INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT (20th Century Fox, 1936) Directed by Eugene Ford; produced by Sol H. Wurtzel; Screenplay by Lou Breslow and John Patrick from an original story by Lynn Root and Frank Fenton; Camera, Ancien Andriot; Musical Director, Samuel Raylin; 75 mins.

NY premiere, Palace Theatre, February 26, 1936. With: Dolores Del Rio (Lorene Dixon); George Sanders (Del Forbes); June Lang (Joyce Parker); Dick Baldwin (Wally Barton); Ruth Terry (Entertainer); John Carradine (Murdoch); Keye Luke (Dr. Wong); Harold Huber (Joseph Lang); Leon Ames (Monte Silvers); Pedro de Cordoba (Zabello).

While "International Settlement" is a solidly entertaining program melodrama by virtue of its cast and production value expertise, it is perhaps interesting today mainly as an example of Hollywood merely using the war in the Far East (and the growing unrest in Europe) as a backdrop for a standardised plot mechanism. Paramount were to use the Spanish Civil War ("The Last Train from Madrid") and the early days of the War in Europe ("Mystery Sea Raider") in a similar way, being careful not to take sides or bring up any serious issues. There's a kind of arrogance of Hollywood's conviction that all of the world's disasters and misfortunes were really there to provide it with additional plot material, and this attitude almost reaches distasteful heights (or depths) in the climax as the suffering of hundreds of Chinese is shunted aside when, during a bombing raid, the hero (who would really be no great loss to the world, and didn't belong in China anyway) is injured, and it is accepted as quite natural that the Chinese doctor should desert his injured and dying countrymen to come to the aid of this one American. One recalls too a Fox Movietone Newsreel of the period, shedding crocodile tears at the devastation wrought on Chinese inhabitants of Shanghai, and then cheerfully adding "And now let's go aloft with a Japanese bomber pilot for a bird's eye view of the same incident"! Of course, this rather cavalier lack of taste seems far more grating today than it did in 1936. "International Settlement" was double-billed at the Palace with "Hollywood Hotel". I remember seeing it in the London area in January or February of 1936 when it played on the big Odeon circuit in support of the Warner Brothers three-reeler, that program is a particularly interesting juxtaposition of contrasting attitudes: America exploiting the war for movie material, never thinking that it could ever be actively involved in the conflict; Britain turning to a story of local politics and a changing social strata, motifs that were rapidly becoming obsolete in view of the European political situation, a situation that Britain virtually ignored in its movies, hoping that it would go away of its own accord. With the USA still somewhat (and often inexplicably) unpopular in the world political arena, as witness the recent anti-Rush demonstrations in Panama, innocuous films like "International Settlement" demonstrate that the roots for that feeling go back a good many years. Incidentally, it was Sanders' fifth film under his new Fox contract; he never became quite the big star that they anticipated and intended, but he certainly remained an extremely useful lesser star and character actor for them. He had earlier co-starred with Del Rio in "Lancer Spy", also Fox.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

EVER IN MY HEART (Warner Brothers, 1933) Directed by Archie Mayo; Screenplay by Bertram Millhauser from an original story by Millhauser and Beulah Marie Dix; Camera, Arthur Todd; Art Director, Anton Grot; 68 mins; NY premiere, Hollywood Theatre, October 23, 1933. With: Barbara Stanwyck (Kerry Archer); Otto Kruger (Euggo Willbrant); Ralph Bellamy (Jeff); Ruth Donnelly (Jiselle); Frank Albertson (Sam Archer); Florence Roberts (Eunice); Laura Hope Crews (Grandma); Clara Banicki (Anna); Ronnie Crosby (Teddy Willbrant); and George Cooper, Frank Reicher, Elizabeth Patterson, William Robertson, Nella Walker, Harry Beresford, Ethel Wales, Virginia Howell, Edward Le Saint, Henry O'Neill, Georges Renevant.

(Last New School showing, March 25 1977)

A pre-Code film (especially in its solution) "Ever In My Heart" reaped some strange and contrasted reviews. Some critics found it thematically and stylistically out of date, belonging more to the World War One period in which it is set; others considered it artistically notable and praiseworthy, but so sad a film that it provided "poor entertainment" for the average audience. Apart from the sincere and poignant plot premise (admittedly, not a very topical one in 1933) its main asset is unquestionably the fine performance by Barbara Stanwyck. It was her 16th film, and while there had been some good ones prior to it, still it was her first really heavy, tragic role. She makes the most of it, playing with surprising restraint in the climactic scenes. It also provided Otto Kruger with one of his best Hollywood roles. Like Curtis' "Atlas The Doctor" of the same period, it is perhaps too short at 68 minutes to reach its full potential. It manages to be dramatic, moving, touching - but it gets from one place to another too quickly to be subtle. The "instant" motivations and reactions are not always believable. On the other hand, this no-nonsense brand of film-making - with humor arbitrarily if effectively inserted when it is needed most - is vastly preferable to some of Warners' expanded two-hour emotional excursions of World War Two: "In Our Time" for example. If it's a choice between unsubtlity and pretention, then the former is preferable every time. Nor is the film wholly unsubtle: the deaths of a child and a small dachshund are both suggested rather than shown, and suggested very poignantly, "Ever In My Heart" is an exceptionally good programmer, the best of the trio that Stanwyck made with Archie Mayo at Warners. (The other two "Eldiot" and "Gambiling Lady").

Program ends approx. 10.00.

--- William K. Everson ---