WHERE'S THAT FIRE? (Gainsborough-20th Century Fox, 1939) Directed by Marcel Varnel; Produced by Edward Black; Screenplay by J.C.C. Otton, Val Guest and Marriott Edgar; Camera, Arthur Crabtree; Music, Louis De Guise; 73 mins. (Last New School showing: April 14 1972)

With: Lloyd Hay (Cary Grant); Benjamin Innes (Benjamin Vickers); Moore Marriott (Gerry Harbottle); Graham Moffatt (Albert Brown); Peter Gawthorne (Chuck Fire Cimaker); Eric Clavinger (Tank Sullivan); Hugh McDermott (Jim Baker); Charles Hawtrey (Helpful Youth); George Carney, Frank Atkinson (councilmen)

Will Hay was easily Britain's most popular comic of the '30's; his characterization overlapped that of W.C. Fields, and his gags were often mechanically elaborate and nostalgic, echoing Keaton, but he was no lazy imitator and drew on his long music hall experience as well. Hay wrote much of his own material and occasionally co-directed, but he was not a creative comic-director in the Chaplin manner. Chaplin was a director by intuition, Hay was a director by his Kipling "Where's the Fire?" immediately followed one of Will's very best films, "Ask a Policeman," and was perhaps too obvious an attempt to duplicate its plot and formula. However, this minor drawback will not be apparent to U.S. audiences, since neither film was released here, either theatrically or on television. In some ways it is a good introduction to Hay for those who don't know him, since, like Laurel & Hardy's "Way Out West," it concentrates entirely on Hay and his two cronies. It even eliminates Hay's frequent (Groucho-Margaret Dumont inspired) silliness with Martita Hunt, and at least plays down the music-hall derived double-talk and backchat, which was sometimes brilliant, if very British, but too often (as in "Old Bones of the River") overdone. The concentration is almost entirely on sight gag material and the comedy of authoritative and public service inefficiency, an area that the British public was always in sympathy with! The film also contains the magnificent pole-hoisting sequence, a prolonged bout of cheerfully sadistic and violent humor. Incidentally, in British films of the '30's and early '40's one frequently found that the villains were the sort of Hollywood-inspired style-monger that no one would accept as an American. They were not as much a racial slur as a genuine tribute to American superiority in criminal efficiency, and in addition that British style-monger would not really provide any healthy opposition to the heroes. (Please note that once at the midway point, the sound is lost for a few seconds. This is in the print, which recovers its voice almost immediately).

--- 10 Minute Intermission ---

THE KID BROTHER (Harold Lloyd Corp.-Paramount, 1926, relt 1927) Directed by Ted Wilde

Story: Ted Wilde, Tom Grizer, John Grey; Camera, Walter Lundin; Silent, with musical track; 82 mins. Last New School showing, March 7 1975.

With: Harold Lloyd (Harold Hickory); Jobyna Ralston (Mary Powers); Walter James (Jim Hickory); Leo Willis (Leo Hickory); Clun Francis (Clint Hickory); Constantin Romenoff (Sandbl); Eddie Beland (Flash Farrell); Frank Lanning (Sam Hooper); Ralph Terrasley (Hank Hooper)

Virtually forgotten until its sudden reappearance nearly 20 years ago, "The Kid Brother" is almost certainly Lloyd's masterpiece, though hardly his most typical film. A remake of sorts of an earlier Hal Roach Glenn Tryon comedy, and also probably the best example by Lloyd of a "mutable David," it's the sort of story that had to be made as a silent, and Lloyd got to it just in time. Slower than most Lloyd films, and warmer, it is also one of the few Lloyd films that doesn't absolutely need an audience. Obviously it, and especially the gags, gain from audience laughter and input, but for once the mechanism doesn't show through so strongly when seen without an audience. Too much planning to be funny as often as possible--embellishes some gags that don't need it, and trips fall to the ground too frequently, but even these unsubtleties pay off in audience reaction. Like most Lloyd films, it is constructed by a team and there is no real sense of authorship, although Lewis Milestone's participation in some of it is occasionally apparent, and especially in the tree-climbing gag. Incidentally, despite its gentleness and often almost lyrical quality, it becomes an incredibly violent film in its climax, full of pain and punishment that is matched and remains amusing only because the ultimate reality of sound is denied. Oddly enough, the value of silence in material like this is stressed by tonight's print, which has added musical score effective, if a bit repetitious in its rather shapeless country music and sound effects. The sounds of doors closing or water splashing always sound a bit incongruous when the humans still cannot speak, but the sound effects do reflect the comic effect of all that final sadism. When there is no sound of a head being hit by a tree, the individual viewer--whether he be saint or monster--is free to overstate or understate the implied sound, according to his own comic or sadistic taste. But when a specific sound is heard, one has to accept it as a given realistic approximation, and in almost every case, the laugh results from the listener's in the completely silent version, (Because of the shift to the 5th Avenue Cinema, and the lack of a plane there we can't have crows at 8:00 tonight, but we're glad to have access to a "Kid Brother" with a music track despite this change). In the Fall season incidentally, we will have three silent programs instead of our customary two. Quite apart from its overall charm and comic invention, "Kid Brother" also contains one of Lloyd's funniest ever gags, although one he personally disliked because it's a monkey that gets all the laughs rather than Lloyd. We'll say more about that particular gag in the intro.

--- William K. Everson

Program Ends approx. 10:25. Discussion/question session follows. PLEASE NOTE: I will be away for the next three shows, back for the final one. Programs will start promptly at 7:30 without introductions. Notes as usual. PLEASE TRY TO BE PROMPT; in this particular auditorium constant opening and closing of the back door by late arrivals can be disturbing. Thank you.