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FILMS 1930s SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS David Moore, 1990

1930 <u>Rookery Nook</u> Aldwych farces, Winifred Shotter, Tom Walls, Robertson Hare + Ralph Lynn, funny man with big teeth and eyeglass.

Catch phrases: 'Indubitably' (R.H.) 'Do you wish to see my quarters?' (Mary Brough the cook)

Impersonations of course. Lots of laughs.

<u>All Quiet on the Western Front</u> (by Erich Maria Remarque) When the wife gets into her soldier husband's bed in hospital--quite shocking (at the time)

1931 George Arliss (from stage) <u>Disraeli</u>--always the same--easy to mimic

Voltaire --etc

1931 <u>Trader Horn</u> J [Jeanne] remembers this

Jessie Matthews Evergreen

About this time I saw Jeanette MacDonald, who I thought was gorgeous!

- 1932 <u>The Frightened Lady</u> Emlyn Williams--J remembers.
- 1932 Marie Dressler in Emma--she was famous as a music-hall artiste?
- 1932 <u>Hell Divers</u>--the US Navy was developing dive-bombers, which enabled them later to defeat the Jap [sic] Navy at Midway and alter the balance of the war in the Pacific (1942).
- 1932 <u>Grand Hotel</u>--this is the film in which Greta Garbo said 'I want to be alone'--recently shown on TV.
- 1933 <u>Cavalcade</u>--Noel Coward suddenly became patriotic, having seemed to be such a cynic.

1933 <u>The Good Companions</u>--J.B. Priestley--was very memorable. John Gielgud was in it.

*<u>Private Life of Henry VIII</u>--1st British film to get big international acclaim--Charles Laughton and his wife Elsa Lanchester in a classic scene as Anne of Cleves, on their marriage night.

- 1934 <u>Norma Shearer</u> in the <u>Barretts of Wimpole Street</u> being obliged to drink a pint of 'porter' for her health.
- 1934 <u>The Thin Man</u>--Myrna Loy and William Powell--a series of films that cut new ground with sophisticated witty dialogue
- 1935 [illegible] I was 18 and remember most of these films, the greatest being the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers <u>Gay Divorce</u> [referring to The Gay Divorcee] (also <u>Top Hat</u>)

(Gracie Fields met our ship's company in Australia in 1945 but she wouldn't sing for us)

'Smoke gets in your eyes'--a great film song [referring to <u>Roberta]</u>--lots of smoking in films of 1930s.

- 1936 Charles Laughton in <u>Mutiny on the Bounty</u> was another ripe field for memory--my captain in the destroyer ACHERON1939-40, Lt Cdr Northcott, was exactly like him)
- 1937 I liked Deanna Durbin in <u>3 Smart Girls</u>
- 1938 I was in the destroyer EXMOUTH at Dover to escort the King and Queen en route to state visit in Paris, part of efforts to cement Anglo-French alliance. All the wardroom went ashore to see <u>SNOW WHITE</u> and loved it, quite amazing breakthrough in cartoons.
- 1938 I saw <u>UN CARNET DE BAL</u> (French) in London and was very impressed by it. Saw several foreign films in London around this time--not shown elsewhere. THE POTEMKIN STEPS ? [referring to Battleship Potemkin] etc. STUDIO 1 theatre and CURZON. The Russian film about mutiny on a battleship? Later the scene with the rotten meat was repeated when our doctor in Murmansk in 1942 had to <u>condemn</u> some reindeer meat supplied by USSR (so there was no mutiny!)

38 or 39'The Donkey Serenade' film was great, with Jack Jones's dad, Alan [referring to The Firefly].

1939 -- don't think I had much time to see films!

Janet Gaynor--a pin-up, pretty little thing.

<u>Boris Karloff</u>--another great source for impersonations--the butler showing the guest into the haunted bedroom. 'I have made arrangements, Sir, for you to be called in the morning...but I do not think it will be necessary.' Also 'The Mummy'. I met BK in New York in 1943, actually a most courteous and charming English gentleman.

The Marx Brothers--Groucho and his walk. Never saw them until <u>after</u> WW2, and then I got hooked.

The ritual of the Sunday-night flick on the quarterdeck of warships, to which ladies were invited. (The exotic scents of the gorgeous ladies ferried in my motor boat across Alexandria harbour to the cruiser DEVONSHIRE (1936).) Mountbatten's RN Film Corporation perhaps worth a mention. The US Navy set great store for morale with films on its warships.

British comedy films--George Formby and Will Hay etc--were very popular, probably unknown in USA.

Lots of funny shorts. One with a gang of children. Laurel and Hardy.

The general view that films in the 1930s were 'escapist'--comedies, or spectacular, or gangsters etc. Few with any 'message'--perhaps I missed them.