An apology: these notes, and the program itself, are sandwiched between back-to-back trips to Syracuse, Minneapolis and London. While the prints were physically checked out some months ago and are complete and in good shape, there has been no time, as is the usual procedure, to re-screen them for detailed cast listing of bit players, and to review one's thoughts for these notes. They are therefore somewhat briefer than notes for a program of this type would normally be.

GRETCHEN COMES ACROSS (Paramount, 1937) with Cecil B. de Mille, Francesca Gaal, William Fine, Frederic March, Akim Tamiroff. 10 mins.

DeMille's little promotional shorts to push his forthcoming releases and heap as much indirect praise on himself as possible were always delightful, and this one, promoting "The Buccaneer" is both one of the most entertaining and one of the most naive. It's difficult to believe that audiences ever took these seriously, but they did! Phoney in every possible way - even the Continental film that busy DeMille is viewing in the wee hours is footage that he shot himself - it also conveniently overlooks the fact that Miss Gaal (whose Hollywood career proved to be brief) had been in European films, both silent and sound, for many years!

THE GIRL HABIT (Paramount, 1931) Directed by Edward Cline; Screenplay by Owen Davis and Gertrude Purcell from a play by A.E. Thomas and Clayton Hamilton; Camera, Larry Williams; 77 mins.; NY premiere, Paramount Theatre.

With: Charlie Ruggles (Charlie Ford); Tamara Geva (Sonya); Margaret Dumont (Mrs. Ledyard); Sue Conroy (Lucy Ledyard); Allen Jenkins (Tony); Donald Meek (Conway); Douglas Gilmore (Herbert Palmer); Betty Garde (Daley Karden); Franchot Tone (Daley Karden's wife).

(Press publicity at the time also listed Paulette Goddard as playing a bit as a shopgirl, but subject to another viewing to confirm it, the scene would seem to have been deleted).

Charlie Ruggles was a magnificent support comedian for Lubitsch and Mamoulian, was fine in shorts (and in the episode in which he stars in "If I Had a Million"), often a delight in short snappy "EP" movies like "Mind Your Own Business". But Ruggles as a star in a talk-dominated early talkie "A" feature was something else again; if you like Ruggles (as I certainly do) one tends to put too much Ruggles down to miscasting and not to blame him. In any event, although it has its turgid moments, "The Girl Habit" - a remake of a James Cruze directed Wallace Reid silent vehicle which carried the title of the original play, "Thirty Days" - is a surprisingly sprightly comedy for its period, genuinely funny at times, and when not, more than salvaged by the extensive location work in and around New York, including outdoor scenes designed to capture shots of the still-in-construction George Washington Bridge. Dancer Tamara Geva doesn't, but is charming nonetheless.

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---


Oddly enough we have never run this film, which also seems to have disappeared from any kind of theatrical exhibition, so a revival is long overdue. For its late 40's theatrical release, and for most of its tv exhibition, the Gene Raymond story and the Wynne Gibson episode were deleted; both are in our print. A far more (and more satisfying) economical answer to MGM's "Grand Hotel", "If I Had a Million" - a good framing story with variable enclosed stories, most of then good - is surprisingly consistent in mood, pace and style considering the incredible array of talent involved. Only one story - the Gary Cooper segment, directed by Norman McLeod - is decidedly weak, while the James Cruze/Van Robson episode doesn't seem to work as well as it should. But Cruze makes amends with the brief, almost anecdotal Wynne Gibson episode, while the highlights are undoubtedly the Lubitsch/Laughton vignette, the brilliant William Saiter/Ruggles sequence, and of course the W.C.Fields episode which, being predictable and absolutely sure-fire, works despite its lack of surprise. And all of this in a slick, streamlined 8 reels. The cast, somewhat omitted above, and rather important in an omnibus film of this type, includes: Richard Bennett (John Glidden); Gary Cooper (Gallaher); George Raft (Eddie Jackson); Wynne Gibson (Violet); Charles Laughton (The Clerk); Jack Oakie (Mulligan); Claude Gilling (Frank); Mary Boland (Mrs. Peabody); Rosemary Karsen (O'Brien); Ray Robson (Mrs. Walker); Gene Raymond (John Wallace); Lucien Littlefield (Zeb); Grant Mitchell (Prison Warden); Joyce Compton (Vera); Cecil Cunningham (Agnes); Irving Bacon (salesman); Blanche Frederici (Head Nurse); Dewey Robinson (Cook); Gayl Palmer (Secretary); William Robertson, Fred Kelsey (doctors); Kent Taylor (bank clerk); Jack Pennick (sailor); Berton Churchill (warden); James Burtis (golfer).

Program Ends app. 10:45. Short discussion period follows.