Monday next, October 5th: Tod Browning's "THE SHOW" (1927) with John Gilbert, Norma Shearer, Lionel Barrymore; and silent shorts - "Out of the Inkwell" etc.

September 28 1970

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD" (Capitol Films, 1936) Director: Jack Raymond
Based on the play by Charles Marlowe; Camera, F.A. Young; 7 reels
With Jack Buchanan, Ray Wray, Garry Marsh, Kate Cutler, Martita Hunt, Robert Horton, Aubrey Mather, Aubrey Fitzgerald, Robert Raine, Moore Marriott, Charles Paton, Guy Oliver.

In its day, "When Knights Were Bold" was a huge domestic success. Not only was Jack Buchanan still a big name, and a light comedian who, thanks to his London stage work, commanded more adult respect than the proliferation of comic talents then at work in British movies, but the swashbuckling angle - even if kidded - gave the film a special appeal in any film era. It was the King Arthur period since the silents - and youngsters especially looked forward to the film for months. I remember seeing it in 1936, waiting impatiently for the dream sequences to begin, and then feeling - together with the rest of the audience, judging from the laughs - that this was one of the funniest films ever made. Also, we were all wrong - or the film has dated - or both! It's one of the least amusing of the many ingratiating films that Buchanan made in that period (and most of them do hold up very well), and the spectacular dream stuff, while on a very big scale, using genuine castle sets and a plethora of extras, is frankly overdone, shored and lacking to easy-going charm and humor of the early part of the film. Buchanan's light patter and songs are always a delight to watch however, and while it's a pity that it isn't a better film, it's still entertaining if one likes the period and the star - and presumably you wouldn't be here if you didn't. Capitol was one of several British independents that rapidly went broke trying to make fairly expensive "little" British films in the 30's, either spending too much money on production and not enough on stars for insurance, or conversely getting good names and not backing them up with plot or showmanship. Another 1936 Capitol film, Olve Brook's "Love in Exile", is one of the most unbelievably bad configurations ever made, and incidentally it used some of the castle interior sets from this film in an effort to save a little on its budget.

"TORNED OUT NICE AGAIN" (Ealing, 1941) Director: Marcel Varnel
Produced by Michael Balcon, asst. producer, Basil Dearden; screenplay by Austin Helford from the play "As You Are" by Wells Root and Hugh Miller; Camera: Gordon Dinwiddie; edited by Robert Hamer; 8 reels

 Critics in 1941 felt that this was quite one of Formby's best films, and liked the way it got away from the traditional Formby slapstick and gave him better plot and characterization values. The faults however, liked their Formby as of yore - and much preferred his previous and more traditional comedy "Spare a Copper" (which we showed earlier this year). "Torned Out Nice Again" however in retrospect can be seen to have been one of Formby's best films, despite its almost total lack of sight-gag humor. It has pep, pace, restrained pathos, and plenty of the harlessly "blue" material - both in song and double-entendre dialogue - that had become a Formby trademark. It represents both a highspot and a turning point in his career; it was his last film for Ealing, and his subsequent ones - seven of them, all for Columbia - all somehow failed to either sustain or develop the essentials of the Formby persona. Ironically, Will Hay - Gaumont-British star and Britain's most popular screen comic - was brought in to replace Formby at Ealing, and he too, away from his old alma mater, made less interesting films. The charming leading-lady by the way is Peggy Bryan, whose very sparse film appearances also included "Dead of Night"; biographical material on her is practically non-existence, but the resemblance to Jane Bryan, a Warner starlet of the same period, is so strong that one can't help but conjecture as to whether there was a relationship there.

BONUS (???)

"STRIP STRIP HOORY" (or "FUN WITH THE SUNBATHERS") British International-Pathe, 1932; Directed by Norman Lee; script by Leslie Arliss; Dance by Edward Dolly; Camera, Walter Harvey; Bert Ford; 3 reels
With Ken Douglas, Betty Norton, Albert Rayner, Muriel White, Hal Gordon, Frank and Albert, and June Seymour and her Dance Band.

There is really no possible excuse for showing this film, other than that if the Huff didn't, nobody else would. It's in the same great (?) tradition as "Redheads", except that sadly it has more plot and less music - although Miss Seymour's dance band is quite something! Gentile members need not be alarmed by the promise of the title -- there's no stripping at all by 1970 standards, and practically none by 1932 standards. You invest 32 irreplaceable minutes of your life at your own risk, and money will not be refunded, but we think you'll find it an interesting experience!

W.K. Browning