THE LADY HAS PLANS (Paramount, 1942) Directed by Sidney Lanfield; Ass. Producer, Fred Kohlmar; Screenplay by Harry Tugent from an original story by Leo Hirinski; Camera, Charles Lang; NY premiere, Paramount Theatre, March 1942; 77 mins.

With Ray Milland (Kenneth Harper); Paulette Goddard (Sidney Royce); Roland Young (Donald Dean); Albert Dekker (Von Kemp); Margaret Hayes (Ate Lenox); Cecil Kellaway (Peter Miles); Addison Richards (Paul Baker); Edward Norris (Frank Richards); Charles Arnt (Pooly); Hans Schum, Hans von Alberh (German thugs); Gena Nickola (German maid); Gerald Mohr (Joe Scalzi); Lionel Royce (Guard); Arthur Lake (Radio executive); Richard Webb (Pan-American man); Martin Garralaga (wailer); Yola D'Avril (maid); Wolfgang Zilser (German secretary) and Nestor Paiva.

1942 offered no less than six movies with "Lady" as the first word of the title! "The Lady Has Plans" was released early in March, and was a kind of trailer for the more elaborate teaming of Goddard and Milland later that same month in deMille's "Reap the Wild Wind". Goddard also teamed well with Bob Hope and Fred MacMurray, but the Milland teamings were especially effective since her fire and wisecracking not only contrasted but meshed with the urbanity of Milland. Their best film together was undoubtedly "Pitty". There is nothing particularly original about "The Lady Has Plans" - in fact its basic plot premise, of plans drawn on the back of a lady's spy - goes back at least to Britain's 1914 "Lieut. Daring Captures a Spy", and was also a major plot-line in the late silent "The Cruise of the Jasper B" - but it made the film an especially hot one in 1942, since it introduced an element of risque farce which was nearer the knuckle than was generally considered acceptable then. Today of course its sexuality, full of style created by the Production Code, seems tame indeed. But the film itself remains very likeable, partly because it is the sort of light and short and sophisticated comedy, also because as a satirical spy film it manages to be both a good comedy and an exciting little thriller at the same time. There are no special highlights, but there is a Hitchcockian flavor to the quite tense climax. Clearly the film was written and probably largely shot before America entered the war, so it remains relatively neutral and introduces no ideological issues, although the humorless and rather grim Germans definitely come off second best to the laid-back but highly efficient Americans (Milland and Goddard), though rather surprisingly (not to the audience but to the writing department of 1942) it's also an American who turns out to be a traitor in the pay of the Nazis. A trifle, but an improvement as well as also an interesting illustration of the gradual swing over to unrestrained anti-Nazi comment even in screwball comedy; by the end of the same year, McCarey's "Once Upon a Honeymoon" had so abandoned (understandably) a neutral stance that one almost felt sorry for its Nazi villain, Walter Slezak. Incidentally, when "The Lady Has Plans" opened in London at Paramount's huge Carlton Theatre, its short running time presented something of a programming problem, so Paramount (and above-average) Hopalong Cassidy western "Riders of the Timberline" in as a second feature. The unit played so well that it was retained on general release shortly thereafter.

- Ten Minute Intermission -

DANGEROUSLY THEY LIVE (Warner Brothers, 1941) Directed by Robert Florey; Ass. Producer, Ben Stoloff; Screenplay by Marion Parsonnet (and, un billed, Florey); Camera, L.W. O'Connor; NY premiere, Warner Theatre, April 1942; 78 mins.

With: John Garfield (Dr. Nick Carter); Marsha Gordon (Coleman (Jane)); Raymond Massey (Dr. Ingersoll); Lee Patrick (Nurse Johnson); Moroni Olsen (Mr. Goodwin); Esther Dale (Daven); Christian Rub Steiner; John Ridgely (Government man); Frank Reicher (Jarris); Ben Welden (Riddle); Cliff Clark (John Dill); Roland Drew (Dr. Murdoch); Arthur Aylesworth (gate-keeper); John Harmon (taxi driver); Matthew Boulton (Captain Hunter); Gavin Nuir (Captain Strong); Ilka Grunin (Mrs. Steiner); Frank N. Thomas (Ralph Bryan); James Seay (Carl)

"Dangeroously They Live" marked Robert Florey's return to Warner Brothers for the first time since the mid-30's, and this time he was to work on "A" movies ranging from "The Desert Song" to "God Is My Co-Pilot". As always, when he had a better script and bigger stars, Florey didn't need to upgrade his material artificially by expressionistic lighting and snazzy cuts and camera angles, elements that had helped his Paramount series so enormously. "Dangeroously They Live", a Hitchcockian spy thriller (not unlike "Saboteur" in some ways) is full of style created by the Production Code and edited. The pace increases methodically, but it's a deliberately disciplined screenplay. When it came to Warners again in August of 1941, the script was ready and waiting - but the war was getting increasingly closer to America, and the 5th column scare was a major one. Florey did much re-writing himself to bring the film up to date (a fact acknowledged and praised by "Variety" in their review) and when it was ready for release (just a month after our co-feature, and running only one minute longer!) Florey's work on the film (helped by course in the presence of some good actors and prestigious names in the leads) had elevated the film to the worth of a major "A". Although it wasn't nearly as big (or quite as big) as "The Big Night" (Bogart vs. Waild and Lorre in a New York-based gangsters-vs-Nazis thriller), Warners released it with the same enthusiasm, but an anti-war campaign. Though a small film for Garfield, it was a big success -- and America's neutrality, at least while the film was in production, kept its propaganda level low. So it still works well as a taut suspense thriller quite divorced from its wartime connections. And though essentially serious in tone, it has some excellent lines of comic dialogue that remind one that, like Hitchcock's films, it isn't meant to be taken too seriously. Neither of tonight's films are terrific today and they should dovetail together nicely - especially as they run as long as they have to, and no more.

--- William K. Everson

Program ends 10:25. Questions/discussions follow