**Lew Ayres in two tough pre-code thrillers from 1932**

(The following notes are abbreviated from many longer ones written on Oct.12 and Oct.19 1973, when we first (and last) showed these films at the New School. At the time, both were major rediscoveries, and not having been seen for many years warranted the extra-long annotation).

**NIGHT WORLD** (Universal, 1932) Directed by Herbert Henley; Screenplay by Richard Schayer from an original story by Allen Rivkin and F.V. Wilcox; Camera, Merritt Gerstad; Dances staged by Busby Berkeley; Musical Score, Alfred Newman; NY premiere, Mayfair Theatre, June ’32. 61 mins.

With Lew Ayres (Michael Rand); Mae Clarke (Ruth Taylor); Boris Karloff ("Happy" MacDonald); Dorothy Revier (Mrs. MacDonald); Russell Hopton (Klaus); George Raft (Ed Powell); Bert Roach (celluloid dupes) ... Dooley Peterson (Edith Blair); Florence Lake (Miss Smith); Gene Morgan (Joe); Failey Noon (Clarice).

**Blonde** (Blebe), Louise Beavers (maid); Sammy Blum (Salesman); Harry Woods (Gun leader); Eddie Phillips (vaudevillian); Ten Tamases (Gigante); Huntley Gordon (Jim); Robert Emmett O’Connor (policeman); Geneva Mitchell (Flerabelle); Jack La Rue (killer); and Arletta Duncan, Pat Somerstat, John K. Wells, Hal Grayson and his orchestra.

"Night World" is an attempt to both jump the gun on "Grand Hotel" (filmed earlier, but released later) and to repeat the success of Universal’s own "Breadway". In some ways its far more economical budget gives it a more realistic aspect to the (inappropriately) more elaborate "Broadway". With its short running time, snappy dialogue and multiplicity of characters it certainly keeps on the move. When we last showed this film, we printing materials were known to exist in America, and our print came from Europe, where lab work is sometimes not of the best. However, since the action never leaves the night-club and everybody is in the throes of some kind of despair, the slightly grey and harsh "look" of the print is perhaps a subliminal asset. But, even so, it should and did originally look like "OK America", which is a standard issue. It’s a stinker, but interesting perhaps mainly for the major talents involved yet still only on the threshold of success: Lew Ayres, still trying to find the right niche to follow up on the impact of his appearance in "All Quiet on the Western Front" ..... George Raft, still playing minor leads ..... Boris Karloff, in his biggest immediate post-"Frankenstein" role, perhaps trying a little too hard (especially with his British accent) to make his higher-class headroom three-dimensional role believable ..... and Busby Berkeley, some Goldwyn experimentations behind him, but here, no need to repeat the experiment suggesting the upcoming musical number. But again, his small-scale yet typical number, an interesting forerunner of his "Tea and Healthy" in "42nd Street", is exactly right in size for the small nightclub in which it takes place.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

**OKAY AMERICA** (Universal, 1932) Directed by Tay Garnett; Screenplay by William Anthony McGuire and Scott Pembroke; Camera, Arthur Miller; NY premiere, Paramount Theatre, September 32. 80 mins.

With: Lew Ayres (Larry Wayne); Maureen O’Sullivan (Miss Barton); Louis Calhern (Milesaway Resse); Walter Catlett (City Editor); Alan Dinehart (Jones); Edward Arnold (Alsotte); Rally Lloyd (Jee Merton); Margaret Lindsay (Ruth Drake); Wallis Clarke (Sec. Drake); Nance O’Neill (Mrs. Drake); Frederic Burton (President); Frank Sheridan (Commissioner); Maryjee Gatesen (Mrs. Wright); George Drew Clark (Obituary Editor); Emerson Tracey (Jerry Robbins); Herbert Heywood (Judge); Ruth Lyons (Phyllis); Berton Churchill (Caren); Frank Darien (O’Toole); and Onela Stevens, June Rayvin, Al Hill, William Davis, Neely Edwards, Lincoln, The Three Cheers, The Blattes, Everett Haggard’s Orchestra, Frank Hagney, Lloyd Ingraham, Akin Tamireff, Harry Strang, Tom London, Willard Robertson, Ed Piel, Gilbert Emery, Virginia Howell.

"Okay America" is one of several (principally 1932) films, mainly comedies though some, like this one, strong melodramas that sought to cash in on and satirise the excitement and often heart-rending that columnist/eye witnesses like Willard Mack were causing at the time. While the Winchell tie-in gives it a framework, the actual story – like that of "The Finger Points" – is actually based (though somewhat fancifully) on a specific case involving a newspaperman. "Okay America" seems at first (despite a dynamic opening) to lack the staccato pace of an equivalent Warner film, and to have miscast Lew Ayres – but these initial impressions are misleading and the film’s second half becomes too startling and unpredictable to warrant detailed discussion here, other than to say that it falls into that group of near-Fascist gang films of the era that literally advocated a kind of illegal law ("Gabriel Over the White House" being the most notable) ..... as so often in these films (and in a totally different way in the Frank Capra films) one almost feels a little sorry for the villains. In their own way, they’re more honest than the politicians they deal with, and get a decidedly odd story ending in the end. (Edward Arnold is especially amusing as the smooth mastermind criminal, and almost deserves to get away with it all!)

"Okay America" was remade, surprisingly well, as a Universal "B" in the late 50’s. Title role "Risky Business" star is George Murphy, with Edward G. Robinson a marvelously villainous villain; political motivations were toned down, but the basic plot remained unchanged, even to the offbeat ending.

--- William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 10:00
Fall schedule will be available on the reverse of the notes for the July 17 program.