THE ROUGH AND THE SMOOTH (Renown-British, 1959) Produced and Directed by Robert Stidham; Presented by George Minter; Screenplay by Audrey Erskine-Lindop and Dudley Leisl from the novel by Robin Maugham; Camera, Otto Heller; Music: Douglas Gamley; Art Director, Ken Adam; NY premiere December 1961, under the title "Portrait of a Sinner"; 99 mins.

With: Nadja Tiller (Ila Hansen); Tony Britton (Mike Thompson); William Bendix (Reg Barker); Natasha Parry (Margaret Goreham); Norman Woolam (David Fraser); Donald Wolfit (Lord Drewsell); Tony Wright (Jack); Adrienne Corrl (Jane Buller); Joyce Carey (Mrs Thompson); John Welsh (Mr. Thompson); Martin Miller (Piggy); Edward Chapman (Willy Catch); Beatrice Varley (Manageress) and Norman Pierce, Myles Bannister, Cyril Smith, Geoffrey Bayldon.

No specific first-run: a blanket opening in NY at several theatres.

A British reference book describes "The Rough and the Smooth" with this understated and terse summing up: "Romance; Archaeologist leaves heiress for German nymphomaniac." Well, the plot element is accurate enough, but it is far more of a film noir than a romance.

Stidham, one of the major new Hollywood directors to emerge in the early war years, made such an instant and indelible impression with his suspense thrillers and noirs that there's an automatic tendency to regard this period ("The Killers", "Spiral Staircase", "Criss Cross") etc., as the major period of his career. Creatively it probably was, with a remarkable output of 21 films between 1942 and 1950. Yet it actually accounted for only a small period in a long, three-pronged career, which took in German and French productions in 1927-1939, and British, French and (mainly) German films from 1951 to 1971. (He died in 1973). "The Rough and the Smooth" comes almost halfway through his second European period, and the film is much closer in mood to the sleazy European noirs than the slicker Hollywood variety with their greater stress on crime and action. Actually it is closest in mood to the German film he made immediately prior to it, "Dorothea Angersmann" (1949), and to Lang's "M" ("M" is a remake of the European film.

Clearly out to utilise the relaxed sexual censorship that came in the wake of the previous year's "Room at the Top", "The Rough and the Smooth", despite the "X" or Adults Only British certificate (retained on this print) still ran into trouble with some elements of Robin Maugham's novel. (Maugham was the nephew of Somerset Maugham). The William Bendix character was the particular bone of contention and had to be toned down somewhat in the screenplay, and it was from the Bendix footage that the cuts were made for the U.S. release. Considering how visually non-explicit the film is in comparison with today's movies, it's surprisingly bold, effectively nasty and thoroughly nasty it all is newly from dialogue, suggestion, and unobtrusive yet effective art direction from Ken Adam, just before he began to tackle far more ambitious projects with "Dr. Strangelove" and the James Bond movies. If it doesn't work quite as well as its American counterpart, "Scarlet Street", it's probably because we don't care too much about the young man who is trapped by the temptress. The role cries out for a Mitchum or at least a Richard Burton, and Tony Britton just can't pull it off. (He was much better as a mature character actor in later years). Nadja Tiller, still coasting on the momentum of her sudden stardom in the German "Rosenmarie" (with a remake of "Lulu" in the outing) is just too obvious and transparent in her entrapment of a staid Britisher to be really convincing. Her career was briefer than that of Natasha Kinski (who seems to have disappeared, while her successor, Valerie Kaprisky, is already running out of steam).

Renown Pictures was an interesting and quite ambitious British independent responsible for such films as "No Orchids for Miss Blandish", "A Christmas Carol" and "Pickwick Papers". Until the early war years their trademark was of the battleship HMS Renown proudly steaming through the waves. Then, alas, the ship was sunk by enemy action, and it became politic to get a new trademark. The one seen on this print was the result — Queen Elizabeth, giving her character a top hat at Hyde Park Corner — chosen because a decision had to be made right away, Korda was already using Big Ben, and the Nelson Monument was of the wrong proportions: — Ten Minute Intermission —

THE SECRET BEYOND THE DOOR (Universal, 1947; rel: 1948) Directed by Fritz Lang; a Walter Wanger/Diana Production; Screenplay by Sylvia Richards from the novel of the same name by Rufus King; Camera, Stanley Cortes; Music, Miklos Rozsa; 98 mins.

NY premiere, Criterion Theatre.
With Michael Redgrave (Mark Lapham); Joan Bennett (Celina Lapham); Ann Revere (Caroline Lamphere); Barbara O'Neal (Miss Robey); Natalie Schafer (Edith Potter); Annabel Shaw (intellectual debutante); Rosa Rey (Piquita); James Seay (Bob Wright); Mark Dennis (David); Paul Cavanagh (Rick).

Such is the ambiguity of the Film Noir classification that "The Secret Beyond the Door" is ignored by most of the standard film noir books, and given only a passing reference in others. Even more curious is the fact that it is totally eliminated from Clive Hirschorn's big movie book on Universal, a major oversight probably caused by the fact that the film is essentially regarded as a psychological thriller, one of many spinoffs of Hitchcock's "Spellbound". Yet it is more noir characteristics, not least in its voice over narration, its photographic style and many of its individual characters, than many films accepted without question as traditional noir. Perhaps the problem is that like Hitchcock's "Suspicion", it changes and distorts the original ending, and puts a more cheerful light on things. When it initially appeared, coming hot on the heels of both "The Woman in the Window" and "The Scarlet Street", it seemed rather a letdown for Lang, and was dismissed as Fun, expertly made, but rather silly. There's no denying that
given the conventions of this particular form of story-telling, it is still much too facile in coming up with a quick, rational explanation for both the bizarre story-line and the hero's psychological problems. So much time has been devoted to building up the mystery that a little more time should have been allotted to its unravelling. Nevertheless, for a film that has been held in rather low repute for all these years, it holds up remarkably well. Possibly it's because Cortez' camerawork is so good, and Miklos Rozsa's score such a wonderful blend of romanticism and menace. And any film that starts with a wife wary of her husband's motives, and then finds BOTH Ann Revere and Barbara Stanwyck in residence at his home is off to a wonderful start, regardless of a slight suspicion of influence from "Rebecca". Perhaps there was just too much of this kind of film around in the mid-40's for it to make much of an impact, but certainly today it's a highly effective and entertaining work - the more so since it is an exceptionally fine print.

Michael Redgrave gives the same rather cold yet neurotic performance that he gave a year earlier in "Dead of Night"; yet - given the role, and the way it is written - there was not much else he could have done. Joan Bennett - the only lady foilstly enough to make four films with Lang (even tough Sylvia Sidney only did three) - also is made to behave in a somewhat illogical fashion by the script. But one of the joys of film noir is that most of them were larger than life to begin with and neither date nor seem diminished when one tries to judge their narratives by standards of logic.

Incidentally, there is an error of sorts in the credits printed on the previous page. The novel was reissued under the title "The Secret Beyond the Door" to cash in on the film, but originally it was called "Museum Piece #13".

-- William K. Everson

Program Ends approx. 11.05.
As I explained last week, our first two programs have been so long as to preclude questions and discussion, but I will keep the introduction very brief tonight and devote that time to any questions about the first programs and the series in general. Next week's session, and the following one, will allow for resumption of normal discussion sessions.

For your information, an advance copy of the Spring schedule is displayed at the back of the auditorium. This will of course also be printed on the last set of notes for this series.

As promised last week, the full cast lists with bit players etc. for "The Vanishing Virginian" and "Honor Among Lovers" are printed below:

HONOR AMONG LOVERS (Paramount, 1931) Directed by Dorothy Arzner; Original story and screenplay by Austin Parker, with additional dialogue by Gertrude Purell; Camera, George Folsey; 75 mins; NY premiere, Paramount Theatre.
With: Claudette Colbert (Julia Traynor); Fredric March (Jery Stafford); Monroe Owsley (Philip Craig); Charlie Ruggles (Monty Dunn); Ginger Rogers (Doris Blake); Avonne Tarbell (Sallyஸ); John Kearnny (Inspector); Ralph Morgan (Riggs); Jules Epavily (Louis); Leonard Cary (Butler).
Robert Barrat (detective); Charles Halton (Wilks); Charles Trowbridge (Lawyer Cunningham); Elsie Cook Jr. (office boy); Granville Bates (Clark); St. Wills (club waiter); and Grace Korn, Roberta Scott, Betty Marissey, party guests.
** Pat O'Brien, listed in many casts in reference books, was edited out before the film's release.

THE VANISHING VIRGINIAN (MG M, 1942; re: 1942) Directed by Frank Borzage; produced by Edwin Knowl; Camera, Charles Lawton; Screenplay by Jan Fortune from an original story by Rebecca Yanoe Williams; Musical Score, David Snell; Musical Direction, LENNIE HAYTON; 97 mins; NY premiere, Loew's Criterion.
With: Frank Morgan (Robert Yanoe); Kathryn Grayson (Rebecca Yanoe); Spring Byington (Fose Yanoe); Natalie Thompson (Margaret Yanoe); Douglas Newland (Jim Shirley); Mark Daniels (Jack Holden); Elizabeth Patterson (Grandma); Juanita Quigley (Caroline Yanoe); Scotty Beckett (Jocie Yanoe); Dickie Jones (Robert Yanoe Jr); Leigh Whiper (Uncle Josh); Louise Beavers (Aunt Emaline); J.W. Kerrigan (John Phelps); Harlan Briggs (Mr. Rogard); Katharine Alexander (Varda Marshall)

Dolores Hurlic (Sugar); Marcella Moreland (Baby Preston); Cleo Desmond (Aunt Mandy); Barbara Bedford (Wildred Simpson); Dudley Dickerson (Alexander); Howard Hickman (Dr. Bernard); Alfred Grant (Jeff Brown); Aris Lee Branche (Eth Brown); Evryn Alderson (Judge Stuart); Ebbie Hare (Roger Hare; juryman); Francis Ford (mountain man); William Forrest (Harrison Jordon); Matt Moore (Charles lngluestad); George Irving (Roger Payson); Clinton Rosemond (Negro minister); Keith Copland, Charles Bates, Margarete Campbell, Dickie McCoy (grandchildren); Lee Bennett (Joel as an adult); Ritta Quigley (Caroline as an adult); Anelle McCarthy (grandchild); Cliff Danielson (Robert as an adult); Jester Hairston (Sam); Rex Downing (newboy); Helen EliSSard (Robert Jr's wife); Myrtle Anderson (maid); William Norton Bailey (man in courtroom); Gibson Gowland (onlooker in 1929 crowd).