

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Air mail</b>
Author(s)	William K. Everson
Source	<i>New School for Social Research (New York, N.Y.)</i>
Date	1971 Mar 12
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Air mail, Ford, John, 1932

"AIR MAIL" (Universal, 1932) Directed by John Ford; written by Lieut-Commander Frank Wead and Dale van Every; Camera, Karl Freund; 8 rls With Pat O'Brien, Gloria Stuart, Ralph Bellamy, Lillian Bond, Russell Hopton, Slim Summerville, Leslie Fenton, Frank Albertson, William Daly, Tom Carrigan, Francis Ford, David Landau, Hans Furburg, Charles de la Motte, Lieut. Pat Davis, Lew Kelly, Frank Beal, James Donlon, Louise Macintosh, James Flavin, Jim Thorpe, Jack Pennick, Ed Burns.

Stunt flying by Paul Mantz

"Air Mail" marked John Ford's first association with ex-Naval officer Frank Wead, one of the most prolific writers of aviation and service scenarios in the thirties, and himself the subject of the later John Ford-John Wayne film, "Wings of Eagles". Not a major Ford, "Air Mail" is one of his least known yet in many ways one of his most entertaining films, made at a time when he was turning out films (and good ones, as witness "Pilgrimage" in our next series) so prolifically at Fox that one wonders why and how he found the time to do this one at Universal. (He hadn't been at Universal since his Harry Carey days in the early 20's, not has he ever returned to Universal since; why the property wasn't handed to a Universal contract director like William Wyler or James Whale is something of a mystery). It's formula stuff perhaps, but Ford's various trademarks are visible throughout; moreover the dialogue is punchy and snappy, the performances uniformly good (it's a pleasure to see the two young ladies from "The Old Dark House" together again), and the camerawork (by Karl Freund) and the manipulation of exceptionally realistic miniatures, really quite fine. One sometimes wonders why these pioneering aerodromes were always constructed in locations that boasted a plethora of mountain peaks, electric pylons and constant fogs, causing more planes to crash than to get through safely, but perhaps that's just dramatic license. A programmer, "Air Mail" is, like all such Universal programmers, a thoroughly professional and vastly entertaining job that deserves more attention than we can give it in these notes, but hopefully we can remedy that in the comments prior to the screening, and the discussion period afterwards

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

The New School Film Series 10 Prog 5 3/12/71