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"SWEETIE" (Paramount, 1929) Directed by Frank Tuttle; scenario by George Marion Jr. and Lloyd Corrigan; camera: Alfred Gilks; music by Richard Whiting; dances by Earl Lindsay; 9 reels.

With Nancy Carroll, Helen Kane, Stanley Smith, Jack Oakie, Stuart Erwin, William Austin, Joe Depew, Wallace MacDonald.

"Sweetie" is hardly the film we would have chosen for a "tribute" program, but not wanting to repeat films we'd run earlier, and "Devil's Holiday" still not being available to us (hopefully, later it will be), it was the only one we could acquire in the short time available to us. It disappoints mainly because it rather short-changes us with Miss Carroll: a not wholly sympathetic role minimises her charm, and songs and dances are shifted to Helen Kane. In the manner of so many 1929 talkies, it talks endlessly at times in a very stagey fashion, and one would dearly love to take a pair of scissors to one or two comedy routines that consume a reel or so at a time, and would frankly never be missed. It's a pity to show a film that is not top-rank Nancy Carroll, but we hope we've evened the score a little by concluding the evening with two excerpts of Nancy singing and dancing from other films. Not that we are consigning her to just a "song-and-dance" category, for she was certainly a winning actress and, given the opportunity, a very fine one. But above all, she had personality, and it is too often kept in check in "Sweetie". In the closing excerpts however, her vivacity and pep is given far more scope.

Although no credit is given, "Sweetie" is actually based rather loosely on an Alice Duer Miller Saturday Evening Post story that Paramount (as was their habit with most properties) filmed on several other occasions. It first saw the light in 1920 as "The Charm School", became "Someone to Love" eight years later, and was dusted off in the mid-30's as "Collegiate". "Sweetie" has most of the trimmings of the collegiate film, complete with that all-important climactic football game, but it suffers from over-length and a lack of pep. You really have to be interested in the history of the movies rather than the art of the movies to find "Sweetie" in any way rewarding, apart from Miss Carroll of course. But approached without too high an expectation, it's a nostalgic and generally enjoyable romp.

"HONEY" (1929, Paramount; EXCERPT) Dir: Wesley Ruggles
A charming little sequence climaxed by a song that was missing from the previous tv-trimmed print that we ran a few years ago. Here Miss Carroll shows quite clearly how she became the early sound cinema's leading contender for the "America's Sweetheart" throne vacated by Mary Pickford, and only half-heartedly claimed by Janet Gaynor.

"PARAMOUNT ON PARADE" (Paramount, 1929; EXCERPT) Directors: Several
Introduced by Skeets Gallagher, and backed by Abe Lyman's orchestra, Nancy's "Dancing to Save My Soul" number was one of the two or three highspots of a revue-film which was generally much slicker and more sophisticated than those put out by Warners and MGM. Nancy's singing and dancing is peppy and delightful, and an appropriate closing image for our program.

----- William K. Everson -----

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