

## Document Citation

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"LADIES OF LEISURE" (Columbia, 1929/30) Directed by Frank Capra  
Scenario by Jo Swerling from the play by Milton Herbert Cropper entitled  
"Ladies of the Evening" and presented by David Belasco; camera: Joseph  
Walker; Released in sound and silent versions - sound, 10 reels; silent,  
9 reels.

With Barbara Stanwyck, Lowell Sherman, Ralph Graves, Marie Prevost, Nance  
O'Neill, George Fawcett, Johnnie Walker, Juliette Compton.

After a stunningly visual opening, "Ladies of Leisure" turns almost at once  
(though not permanently) into a kind of object lesson in the follies of  
trying to cut silent versions from sound pictures in those early days of the  
talkies. It was a common practice, and it rarely worked. "Ladies of Leisure"  
is really no more of a "talkie" than many full-fledged silents; but it is  
paced as a talkie, its whole grammar built around the fact that dramatic  
situations will be presented and solved orally rather than visually. For a  
while, even though camera speeds are normal, one has a kind of slow-motion  
effect and one senses an invisible barrier. Fortunately, at the half-way  
mark, the film decides to be an updated "Camille" - from then on it moves in  
a filmic way, the spoken word becomes incidental, and the climactic sequence  
is genuinely tense, exciting and visual in the manner of the best silents.  
Throughout too, it is always well-served by cameraman August. The sets are  
interesting, the compositions often striking, and some of the closeups of  
Miss Stanwyck are quite lovely. The roof garden atop a New York skyscraper  
isn't 100% convincing, but it makes a fascinating backdrop to much of the  
action too.

Stanwyck, with her customary hysterical scene even in those days, is  
extremely good and shows a marked improvement from her prior film, "The  
Locked Door" (which we ran quite a few years ago). Lowell Sherman does his  
Lennox Sanderson from "Way Down East" all over again, and it's always a  
pleasure to watch him glide through a scene, taking over so effortlessly.  
Quite obviously this titled version (all that has survived apparently)  
doesn't do full justice to the film, but it's still good, stylish Capra,  
and clearly - if one can read between the frames accurately - an extremely  
accomplished and able early talkie, even if it doesn't quite come off as  
an equally accomplished late silent.

Wm. K. Everson

For the benefit of members not present at last week's show: programs  
cancelled because of the transit strike will be re-scheduled in early  
March, and dates announced on our March-May News Bulletin.

- Tues Jan 25, 1966 -

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

~~Wm. K. Everson~~