HIT AND RUN DRIVER (MGM, 1935) Directed by Edward L.Cahn; Produced by Jack Chertek; Screenplay by Robert Lees and Fred Rinaldi; 20 mins.
With: Jonathan Hale (Capt. James); Morgan Wallace (Stevenson); Carl Stockdale (Squires); William Gould (Police Chief); Cyrus Kendall (Frankie); Howard Hickman (Doctor); Sam Flint (Judge)

The 5th of MGM's "Crime Does Not Pay" series (some 49 were made over a ten year period), is hardly one of the best, but it is sturdy and typical, and makes an interesting introduction to our first feature tonight, with a similar theme though one naturally developed with a little more subtlety since it has an extra four reels to do it in.

THE DEVIL IS DRIVING (Columbia, 1937) Directed by Harry Lachman; Screenplay by Jo Milward and Richard Blake from a story by Lee Loeb and Harold Buchman; Camera, Allen Siegler; 68 mins. NY Premiere: Rialto Theatre, July '37.

Not to be confused with the 1932 crime film of the same title that we ran a few seasons back, this "The Devil Is Driving" is an unusually restrained and sensitive "B" from a studio that normally leaned towards shock and sensation in such pictures. Admittedly capping in on shocking current headlines - statistics showed that 38,500 people were killed in road accidents in America in 1936 - it nevertheless keeps a sober and even keel throughout. The script undoubtedly had a good deal to do with that, but so did the always interesting and much underestimated director Harry Lachman. Give this same script to a typical Columbia "B" director like Jack Goldflsh and the results would have been very different. True, there are some contrivances in the script - but there is also a great deal of honest strength and some pleasing surprises. Over the Summer we'll be running a far more typical Columbia "B", "Legion of Terror" (which raced against time to beat Warners' "Black Legion" to the screen) and while that one is a lot of fun in its own wild and woolly way, it has none of the integrity of this thoughtful and satisfying little film. Inadvertently, the cast list was by-passed above, so is given here:
Richard Deacon (Ralph Scott); Eve Hamond (Ive Hamond); Nana Bryant (Rose Sanders); Frank C. Wilson (Martin Foster); Ian Wolfe (Elisa Sanders); Elisha Cook Jr. (Tony Stevens); Henry Kolker (John Stevens); Ann Rutherford (Kitty Wooster); Paul Harvey (Sam Mitchell); John Wray (Joe Peters); Charles Wilson (Dan Hailey); Walter Kingsford (Louis Wooster).

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---

With: Dennis O'Keefe (Dennis O'Brien); Alfred Ryder (Tony Genare); Mary Meade (Evangeline); Wallace Ford (Schemer); June Lockhart (Tony's wife); Charles McGraw (Moxie); Jane Randolph (Diana); Art Smith (Gregg); Herbert Hayes (Chief Carson); Jack Overman (Brownie); Jim Bannon (Lindsay); John Hengraf (Shvy); William Malen (Paul Miller); Vivian Austin (Genevielle); James Seay (Hardy); Lyle Latell (Ziggy); John Newland (Jackson Lee); Vic Cutler (Shapbrim); Trevor Bardette (Rudy); Al Bridge (Agent); Keeve Grasselle (cigar attendant); Frank Ferguson (Secret Service agent); George Carleton (Morgue attendant); narrated by Reed Hadley

Although we once ran a brief excerpt, oddly enough we have never run "T Men" in its entirety. Now that most of the Edward Small films have disappeared from tv and other distribution, this is an appropriate time to bring it to light again. In its day it was a big box office success - it was never a real "A" film as it is often called, but in intent and budget it was never more than a "B"-class programmer. Featuring a great cast and brought in huge profits. While there is nothing essentially new in it, it created (at the time) a novel form of crime film in that it united two schools of film making. It was only a few years ago that Lewis de Rochemont introduced the semi-documentary crime thriller which by 1946 had become so imitated and standardised that the freshness was wearing off. Film noir too, although many prolific years remained, had reached its peak in a certain type and quality in 1947. "T Men" brought two familiar styles together and made something fresh and good of them. Actually the film looks is much more important than what happens. Vivid and exciting, it also has many noir characteristics in its lesser lesser figures (Wallace Ford especially) and in the way it de-dramatises the T Men investigative procedure and makes it seem sleazy and futile, despite the technically successful results. Mann and Alton followed up with the under-rated "Raw Deal", a thoroughly definitive noir despite its late date and then, as a result of the huge success of "Menendez", MGM's "MT Men" is either a great semi-documentary or great Noir, but it's an excellent wadling of both, far more successful than many later, more ambitious films (such as MGM's "Scene of the Crime") that tried the same recipe but came up with a rather soggy dish.

Program ends approx. 10:50.
No discussion tonight; nor at our next program (April 5, also a long program); hold questions until April 12 and April 19 sessions. No class next Friday due to Easter.