EXIT SMILING (Mem 1926) Directed by Sam Taylor; Written by Taylor and Tim Whelan from a story by Marc Connelly; Camera, Andre Barlatter; 70 mins.

With Beatrice Lillie (Violet); Jack Pickford (Jimmy Marsh); Doris Lloyd (Giga); De Witt Jennings (Orlando Wainwright); Harry Myers (Jesse Watson); Tenen Holtz (Tod Fowall); Louise Lorraine (Phyllis); Franklin Pangborn (Cecil Lovelace); D'Arcy Corrigan (Maccomber); William Gillespie (Jack Hastings); Carl Richards (Dave).

The presence of "Exit Smiling" on our schedule is a partial mistake; we originally booked it after its long absence from any New York screen - in response to specific requests for it, only to find that it was coming up at the Film Forum. Now ironically, a second Film Forum exposure is scheduled for some time in May! Not that it isn't worth showing, but with only 29 programs a year, it's a pity to - in a sense - waste playing time. However, cancelling and substituting creates as many problems and dissatisfaction as it solves, so on the rare occasions when this overlap occurs, it's usually best to stick to the original program. Despite the partially pantomimic nature of the role, it was a curious vehicle to choose for Beatrice Lillie's introduction to movie stardom. Not only was her voice a key asset, but especially the inflections in her voice, and her unusually expert, Maggie Smith-like timing. While not exactly miscast, she is certainly not used to her best advantage. Reportedly, the film was a failure - though presumably MEM didn't try very hard to sell it, since the film had no NY first run at MEM-controlled theatres, and New York's theatre audiences surely would have supported it. Regardless, it's a sprightly and sometimes very amusing comedy, a kind of feminine parallel to Chaplin's "The Circus" at the heart of the film are two roles in films like "Shipyard Sally", the elevation of the character is very remarkable. While the present is adequate it is disappointing that it is belated and too light, losing some of the facial nuances; frustratingly, about a second before every fadeout, the timing and facial tones are just right, indicating that it was only laboratory sloppiness and laziness in working from a good negative that prevented a really good print from being made. If the film is attractively double-billed in its upcoming Film Forum exposure, you'll get a chance to see it. Finally, 8:30, and note the difference. (A poorly written sentence; whether it's attractively double-billed or not, the chances are that it will be, the opportunity to see it again in a good print is worth taking).__

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---

THE PRICE OF PLEASURE (Universal, 1924; rel: 1925) Directed by Edward Sloman; Scenario by J. J. Hawkins and Raymond Schrock from the story "Clinging Fingers" by Elizabeth Holing and Marion North; Camera, John Stumar; 75 mins.

With: Virginia Valli (Lindie Randall); Norman Kerry (Gary Schuyler); Louise Fazenda (Stella Kelly); Kate Lester (Mrs Schuyler); George Favost (John Osborne); T. Roy Barnes (McGuffy); James O. Barrows (Jenkins); Marie Astaire (Grace Schuyler); Charles Bernard Murphy Jr (baby)

Sometimes these lovely old multi-toned prints appear out of nowhere (I have certainly never come across a copy of this in the past 60 years) and are worth showing just for their rarity. For "The Price of Pleasure" however happens also to be a good example of the typical Hollywood story of its time: the store girl who winds up marrying the boss - which became even more prevalent in the depression years, and stuck around even longer than that, though usually in a comedy format as in the delightful "Bachelors Mother" of 1939. Department store stories always have a kind of fascination of their own, and they proved particularly useful in the 20's in enabling top stars - Mary Pickford, Evlyn Brent, Louise Brooks, Gloria Swanson, Joan Crawford, Clara Bow - to come down from their pedestals and play roles that their audiences could readily identify with. "The Price of Pleasure" leaves the department store behind fairly quickly, and launches itself into a wildly improbable story depending too much on coincidence and contrivance, but is vastly entertaining for all of that. Its New York milieu is, for the most part, fairly convincing, with authentic inserts of theatre programs and boxoffice tickets (top prices $5!), although a climactic ride through Central Park has the road bordering a steep cliff with a lake at the bottom, a combination that luckily no longer seems to exist! In his quite long but very peculiar review in the NY Times, Howard Pyle called it absurd without even trying. He drew to a conclusion based on the risible performance of the baby; even if it's a tongue in cheek appraisal, it seems excessive since he makes no references to director Sloman's other interesting work, and somewhat erroneously refers to Norman Kerry as making a welcome change from his usual (!) villain roles to play the hero! Ward Crane, the wonderfully sleazy comic heavy of "Sherlock Jr" plays much the same role here.---- William E. Everson

Program finishes approx. 10.15. DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS follow.

A reminder: NO SCREENING NEXT WEEK. The snow-cancelled Film Noir program is being repeated on TUESDAY May 17th. And a final correction of several errors that appeared in the New School printed bulletin; the program listed for Feb.18th plays on March 18th. The printed schedule on our program notes last December is correct.