While one shouldn't read too much into it, there was a trend at Columbia to build "P's around the leading ladies rather more than at the other studios. Columbia made so many "P's that it might have to prove this statistically, although the fact that Columbia also produced the popular and long-running "Blondie" series with Penny Singleton helps to confirm the theory. Further, Jack Holt apart, Columbia's "P" leading men were a rather bland, passive lot - Charles Quigley, Robert Wilcox, Stanley Brown, Richard Arlen, Ralph Bellamy, Johnny Downs etc. - while the leading ladies (Ann Dvorak, Rita Hayworth, Helen Mack, Gloria Stuart, Frieda Inescort) were not only attractive, but seemed to have considerably more energy. Anyway, tonight's triple bill is an interesting and (in terms of plots) varied cross section. The first, from 1938, is easily the glossiest; production values went down quickly as the "P's moved into the 40's, although none of tonight's films reach the rock-bottom levels of some of Columbia's "P's where rehearsals and retakes were virtually unheard of, and stars - including the usually scruffy-looking Bruce Cabot - provided their own well-worn wardrobes:

THE LADY OBJECTS (Columbia, 1938) Directed by Erle C. Kenton; Produced by William Perlberg; Screenplay by Gladys Lehmann and Charles Kenyon; Camera, Allen Sturgis; 65 mins. With Gloria Stuart (Ann Adams); Lanny Ross (William Hayward); Joan Marsh (June Lane); Roy Benson (George Martin); Pierre Watkin (Mr. Harper); Robert Paige (Ken Harper); Arthur Loft (Charles Clarke); Stanley Andrews (Eaker); Jan Buckingham (Mrs Harper); Bass Flowers (Miriam Harper); Ann Doran (Miss Hollis); Edward Le Saint (Judge); Harvey Clark (Mrs Franklin); Wilbur Mack (Mr. Howell); Gloria Randell (Grace); Lloyd Whitlock (Collins); Phillips Smalley (Fairbanks); Robert Fiske (Mr. Horn); Hooper Atchley (Doctor); Dick Curtis (Gila guard); Gene Morgan (Rede Announcer); David Newall, Stanley Brown (Students); Eddie Fetherston (Bartender).

A fairly close remake of the 1933 Ann Garver's Profession (with Fay Wray and Gene Raymond), this combination of musical/mystery/courtroom drama upgrades the musical content considerably to exploit Lanny Ross. One song, "A Mist Is Over the Moon", rated an Academy Award nomination. It's a slick little film, despite the songs given to Ross, allows Gloria Stuart to dominate.

FIVE MINUTE INTERMISSION

A WOMAN IS THE JUDGE (Columbia, 1939) Directed by Nick Grinde; Produced by Ralph Cohn; Original story and screenplay by Karl Brown; Camera, Benjamin Kline; 62 mins. With: Frieda Inescort (Mary Cabot); Otto Kruger (Stephen Graham); Rochelle Hudson (Justine West); Gordon Oliver (Robert Langley); Mayo Methot (Gertie); Arthur Loft (Tim Ryan); Walter Ferner (Harper); John Wilson (Nassey); Bentley Hewlett (Wolf); Deryl Mercer (Mrs Butler); Dick Curtis; James Craig (Detectives); Robert Sterling, Walter Sands (reporters); Ann Doran (Audia); Edda Le Saint (Judge); Byron Foulger (Balistics expert); Robert Dudley (Prosecutor).

By this time, you should be recognizing many of the Columbia "P's regulars like Ed Le Saint, Dick Curtis and Ann Doran. The script by Karl Brown, former cameraman of Griffith and Crane, and later a director himself, is a colorfully embellished reworking of "Madame X". There's so much going on and so many plot twists that you're bound to enjoy the ride, even if you find it a little hard to believe. One major novelty value is that Otto Kruger, usually playing sympathetic villains in these "P's, invariably killed off or making a noble sacrifice at the end, actually gets out alive this time, and with a happy ending to boot!

FIVE MINUTE INTERMISSION

GIRLS OF THE ROAD (Columbia, 1940) Directed by Nick Grinde; Produced by Wallace MacDonald; Original screenplay by Robert D. Andrews; Camera, George Mehan; 61 mins. With: Ann Dvorak (Kay Warren); Helen Mack (Mickey); Lola Lane (Elly); Ann Doran (Jerry); Marjorie Coyle (Irene); Mary Field (Mae); Mary Booth (Eva); Nadelon Grayson (Amie); Grace Leonard (Stella); Evelyn Young (Sadie); Bruce Bennett (Doctor); Eddie LeSaint (Poetcy); Don Bedee (Sheriff); Howard Hickman (Governor Warren); John Tyrrell (Deputy); Ethan Laidlaw (Bakeman); Harry Strong (Mechanic); Helen Brown (Mrs Spencer); Edward Earle (Senator Wilson); Ernie Adams (Proprietor); Eddie Acuff (Bartley) and Claire Rochelle, Lois Collier, Lester Derr, Eddie Fetherston, Chuck Hamilton, Florence Wright, Dorothy Gray.

Released shortly after "The Grapes of Wrath", "Girls of the Road" may have been Columbia's attempt at a social-protest film. Certainly the early scene in the Governor's office gets a documentary flavor. But the presence of the several young girls at big city bus depots was clearly shot for the trailer and the advertising! Well intentioned, the film falls between two stools, and is too short and too contrived to make much impact. Girl hoboes weren't all so lucky as to have the Governor's daughter masquerading as one of them to improve their lot. But it's quite unique of its kind, helped by a strong cast, and an appropriate climax to our evening.

FIVE MINUTE INTERMISSION

PROGRAM ENDS APP. 10.55 (DEPENDING ON HOW FAST THE PRECEDING JAZZ CONCERT VACATES). NO DISCUSSION SESSION, OBVIOUSLY. AN IMPORTANT REMINDER OF ERRORS IN THE NEW SCHOOL PUBLISHED BULLETIN. PROGRAM LISTED FOR FEB.18 ACTUALLY PLAYS MARCH 18; PROGRAM LISTED FOR FEB.25 ACTUALLY PLAYS TONIGHT; PROGRAM LISTED FOR MARCH 18 PLAYS FEB.25, DATES ETC. AS LISTED IN SCHEDULE ISSUED AT OUR LAST DECEMBER PROGRAM ARE CORRECT.

Earlier we explained the sudden non-availability of the woman "IS THE JUDGE" print. A substitute print is being delivered tonight and we will mount it, clean it etc. while the first film plays, but we have had no opportunity to screen it. However, we are glad to be able to show the film we announced (although cautiously, we have a print of CONVICTED with Rita Hayworth, from a Cornell Woolrich story, on hand just in case of a let-down). Finding what you want when you want it is getting harder than ever!