THE NEW SCHOOL  
FILM SERIES 77: Program #2  
April 21, 1965

SILENT MARITIME MELODRAMAS  
Piano Accompaniment arranged and played by
STUART ODEMAN

BELOW THE SURFACE (Paramount, 1920) A Thomas Ince production directed by Irvin V. Willat; Scenario by E. Magnus Ingleton from a story by Luther Reed; Camer., J.O. Taylor; 70 mins. With Hobart Bosworth (Martin Flint); Lloyd Hughes (Luther Flint); Grace Darmond (Edna Gordon); George Webb (James Arnold); Gladys George (Alice); J.P. Lockney (Dave); Edith Yorke (Martha Flint); George Clair (Gale); Robert Edeson (Submarine Commander).

In all honesty, I must confess that "Below the Surface" is not quite the gushy actioner that I had it in memory as being. The combination of that excellent director Irvin Willat with Hobart Bosworth (playing a character called "Flint") possibly caused me to recall it over the years (during which other Bosworth films emerged too) with rose colored values. Two things hurt it: one, a strikingly staged and photographed opening in a crippled submarine which the rest of the film doesn't sustain, and a five reel plot stretched to seven reels. It's an enjoyably slick melodrama which would be far better if it moved along at a few more knots to the reel, and Hobart Bosworth of course is always worth watching in the kind of role he loved to do. Frustrating too is the limited footage given to Gladys George as the nominal heroine, displaced for most of the running time by the vamp-villainess of Grace Darmond. George made a few films in the 1918-21 period before returning to the stage, only making her major impact in film as a character actress in the 30's and 40's. Although there are one or two brief and pleasing closeups, most of the time she is shot from the back of the stage, a fact that it's hard to fathom how. Doubtless Stuart Oderman's music will bring the film to considerably more life than I have suggested in these notes.

— Ten Minute Intermission —

YANKEE CLIPPER (DeMille-Pathe, 1927) Directed by Rupert Julian; Produced by Cecil B. deMille; Supervised by C. Gardner Sullivan; Scenario by Garrett Fort and Garrett Weston from a story by Denison Clift; Camer., John Mescall; NY premiere Roxy Theatre, May 1927; 80 mins. With: William Boyd (Hal Winslow); Elinor Fair (Lady Jocelyn Huntington); Frank Coghlan jr. (Mickey); John Miljan (Richard); Walter Long (Iron Head Joe); Louis Payne (Huntington); Burr McIntosh (Mr. Winslow); George Ovey (Alf); Zack Williams (Ham); William Blaisdell (Ike); Clarence Burton (Captain McIntosh); Stanton Heck (American Mate); Julia Faye (Queen Victoria); W. Sousanna (Prince Albert); Harry Holden (President Zachary Taylor); James Wang (Chinese merchant)

After DeMille left Paramount, he directed four specials personally at Pathé, and supervised other productions, all for his own company, directed by and starring personnel he had brought with him from Paramount (William K. Howard, Leatrice Joy, Rod la Rocque etc.). "Yankee Clipper" was a pocket epic that fell somewhere between his big personal productions and the more routine programs (among the five directed by Rupert Julian ("Merry Go Round", "Phantom of the Opera") indicated that it was still a prestige production. While the sea scenes include many miniatures, much of it was filmed aboard a full-scale clipper (which DeMille cannily put to use in "The Wreck of the Hesperus" as soon as shooting was concluded on this film) and the dry-land scenes feature some elaborate and impressive interior sets.

For years all that was available on this film was the 5-reel KodakScope cut-down, available for schools and home movie users. It was well edited, but with school and church audiences in mind, some of John Miljan's extra-curricular activities were neatly trimmed out. Then when the film was bought for TV usage by the William Organisation, a full print was made up from the original negative. That print was cut and used as a work-print for the TV version, but has here been re-assembled. One or two connecting subtitles (such as the one introducing Zachary Taylor) were lost in the process, but otherwise the print is intact. (A version released by Blackhawk Films contains those missing titles, but that print, though still good, is a generation away from this original. The loss of a very few linking titles, none of them essential, seems a small tradeoff for the superior print quality of this copy.)

William Boyd, pre-Hopalong Cassidy, is already using many of the Cassidy mannerisms, and leading lady Eleanore Fair was Boyd's wife at the time. (Julia Faye, the film's Queen Victoria, was also DeMille's lifetime mistress, and he continued to use her in bits in most of his films). The plot, in which Victoria and Albert lose the China tea trade to the U.S. via a single China to Boston race is somewhat fanciful, but does allow for much maritime excitement, including a storm at sea that proved invaluable as stock footage in independent films of the 30's, a mutiny which borrows a sequence from Stevenson's "Treasure Island", and a geographically quite incorrect depiction of Boston Harbour!

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When all is said and done however, probably the most enjoyable aspect of the film is its totally uninhibited villainy. At one end of the thuggery scale we have the suave John Miljan who outdoes himself in cowardice, treachery, lechery, greed and callousness, and at the other we have Walter Long as "Iron Head Joe, Mongrel Whale of the Seven Seas," largely repeating his role as Ous in "The Birth of a Nation," his libidinous desires set afame when a gust of wind reveals the heroine's pantalooned ankle! Incidentally, Miljan's death scene is deliberately ambiguous - whether he dies of a heart attack brought on by fright, or is knifed to death by a vengeful crew is never made clear. Either way though, he more than deserved it!

Program ends approx. 10:40.

Brief discussion follows.

WILLIAM K. EVERSON

FILM SERIES: SUMMER '25.

We're back with a Summer series and also back to a 7:30 starting time. In order to catch up with missed titles because of our shortened schedule, we are including TWO triple bills this time, but as always they will be no longer than our regular shows. Only two of the films are repeats (from 15 years ago or more) and are marked (+) for ready identification. Shortage of space will keep these notes short; fuller details in the Summer Bulletin. (Showings on Wednesdays)

1. June 7
   Two elusive thrillers: CANON CITY (1948, dir: Crane Wilbur), unique combination of semi-documentary and film noir; Scott Brady, DeForrest Kelley, superb John Alton photography; KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS (1948, dir: Norman Foster) with Burt Lancaster, Joan Fontaine, Robert Newton.

2. June 14
   Fox, early Technicolor, horses WINGS OF THE MORNING (+) (1937, dir: Harold Schuster) with Henry Fonda, Annabella, Leslie Banks, John McCormack; KENTUCKY (1933, dir: David Butler) with Loretta Young, Richard Greene, Walter Brennan; "Wings of the Morning," Britain's first Technicolor film, had a prologue, a family feud, lots of horses and scenic landscapes and costumes designed to exploit color in every way possible. Fox took the formula to the U.S. and repeated it with equal success. Naive dramatics, stunning color.

3. June 21
   Three silent melodramas, with Stuart Oderman at the piano
   THE FORBIDDEN CITY (1917, dir: Sidney Franklin) A fine original print of the best of the early surviving Norma Talmadge films; with Thomas Meighan; CLASH OF THE WOLVES (1925, dir: Noel Smith) An enjoyable if lesser Rin Tin Tin, memorable for the sequence in which he dons a set of false whiskers and deceives the townspeople! With Charles Farrell, June Marlowe; CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD (1929/30, dir: John Ford) Paul Fejos, a real oddity, a German film, a musical. A handsome, elaborate French Revolution spectacle, and a fascinating example of the hybrid transition-to-sound movie. With John Boles, Laura Laflette, Sam de Grasse - and our favorite Laurel and Hardy villain, Dick Crramer, as Danton!

4. June 28
   Two more Mr. Smiths go to Washington. ROVIN' TUMBLEWEEDS (1939, dir: George Sherman) One of the more offbeat Gene Autry features - the same year's Capra film literally transposed (or appropriated!) to the Autry format with Gene as a senator in Washington battling corrupt politicians. With Mary Carlisle, Douglas Dumbrille, William Farnum. WASHINGTON STORY (1952, dir: Robert Pirosh) A much underrated, largely forgotten political drama, worthy of comparison with Capra's "State of the Union". Intelligent and thoughtful; with Van Johnson, Patricia Neal, Louis Calhern, Sidney Blackmer, Reinhold Schunzel.

5. July 12
   MADONNA OF THE SEVEN MOONS (+) (1944, dir: Arthur Crabtree)
   Much-requested repeat of one of Britain's most popular wartime hits: wildly extravagant romantic escapism with amnesia, gypsy love and schizophrenia fashionably mixed. The full British version, not the edited US release. With Phyllis Calvert, Stewart Granger, Patricia Roc, John Stuart, Peter Glenville, Jean Kent, Dulcie Gray. Plus a selection of surprise shorts.

6. July 26
   Pot-pourri; a triple bill of off-beat melodrama, SILENCE (1931, dir: Louis Gasnier); a remake of a silent DeMille, with Clive Brook, Peggy Shannon, Charles Starrett; THUNDER TRAIL (1937, dir: James Hagan); a model of how to make a "B" Western which really class. Zane Grey's story covers ten years of action and complications, and the film does it all in 58 minutes; Gilbert Roland, Marsha Hunt, Monte Blue, James Craig, J. Carroll Naish; STRANGE IMPERSONATION (1946, dir: Anthony Mann); most elusive of all the early "B" Manns; an involved semi-noir with Brenda Marshall, William Gargan, Hillary Brooke.