I LOVE THAT MAN (Paramount, 1933) Directed by Harry Joe Brown; Story and screenplay by Gene Towne and Graham Baker, with additional dialogue by Casey Robinson; Cameras, Milton Krasner; 74 mins. NY premiere, Paramount Theatre. A Charles Rogers Production. With: Edmund Lowe (Brans Stanley); Nancy Carroll (Grace Clark); Lew Cody (Labels Castellano); Robert Armstrong (Driller); Warren Hymer (Mousy); Dorothy Burgess (Giggles); Grant Mitchell (The Dentist) and Susan Fleming, Walter Walker, Inez Courtney, Harvey Clark, Belle Mitchell, Luis Alberni, Lee Kohlmar, Leon Holmes, Esther Muir, Eddie Anderson, Lloyd Ingraham, Charles West, Irving Bacon, C.J. McGowan.

Note: Norma Kennedy gets on-screen billing, last in the list of support players, but does not appear to be in the movie, nor is she listed in other credit sources. In all probability she was either replaced by Susan Fleming, or deleted pre-release.

"Love" was a popular word in 1933 titles; it turned up a dozen times that year, including three similar ones in a row - "I Love That Man", "I Loved a Woman" and "I Loved You Wednesday" - that seem to cover all the bases. It's probably best not to say too much about the film, and leave it as a total surprise, as it was to me. The last of Nancy Carroll's films for Paramount, it was received somewhat lethargically by all but one or two of the fan magazines; the trade press was apathetic, and the NY Times was downright cruel, likening it to an illustrated Helen Morgan song, and saying that it was the kind of "Art" film that Groucho Marx might have made. No matter. It's unpredictable, and full of surprises which are underlined by sudden changes of mood. Is it a gangster film, a wisecracking comedy in the manner of "Blonde Crazy", or a serious love story? It's a little of all three, and to say more would mean taking sides - defending it and perhaps over-praising it, or criticising it for not being the important film it never intended itself to be. Harry Joe Brown, best known for his later Randolph Scott westerns, was doing some quite offbeat things at Paramount at this time, and "I Love That Man" is a worthy companion to his "Stillian Dollar Scandal" of earlier the same year. And Nancy Carroll's earnest, sincere performance is quite one of her best.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

THE OFFICE WIFE (Warner Brothers, 1930) Directed by Lloyd Bacon; screenplay by Charles Kenyon from an original story by Faith Baldwin; Camera, William Rose; 59 mins. NY premiere, Winter Garden Theatre. With Dorothy Mackaill (Anne Murdoch); Lewis Stone (Lawrence Fellows); Natalie Moorhead (Mrs Fellows); Joan Blondell (Katherine); Hobart Bosworth (McGowan); Brooks Benedict (Jamison); Blanche Frederic (Miss Halsey); Dale Fuller (Andrews); Walter Merrill (Ted O'Hara) and Dickie Moore.

The first of ten Faith Baldwin stories adapted to the screen in the 30's, "The Office Wife" introduces us to that long extinct animal that roamed the Hollywood screens in The Great Secretarial Age, the so-called "Woman's Picture". No one would dare admit that any current film fell into such a classified section - the fear of being attacked for sexual harassment, and in any event, the big glossy remakes of the standards - "Back Street", "Magnificent Obsession", "Madame X" etc. - in the 60's virtually went into overkill and we haven't really seen their like since. None of them were possessed of the superficial but nevertheless recognisable contact with reality that made the original article so sturdy and enjoyable. Faith Baldwin was the High Priestess of this kind of novel, her characters invariably virtuous yet emeshed in circumstances that suggest otherwise, and confronted with webs of problems that managed to sort themselves out happily for absolutely everybody in the last chapter, or real - the kind of superman story ending that Preston Sturges parodied so beautifully in "The Palm Beach Story". Baldwin's later "Wife Versus Secretary" is probably the best, slickest and most enjoyable movie of its kind, but it is a post-Code movie without the slightest suggestion of infidelity or amorality. "The Office Wife", despite its cast of "nice" and "sensible" people, is a little cruder, a little more honest to its Gold-Digging period, a little more brittle in its situations and wisecracking dialogue. As always, and no complaints, Joan Blondell spends much of her time getting in and out of lingerie, and Miss Mackaill gives her usual sensitive and intelligent performance, though her role is somewhat inconsistently written, and her changes in motive insufficiently explained. However, since the whole story is told in less than an hour, we have to accept that slight lack of subtlety along with the surprisingly uncorrected dialogue fluffs and the fact that we never get to understand what makes the likeable but boorish hero tick. But in the latter role, Lewis Stone, unfuddled and dignified as always, at least gets a chance to make up for the times he lost Garbo and other major leading ladies to younger men over at MGM, while Blanche Frederic, perennial wife/mistress to Noah Beery in Paramount's Zane Grey Westerns, is a delight as an aggressive authoress allegedly patterned on Miss Baldwin herself.

Program ends 10:05. Discussion session follows. --- William K. Everson