies back, in fine form, in our Spring schedule. Surprisingly short, and perhaps refreshing so - these complications would have taken at least another four reels to unravel over at MGM. "If I Were Free" is an adaptation of a play that won great acclaim for its star, Gertrude Lawrence, but won no excess of admiration for its own merits. Because of that perhaps, Rko had few qualms in making the film lighter than the play, and removing its tragic ending. Clive Brook has more chances than Irene Dunne, Nils Asther is at his sleaziest best (not that he couldn't be equally good in more sympathetic roles) and there's far too little of dear old Henry Stephenson.

--- WM. K. EVERSON ---

PROGRAM ENDS 10:10 approx. Discussion/Questions Follow.

Since there was early interest expressed in the Spring schedule, and we have space left, I am listing that schedule herewith. No space for more than dates and titles. Fuller details in program note #10 in two weeks, and even more in the NS Bulletin out Dec.26.


*** As a postscript to the notes on "Two Sinners", it is worth commenting that it was well thought of in England, so much so that the big Odeon circuit used it as a co-feature throughout the country, very much of a compliment to Republic, since there was never any shortage of major studio product for oc or second feature booking at that time.

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