

SAN FRANCISCO
SILENT
FILM FESTIVAL



SILENT AUTUMN | SEPTEMBER 20, 2014 | CASTRO THEATRE

SILENT AUTUMN SEPTEMBER 20, 2014

11:00AM ANOTHER FINE MESS: SILENT LAUREL AND HARDY SHORTS

Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

Copresented by Sketchfest and Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum

1:00PM THE SON OF THE SHEIK

Musical Accompaniment by the Alloy Orchestra

Introduced by Donna Hill

3:30PM A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA IN 1914

Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

Copresented by BAM/PFA, California Film Society and San Francisco Film Society

7:00PM THE GENERAL

Musical Accompaniment by the Alloy Orchestra

Copresented by California Film Society and San Francisco Film Society

9:00PM THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

Copresented by Goethe-Institut/Berlin & Beyond and MIDNITES FOR MANIACS

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MUSICIANS



ALLOY ORCHESTRA

Alloy Orchestra is a three-man musical ensemble that performs live accompaniment its members have written expressly for classic silent films. Working with an outrageous assemblage of peculiar objects, they thrash and grind soulful music from unlikely sources. Founded 20 years ago, Alloy has composed scores for numerous feature-length silent films and shorts. The group has helped revive some of the great masterpieces of the silent era by touring extensively, commissioning new prints, and collaborating with archives, collectors, and curators. At today's event, the orchestra will perform its original scores for *The Son of the Sheik*, a world premiere, and for *The General*.



DONALD SOSIN

Donald Sosin scores silent films for major festivals, archives, and DVD recordings. He has accompanied many films on solo piano at the San Francisco Silent Film Festival since 2007. His commissions include the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, New York's Museum of Modern Art, and Turner Classic Movies. Today he will play solo piano for *Another Fine Mess: Silent Laurel and Hardy Shorts*, *A Night at the Cinema in 1914*, which includes a vocal performance, and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, for which Sosin will also incorporate synthetic sounds.



Image courtesy of Photofest

ANOTHER FINE MESS: SILENT LAUREL AND HARDY SHORTS

Live Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

SHOULD MARRIED MEN GO HOME? Directed by James Parrott, USA, 1928 **Supporting Cast** Edgar Kennedy, Edna Marian, and Viola Richard **Production** Hal Roach Studios **Supervising Director** Leo McCarey **Photography** George Stevens **Editor** Richard Currier **Titles** H.M. Walker **Print Source** UCLA Film and Television Archive **TWO TARS** Directed by James Parrott, USA, 1928 **Supporting Cast** Edgar Kennedy, Thelma Hill, and Ruby Blaine **Production** Hal Roach Studios **Supervising Director** Leo McCarey **Photography** George Stevens **Editor** Richard Currier **Titles** H.M. Walker **Print Source** Library of Congress **BIG BUSINESS** Directed by J. Wesley Horne, USA, 1929 **Supporting Cast** James Finlayson and Tiny Sandford **Production** Hal Roach Studios **Supervising Director** Leo McCarey **Photography** George Stevens **Editor** Richard Currier **Titles** H.M. Walker **Print Source** Library of Congress **Shorts program courtesy of** Sonar Entertainment

Before they became the comedy team known as "Laurel and Hardy," Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy each had worked in different capacities in vaudeville and the fledgling film industry for more than a decade. It took the freedom offered by producer Hal Roach to foster their collaborative genius.

In 1910, at the age of 17, Oliver Hardy became the operator of a movie theater in Milledgeville, Georgia. He was not impressed by the quality of the performances he saw on the screen and thought he could do better, and certainly no worse. In 1913 he traveled to Jacksonville, Florida, which hosted a number of film studios, and broke into the business the next year. Any fans trying to follow his early career would have had difficulty keeping up with his roles as a character actor. Hardy was often the sidekick to the lead comedian—if he wasn't the villain—and he was usually disguised by bushy eyebrows, a variety of comical mustaches or beards, made up in blackface, or dressed as a woman. He worked steadily but, over the course of his career, moved to an assortment of film companies, including Edison, Lubin, Vitagraph, King Bee, and Arrow, to name a few. By the time Hardy signed a contract with Hal Roach Studios in 1926, he had worked in more than 200 films.

Stan Laurel, born Arthur Stanley Jefferson, first came to the United States from his native England in 1910 as understudy to Charles Chaplin in the Fred Karno Company. The Karno troupe toured the country on the vaudeville circuit for three years. When Chaplin left for the Keystone Film Company at the end of 1913, Stanley Jefferson, as he was then professionally known, went on the vaudeville circuit in his own song and dance company briefly, then he toured in an act called "Raffles the Dentist" with his common-law wife, Mae Dahlberg. Billed as Stan and May Laurel, the couple appeared on the opening bill at San Francisco's brand new Casino Theater on April 8, 1917.

The Casino, with 3,000 seats, was the largest of more than 100 theaters in town at the time and was owned by Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson, the first movie star cowboy. Anderson had left his Essanay studio in Niles, California, the year before but maintained an interest in producing films. After Laurel had tried several times to make the transition to movies, with little success, Anderson hired him in 1921 to star in the pilot for a series. This film, *The Lucky Dog*, is notable as the first time Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel appear together in a movie.

By 1922 Laurel was starring in his first successful films. In the next three years, he specialized in parodies of popular hits of the day, with titles like *Mud and Sand*, *Dr. Pyckle and Mr. Pride*, *The Soilers*, *Rupert of Hee Haw*, and *Monsieur Don't Care*. Then all of a sudden he disappeared from the screen. A contract dispute with independent producer Joe Rock in 1925 forced Laurel to abandon his acting career temporarily. Instead, he worked as a film director and writer at Hal Roach Studios.

Laurel had already been involved in shaping the content of his movies, but the Roach studio offered more. His talent became recognized and respected as he worked for every production unit on the lot. The boss knew comedy and was also wise enough to let the talented people he hired do their jobs, including directors Leo McCarey, James Parrott (brother to Charley Chase), George Marshall, Keaton collaborator Clyde Bruckman, scenario writers Frank Butler and Carl Harbough, brilliant title writer H.M. Walker, as well as

The Roach lot was named 'The Lot of Fun'...

teenaged camera operators Art Lloyd and George Stevens, who left the studio in 1931 and advanced to directing.

Hal Roach himself was only 19 when he started in the movie business in 1913, as an extra for a dollar a day plus bus fare and lunch. On his first day, he was on a western set in a gambling hall scene in which the hero was supposed to win a lot of money at roulette. No one knew the correct way to spin the roulette wheel, except Roach, who was immediately raised to five dollars a day. The next year, Roach was directing movies on a shoestring budget with fellow extra Harold Lloyd as his comedian.

By 1919, Roach had built a new 17-acre studio in Culver City. He slowly developed a number of units, producing films with Charley Chase, Will Rogers, and a group of youngsters he called Our Gang.

Roy Seawright, who began his career as an office boy for Hal Roach and later became the head of the optical effects department, recalled in a 1980 interview: "MGM, Fox, Universal—they were nothing but machines. The Roach lot was very individual. And the people there had talent with a wonderful sense of humor. The Roach lot was named 'The Lot of Fun,' because it was a comedy studio—and it was a lot

of fun." By the mid-1920s the Hal Roach Studio was the equal, if not the better of Mack Sennett's "Fun Factory."

The first time Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy both appear in a Roach-produced film was in *45 Minutes from Hollywood* (1926), a Glenn Tryon short subject. Laurel and Hardy share no scenes together and the film is otherwise unremarkable, but the next film is a different story. *Duck Soup* (no relation to the Marx Brothers film), released in 1927, features Laurel and Hardy as two hobos on the run from the law who come upon a mansion that is temporarily unoccupied. They settle in and there are complications. The story was good enough to be reworked as a talkie, *Another Fine Mess*, in 1930, but the earlier film provides hints of the genius to come. The chemistry between the two men on the screen was not lost on the production personnel at the studio, but it took awhile for the wheels to turn. The next five films with Laurel and Hardy were a regression as far as teamwork was concerned, with some humorous individual bits by each of them, but no collaboration.

The spark returned with *Do Detectives Think?*—the attire was in place, the vacant stares, Oliver nominally in charge, Stan bursting into tears, the two mixing up their hats. Their rapport increased, and the set pieces became polished. Most notable were the scenes in which an innocent slight escalates into a battle royal. It happens in a focused way in *Big Business*, with a private battle between "The Boys" and homeowner Jimmy Finlayson ending in near total destruction. In *Two Tars*, the battle becomes widespread, with everyone in sight involved in the mayhem.

When talking pictures came in, Laurel and Hardy embraced the medium, making sound a part of the humor. Their first talkie, *The Last Word*, (later retitled *Unaccustomed As We Are*) features a final gag of Stan falling, off-camera, and you just hear the noise. They used the idea more than once, most effectively in *The Music Box*, their Oscar-winning short, another

silent film story brilliantly reworked as a talkie by replacing a washing machine with a player piano carried up a long flight of steps.

They made another transition, to feature films, in 1930, with *Pardon Us*. Although the team felt it was difficult to be successful in the longer format, the film was good enough for them to tackle it again when they felt they had a solid story. Of the 106 films Laurel and Hardy made together, 25 were features. They made eight of these at 20th Century-Fox after they left Hal Roach in 1941.

When Oliver Hardy died of a stroke in 1957, Stan Laurel retired from performing and lived quietly with his second wife in Santa Monica. He received an honorary Oscar in 1961. He died in 1965, but Laurel and Hardy live on through their fans, many of them in the "Sons of the Desert" appreciation societies in more than 100 cities throughout the world, each "tent" named after one of their films. There are two tents in the Bay Area, the "Call of the Cuckoos" in San Francisco and "The Midnight Patrol," which meets once a month at the Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum's Edison Theater to see them once again on the big screen, and laugh.

—DAVID KIEHN



Oliver Hardy, Stan Laurel, and James Finlayson in *Big Business*



Image courtesy of Donna Hill

THE SON OF THE SHEIK

Live Musical Accompaniment by the Alloy Orchestra

Directed by George Fitzmaurice, USA, 1926

Cast Rudolph Valentino (Ahmed/The Sheik) Vilma Banky (Yasmin) Agnes Ayres (Diana) George Fawcett (André) Montagu Love (Ghabah) Karl Dane (Ramadan) Bull Montana (Ali) Bynunsky Hyman (Pincher) **Production** Feature Productions Inc. **Producer** John W. Considine Jr. **Scenario** Frances Marion and Fred de Gresac, based on the novel by E. M. Hull **Titles** George Marion Jr. **Photography** George Barnes **Art Direction** William Cameron Menzies **Print Source** Box 5

In the 1920s Bedouin chieftains prowled the movie screens much as vampires do today. "There are more sheiks here than in the Sahara," complained a *Photoplay* reporter in 1923. Perhaps the craze for the desert romance was fed by Lowell Thomas who exhibited footage of the dashing World War I exploits of one T.E. Lawrence; perhaps it can be traced to the improbable imperialist adventure stories of H. Rider Haggard (*King Solomon's Mines*, *She*). Certainly it was Edith M. Hull who set the standard when she blended exotic adventure with S&M-tinged romance in her best-selling bodice-ripper of 1919, *The Sheik*. Famous Players-Lasky adapted the titillating page-turner in 1921, spawning a host of celluloid imitations, including *Burning Sands*, *The Tents of Allah*, and *The Arab*. The film was lampooned by Mack Sennett in *The Shriek* and inspired songs like "Lovin' Sam, the Sheik of Alabam." Sheik brand condoms soon followed.

The *New York Times* described the formula: "the beguiling beauty of Anglo-Saxon maidens wreaks havoc with the hearts of handsome chieftains who decide that after all they only want one wife." In the book and film versions of *The Sheik*, the title character kidnaps the independent Lady Diana Mayo as she's adventuring unprotected (except for an Arab guide and crew of servants) in the desert. The film version is vague about how far Diana and

the Sheik go, but the book spelled out their physical relationship quite clearly. After weeks of captivity, Diana realizes she's in love with the masterful sheik, who is then revealed to be an Englishman under his flowing robes. Hull disapproved of miscegenation, if not rape. While the sexual and racial politics may seem hopelessly retrograde to modern audiences, at the time, as David Robinson noted in *Sight and Sound*, "to have read this slightly pornographic tale was the mark of the New Woman."

The Sheik catapulted Famous Players' newly signed young actor, Rudolph Valentino, into a kind of stardom unseen before. From the moment he snatches costar Agnes Ayres from her saddle, followed by a title card reading, "Lie still, you little fool!" Valentino became forever identified with the role.

Born Rodolfo Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antonguolla, Valentino emigrated from Italy in 1913, a ne'er-do-well of 18 whose bourgeois family had given up on him. Ambitious and fond of high living, Valentino supported himself by taxi-dancing in New York City, eventually becoming an exhibition dancer, all the while trying to break into showbiz. He fell back on dancing again and again throughout his struggle to make it in movies. He danced for a spell at San Francisco's Cliff House in 1917 as he made his way to

Certainly it was Edith M. Hull who set the standard when she blended exotic adventure with S&M-tinged romance...

Hollywood, where he played an apache dancer in an early bit role. Valentino famously danced the tango in his breakout film, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) and, when a contract dispute forced him off the screen in 1923, he went on a dance tour to advertise Mineralava face cream. However, as the Sheik, he leaves dancing to the harem girls and shows off his horsemanship instead.

Five years after Valentino first galloped across the desert, Joe Schenck at United Artists bought the rights to E.M. Hull's sequel *Sons of the Sheik* as a vehicle for the actor's comeback. By 1926 studio heads were relying on dependable film formulas more than ever. Thousands of new theaters had opened, demanding more product. Balaban and Katz had recently merged with Famous Players to form Paramount, the last of the big studios to combine production with exhibition. "In the twenties," Jesse Lasky wrote in his memoir, "I was turning out a continuous flow of pictures

like a frozen custard machine." It was a telling comparison. As Douglas Gomery points out in his history of film exhibition, *Shared Pleasures*, the movie industry came of age during a revolution in mass marketing; studios modeled their business practices on the emerging chain-grocery stores; economies of scale, assembly-line production methods, and standardized products were the order of the day.

By 1926 Valentino had changed, too. The survivor of two divorces, a bigamy trial, and contract battles that had kept him offscreen for more than a year, Valentino was sick of being the Sheik. He told a reporter for *Collier's* in 1925 that "If any producer comes to me with a sheik part I am going to murder him!" He was weary of the intense scrutiny his fame provoked. His role as the Great Lover had sparked both devotion and antipathy, the latter exemplified by Dick Dorgan's famous "Song of Hate." Printed

in *Photoplay's* July 1922 issue, it begins simply, "I hate Valentino! All men hate Valentino." Valentino's appeal was as incomprehensible to his bosses as it was to Dick Dorgan. They knew there was money to be made out of him, but how? Their solution was another frozen custard.

If Valentino didn't murder Schenck, it was because the 30-year-old was in debt and the films he'd made since his return to the screen had been financial disappointments. Frances Marion, who wrote the scenario for *Son of the Sheik* (and privately called the film "Son of a Bitch"), recalled in her memoir that Valentino "was too tired to combat the overwhelming forces that governed his career." He took what comfort he could in his director, George Fitzmaurice, whom he'd long wanted to work with, and his costar Vilma Banky, a Hungarian discovery on loan from Sam Goldwyn. He liked the challenge of playing both

the old Sheik and his son (the film combines the novel's twin brothers into one character). Schenck's market research, showing that 90 percent of Valentino's fans wanted to see him as a sheik again, won the day.

The shoot in Yuma, Arizona, was hot and the menagerie

of horses and camels attracted so many flies that cast and crew doused themselves in citronella. The *New York Times* "Movie Screen" column joked: "It is a Western thriller in an Arabian atmosphere, except for the exotic Eastern love affair, which no noble hero of the wide open spaces of the West would ever be let in for in moving pictures, no matter how much he really felt like it. Not even Tom Mix's horse would be caught in a situation like that."

On a more respectful note, *Variety* praised it as "an outstanding success." Sales were brisk after the film premiered in August, even as the latest buzz was the Broadway opening of Warner Brothers' *Don Juan* with its synchronized Vitaphone score. Then

something happened that put this sync-sound invention in the shade. Rudolph Valentino went to the hospital on August 14 and died a week later, a victim of acute appendicitis and a perforated gastric ulcer.

"We are grieved and shocked at this great loss," said Schenck, who then quickly pushed *The Son of the Sheik* into wide release. The publicity blast from Valentino's death was phenomenal: a week's worth of tabloid deathbed reporting, followed by coverage of the crowds at the funeral parlor, the Italian honor guard (a fake), the suicides, and, finally, the funeral. When the books were balanced at the end of the year, *Son of the Sheik* had grossed a million dollars. And the revenue stream didn't stop there. Three years later the *New York Times* was writing stories about "the Valentino Cult" whose members were "obligated to think of Valentino at least once a day, to go see all Valentino films and to agitate for the showing of more of his films in the kino houses." It was the kind of cult any studio boss could get behind. One might agree with H.L. Mencken who put aside his usual grouchiness to write of the fallen star, "I incline to think that the inscrutable gods, in taking him off so soon ... were very kind to him."

—MONICA NOLAN



Poster image courtesy of Ken Winokur



Image courtesy of Photofest

THE MOGUL AND THE MOVIE STAR: VILMA BANKY'S BRIEF, BRILLIANT CAREER

BY SHARI KIZIRIAN

As hordes of hopeful ingénues flocked to Hollywood to be discovered, movie producers also ventured far from home in search of fresh faces with box-office appeal. Unashamed to poach them from the film industries of other countries, they planned scouting trips under the thinly veiled cover of European vacations. Samuel Goldwyn, on a mission to rebuild his studio, and his name, embarked on one such trek, returning with just the face to help put him back on top, a

woman with violet eyes and a golden crown of glory soon to be billed as the "Hungarian Rhapsody."

Vilma Banky, born in 1901 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was Goldwyn's answer to Paramount's Negri and MGM's Garbo. She had played roles in Budapest and Berlin in the films directed by Carl Boese, Max Linder, and even Jacques Feyder before the Polish-born mogul spotted her in a photograph while touring around the Old World. Gloria Film, Banky's current studio, deftly stalled Goldwyn's persistent

attempts to meet its leading star, but the young beauty had heard tales of the size of Hollywood salaries and showed up still in costume from the day's work as the producer was boarding a train out of town. He was immediately smitten, and she immediately signed.

As was the usual practice, she was given a new (more noble) background, better teeth, and a diet regimen (lamb chops and pineapple), which, to Goldwyn's frustration, did not take into account her capacity to smuggle homemade goulash into her dressing room. "I didn't know what hit me," she later said of her introduction to Hollywood. She was thrust into starring roles, first in the World War I drama, *THE DARK ANGEL*, alongside Goldwyn's answer to Valentino, Ronald Colman. The *NEW YORK TIMES* was among the outlets that rhapsodized over the newfound starlet: "not only a radiant beauty but also an actress who performs with ease and charm. . . . [N]obody will be surprised at a hero falling victim to her soft pleading eyes." Elinor Glyn proclaimed she possessed the coveted "IT."

A few stories of how she ended up opposite the real Valentino circulate. Producer Joe Schenck, in charge of Valentino's comeback and United Artists' bottom line, saw *DARK ANGEL* and approached Goldwyn to borrow her. Or, Valentino had attended the premiere and requested her as his next leading lady. Or, the least likely but most compelling version, he spotted her one day on horseback in the Hollywood Hills. However it happened, everyone involved thought she'd make a perfect sweet foil to Valentino's vengeful Cossack in *THE EAGLE* and then later as Yasmin, dancing siren to the son of a sheik.

They only starred in two films together but Banky and Valentino became fast friends: Valentino, heartbroken during his very public and protracted split with Rambova, and Banky no doubt homesick and eager to bond with another outsider. Goldwyn pretended to impede the pairing, forbidding her to attend the premiere of *THE EAGLE* in New York, with Valentino as her escort. He later fed gossip's gaping maw by planting a counterfeit Hungarian baron who claimed to be engaged to Banky in the lobby of Paris's Mogador Theater and then challenged the Great Lover to a duel.

If a diary-secreting secretary is to be believed no such romance existed. But whatever happened the tried-and-true

publicity gimmicks worked, and Banky used her talents to parlay her fame into a successful run as Colman's leading lady in four more films. In her short but productive career, she worked with directors Henry King, Victor Fleming, and Victor Sjöström. Her biggest conquest, however, may have been leading Romeo Rod La Rocque, a Goldwyn discovery and a Cecil B. DeMille success. For the couple's 1927 wedding, Goldwyn spared no expense, doling out \$50,000 and insisting on a passel of famous bridesmaids. To add an air of suspense he supposedly instructed Banky to arrive 15 minutes late. It was hailed as the social event of the year.

Talkies soon arrived to destroy Goldwyn's finest creation. Banky studiously prepared for her dialog debut and Goldwyn kept delaying its release, but the fussed-over *THIS IS HEAVEN* didn't send critics to paradise and audiences stayed home. Only part-talking, it was already passé, and, while some reviews noted that her accent was charming, Goldwyn paid out Banky's contract rather than risk another flop.

Banky's story, however, is not one of those sad tales of silent stars dimmed by sound. Already making noise about quitting the business when with Goldwyn, she managed a few films without him. Her last, *THE REBEL*, made for Universal in Germany and costarring mountain-film hero Luis Trenker, was praised by Hitler and Goebbels, soon to be taken very seriously about such things. But Banky was done. She had caught on quick to the American way, investing in a handsome, durable husband and several pieces of choice real estate, and spent the rest of her 90 years on Southern California's golf courses, even long after La Rocque's death in 1969. Upon her own instructions, her death, in 1991, was not reported in the newspapers until a year later.

Read the diary kept by Irving Sindler, a property-man on “Son of the Sheik,” when the company was on location. It tells of unbelievable hardships which Rudolph Valentino experienced.



The stars who, a few years ago, consented to the use of a trained acrobat to double in work involving actual danger, now do this work themselves. Hollywood has gone work mad.

“The Path of Glory . . .” By HELEN CARLISLE

Is Hard Work and the Strain Attendant Upon Fame Killing Our Screen Stars?

Three of our leading film stars, Barbara La Marr, Willard Louis, and Rudolph Valentino, have died within the year. In each case it has been said that the death came suddenly. But did it? Is it not possible, even quite probable, that these film players in a tense fight to gain greater fame, or to keep fame that was theirs, ignored over a period of time the limitations of the human body?

Barbara La Marr, a victim of strenuous diet which brought about tuberculosis, certainly burned out the last spark of her vitality in “The Girl from Montmartre.”

Willard Louis, who, after twelve years of obscurity in film work, gained fame in “Beau Brummel” with John Barrymore, was almost continuously on one set or another at Warner’s studio during the last three years of his life. Making eight pictures a year, certainly it cannot be doubted that he was severely taxed physically. A new contract, calling for but four pictures a year was signed during the filming of his last picture. It came too late. Two days after the completion of “The Honeymoon Express,” he was reportedly seriously ill. In a week he was dead.

The “sudden” death of Rudolph Valentino, idol of millions of motion picture fans, shocked America and Europe. Yet we in Hollywood who knew him from the “Four Horsemen” days onward were not so shocked. In five years he changed from a blithe, happy youth to a weary man, his heavily shadowed eyes showing every indication of some serious illness. It is not difficult for us to believe that he

paid for “Son of the Sheik” with his life, that he had not the physical resistance to throw off the strain of his last location trip which took him into the bitter wastes of the Arizona desert.

Irving Sindler, a property-man on “Son of the Sheik,” kept a diary during the filming of the picture. Here are a few entries:

“Monday Night—In Camp. Oh boy, what heat. It rose right up and smacked you in the face. Twenty miles of trek by auto and horse across the desert. Nothing but heat, sand and flies. Well, we’ll get Mr. Valentino’s lovely, beautiful desert scenes. This can’t last forever.

“Tuesday. Miss Vilma Banky put her spoon in a bowl of something that looked like blackberry jam, and when the flies flew away it was the sugar bowl. Montagu Love is sick, but carrying on. He says it’s the brackish water.

“Thursday. The thermometer in Mr. Valentino’s tent went to 123 degrees at 11 o’clock. We worked in the sun, toiling up the side of a big sand dune. Our assistant director intended to take a shower this afternoon but news spread that somebody had killed a sidewinder (snake) in the shower-room. At midnight it is still too hot to sleep. Sheets are like fire.

“Friday. We got up at four o’clock. Had two hours sleep. At sunrise Mr. Valentino’s white helmet looked solid black. Flies all over it. They get in your eyes and mouth. Evening. A little cooler, but still over 100 degrees.

“Saturday. We climb the sand dune again, sometimes on hands and knees. Mr. Valentino deserves much applause. He does his work without complaint. His horse fell in the sand twice today. It was galloping. He never complained.”

Desert locations such as those used in “Son of the Sheik,” “Beau Geste” and “The Winning of Barbara Worth” are almost unendurable. I know, because I’ve been on them. In each case, the camp is tossed up far out on the blazing desert floor. Communication with the outside world is cut off. Frequently the food from the camp kitchens is bad. Wells are drilled and shower-baths built, but all drinking water comes from a long distance. At least one physician and trained nurse are sent out with each such company, and they always find plenty to do. There is no recreation, except watching the rushes of the picture when the reels of film, shipped daily to Los Angeles for development, are returned to camp for the director’s inspection. Indeed, the company desires no recreation, after a fourteen-hour day of toil in the blasting heat.

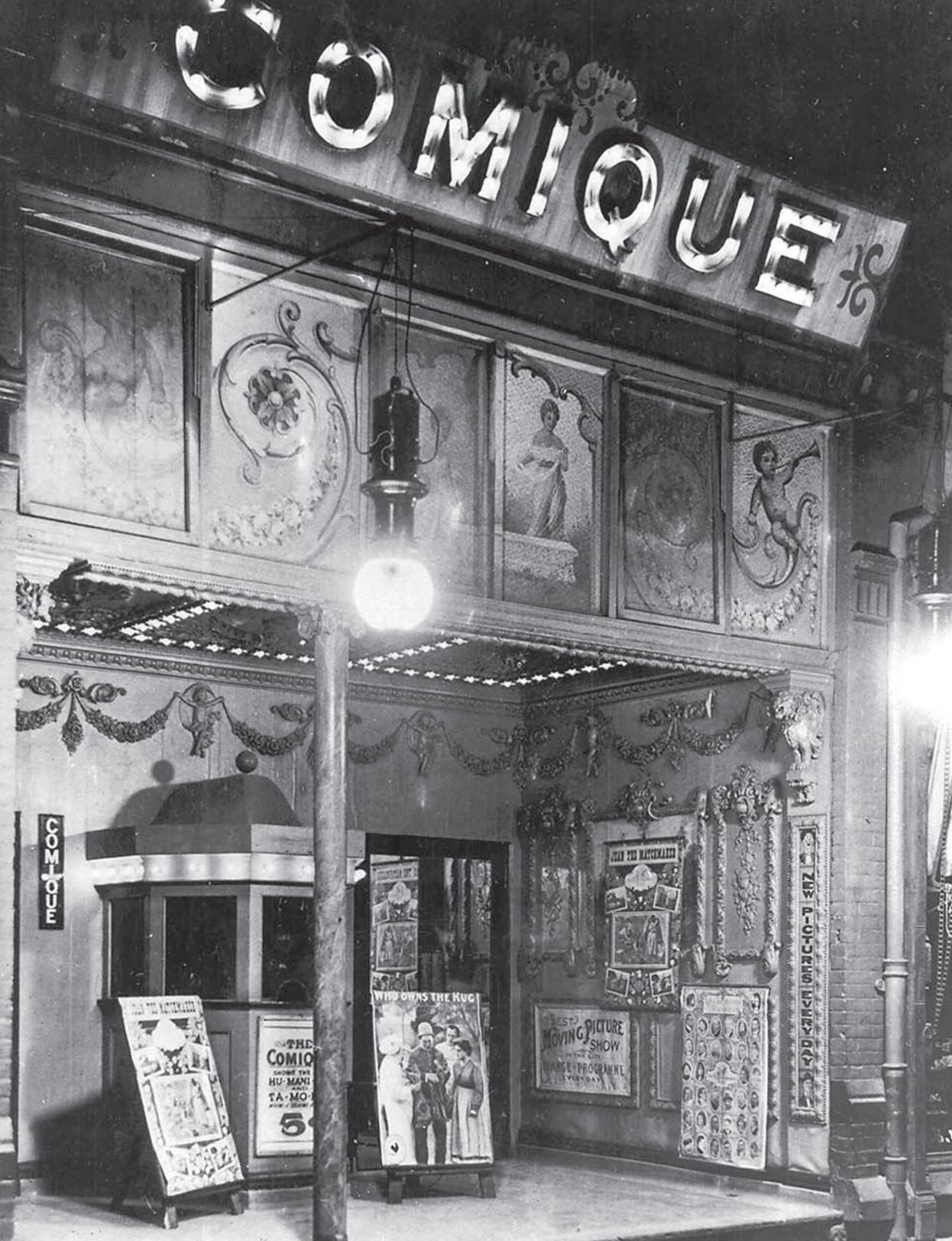
When I asked Henry King, director of “The Winning of Barbara Worth,” why he had chosen such a furnace as the Black Rock Desert up in Nevada as the location for his picture, he said: “It was necessary to find a location that never had been used before. ‘Barbara’ would have been just another western if made in the studios or on near-by locations. I and my chauffeur got completely lost while hunting the locations we have here in Nevada. He suffered from

sun-stroke and was delirious. We were out of water. When finally I found a desert shack where we could get some water, my lips were so swollen and cracked that I was unable to speak. But I got the right locations for ‘Barbara.’”

Without a doubt he did, and without a doubt you know who co-starred in that picture, filmed in the furnace heat. Ronald Colman, who had just completed ten weeks in the Arizona desert on “Beau Geste,” and Vilma Banky, who had just completed six weeks on “Son of the Sheik.” Sixteen weeks for Ronald and twelve for Vilma on the desert this summer.

Even at this writing, two Famous Players-Lasky companies are down in Texas. One director is ill. So is one leading woman. I’ve been requested not to name them, so I won’t. But they’re fighting poisonous mosquitoes and malaria down there to get the “real stuff.”

In all seriousness, I say that Hollywood has gone location-mad and work-mad. Hollywood has built a Juggernaut, under whose wheels the highest and lowest are being crushed. One hears nothing of the deaths of minor players who may be killed in the making of a picture. One rarely hears of injuries, serious though they may be, or of the illness of a prominent player. It is only when a Valentino dies, after a week in which his illness was considered “publicity bunk” by the very wise film fans, that the world can realize what a human—perhaps I might better say inhuman—place is the Hollywood of today.



The Comique Theatre in Toronto, circa 1910

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE PRESENTS A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA IN 1914

Live Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

Part of the appeal of silent-era movies is their ability to give today's audiences a glimpse of lost worlds. With these newsreels, travelogues, animation, comedy, and adventure films, the British Film Institute provides a look at what average British moviegoers might have seen at their local picture show 100 years ago. While the program reveals a very different moviegoing experience from the single-feature approach film fans enjoy today, it's not far-fetched to think of early cinema as the Internet of its day, offering a one-stop shop for visually exciting news, travel, and entertainment.

The British public began the year concerned with the women's suffrage movement, which had taken on a shocking new militancy that March when a supporter of suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst entered the National Gallery and slashed Diego Velázquez's nude *Rokeby Venus* seven times with a meat cleaver. The sensationalist story must have been on audiences' minds later that May when a newsreel showed Mrs. Pankhurst being escorted by guards as she made her way to petition King George V for the vote. He was not moved and women did not achieve full suffrage until 1928.

More than merely shocking was the assassination in June of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophia in Sarajevo. The assassinations, reported in the July newsreel *Austrian Tragedy*, hung like an unfinished sentence over the political landscape. Audiences entertained earlier that spring by the derring-do of aviation pioneers Gustav Hamel and Bentfield C. Hucks in *Looping the Loop at Hendon* might have found it sobering to consider that Hamel

vanished from the skies over the English Channel only two months later and that Hucks enlisted when war broke out in August. Unlike many of the men shown in the December newsreel *Christmas at the Front*, Hucks was discharged as an invalid after an attack of pleurisy in 1915. He died at home of pneumonia four days before the Armistice, never having flown a single combat mission.

After war was declared, audiences were eager for news from the frontlines but in 1914 such films were hard to come by. Critic Stephen Bush complained in the British film trade journal *The Bioscope* that the London market was "flooded with so-called war pictures which are nothing more or less than badly executed dupes of old and scratched positives that have been culled from weekly animated gazettes and pictures of maneuvers. The curious part

of it all is the hunger with which even this poor stuff is swallowed by the public." The reason for these deceptions was a ban on photography, still and moving, by newly occupying German forces in neutral Belgium, a ban enforced with the threat of execution. Civilians, ever on the lookout for spies, were quick to attack anyone with a camera. *German Occupation of Historic Louvain*, a newsreel taken of the war-pulverized Belgian town, was an unusual dispatch and a valuable piece of propaganda contributed by a cameraman who could have been shot for filming it.

Even in the first months of the war, spy obsession was ripe for parody, and a knowing British audience probably got a kick out of *Lieutenant Pimple and the Stolen Submarine*. Pimple, the invention of brothers Fred and Joe Evans who operated the independent

Even in the first months of the war, spy obsession was ripe for parody...

Folly Films studio, was lifted out of the circus ring and off the boards of the British music hall where the brothers' father and grandfather were seasoned performers. Fred played the acrobatic, clown-faced bumbler who, in this short, foils some mustache-twirling spies on rickety sets that became a Pimple trademark, including a submarine from which divers passed through an ordinary hinged door.

From the beginnings of the war, too, propaganda filled the movie houses hoping to fan the flames of patriotism. *Scouts' Valuable Aid*, released in August, showed that even youngsters could play their part by acting as lookouts and sounding the alarm should invading fleets be detected. Through stop-motion "lightning" animation, sketches by Lancelot Speed showed General John French, commander of the British army in France, trouncing the enemy before an amused and amazed audience. Speed, who made his name as an illustrator of Victorian novels, became a fixture of wartime cinema as he drew and animated his way through the end of the war with 1918's *Britain's Effort*.

Inevitably, the British public longed for an escape from the war and its attendant hardships, and adventure films filled the need. Robert Falcon Scott's fatal expedition to the South Pole in 1912 had fueled the fascination with polar exploration and it continued with Sir Ernest Shackleton's preparations for his own attempt to transverse Antarctica. A newsreel of Lord Kitchener reviewing troops in Egypt provided a vicarious experience for average British moviegoers who, in all likelihood, never traveled beyond their own borders. More excitement awaited in the American serial, *The Perils of Pauline*. Pauline (played by Pearl White), whose wealth put her in constant danger, kept audiences in suspense as she was variously stranded on a cliff face, menaced by sharks, and, in this installment, set adrift in a hot-air balloon and locked in a burning building. White, who did her own stunts, found the balloon incident genuinely hair-raising, as a sudden storm blew up and carried the intrepid actress miles away from the landing site.

In the end, comedies provided the greatest escape. American Vitagraph star Florence Turner, one of early cinema's powerful women, set up her own production company at the Hepworth Studios in Surrey, a hub of British filmmaking founded by Cecil Hepworth, one of the fathers of the British film industry. In *Daisy Doodad's Dial*, Turner used her agile face (the "dial" of the title) to hilariously frightening effect as her character practiced for a funny-face contest. Cecil Hepworth is connected to another short in the program, *The Rollicking Rajah*. This music-hall act brought sound to 1914 cinemas more than a decade before the arrival of talkies in the form of the Vivaphone, invented by Hepworth. Similar to the early Vitaphone sound-on-disc system in the United States, it allowed the rajah and his harem's corny song to ring out in movie theaters.

The most auspicious film event of 1914 was the return of Charles Chaplin to his native land—if only on celluloid. Chaplin, whose Little Tramp debuted on-screen that year, appears in one of the rapid-fire, slapstick comedies he reluctantly churned out for Mack Sennett's Keystone Studios, a backlot confection called *A Film Johnnie*, in which he plays a movie version of the so-called "stage-door Johnnies" who courted theater actresses. Although buried in Sennett's maniacal silliness, Chaplin's fluid movements and sly insolence are already on view, rough diamonds ready for a polish. Frontline troops, who watched films in makeshift battlefield theaters, waited with great anticipation for Chaplin's comedies. Although the British press attacked him for not enlisting, his efforts to raise money for U.S. Liberty Bonds and his growing popularity as a diversion during the long, brutal war redeemed him in the public's eyes.

—MARILYN FERDINAND

THE FILMS

LOOPING THE LOOP AT HENDON Pioneering British aviators Gustav Hamel and Bentfield C. Hucks perform stunts at the legendary Hendon airfield.

PALACE PANDEMONIUM The leading campaigner for women's suffrage, Emmeline Pankhurst, on her way to petition the king at Buckingham Palace in May. The suffragettes often staged appearances to keep their struggle in the news.

AUSTRIAN TRAGEDY Newsreel footage of the Austro-Hungarian royal family, including the wedding of Archduke Karl who became heir to the imperial throne after Franz Ferdinand's assassination that July.

DOGS FOR THE ANTARCTIC An August newsreel shows Sir Ernest Shackleton preparing for his expedition to Antarctica, bringing along plenty of dogs.

DAISY DOODAD'S DIAL The ebullient Daisy Doodad, played by American Vitagraph star Florence Turner, practices for a face-pulling competition and ends up getting herself arrested.

EGYPT AND HER DEFENDERS This color-tinted travelogue shows Lord Kitchener as British Consul General reviewing the troops against a backdrop of Egypt's famous sights.

LIEUTENANT PIMPLE AND THE STOLEN SUBMARINE Fred Evans, Britain's most popular comedian of the time, foils the plans of dastardly foreign spies in one of hundreds of Pimple films that made a virtue of their low budgets.

SCOUTS' VALUABLE AID A pair of young Sea Scouts keep lookout for an invading fleet from the cliff tops.

GERMAN OCCUPATION OF HISTORIC LOUVAIN When the Kaiser invaded neutral Belgium in August, the destruction of the centuries-old town of Louvain and its ancient university library provoked worldwide outrage.

GENERAL FRENCH'S CONTEMPTIBLE LITTLE ARMY General John French, commander of the British army in France, gets the better of the Germans in this lightning sketch by pioneering animator Lancelot Speed. Commonly distributed with newsreels, animation was popular with audiences and allowed Speed to be splendidly irreverent.

CHRISTMAS AT THE FRONT Troops are well fed before they return to the trenches in late December. National security issues prevent us from knowing where.

THE PERILS OF PAULINE American imports were always popular in England and serials were the latest sensation. This episode features an accidental hot-air balloon ride and a spectacular rescue from a burning building.

THE ROLLIICKING RAJAH Ladies fashions and dance moves of the day are highlights of this Vivaphone song film, which was accompanied by a now-lost synchronized sound disc. The song has been recreated from the surviving sheet music.

A FILM JOHNNIE In the summer of 1914, Charlie Chaplin exploded onto British screens. This Keystone Comedy is one of his very first films and is, appropriately, set in a cinema. Keep an eye out for Edgar Kennedy as the harried director and a cameo by Fatty Arbuckle.





THE GENERAL

Live Musical Accompaniment by the Alloy Orchestra

Directed by Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton, USA, 1926

Cast Buster Keaton (Johnnie Gray) Marion Mack (Annabelle Lee) Charles Smith (Her father) Frank Barnes (Her brother) Glen Cavender (Captain Anderson) Jim Farley (General Thatcher) Frederick Vroom (A Southern general) Joe Keaton, Mike Donlin, and Tim Nawn (Union generals) **Production** Buster Keaton Productions **Producer** Joseph M. Schenck **Scenario** Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton **Adaptation** Al Boasberg and Charles Smith, based on Lieutenant William A. Pittenger's *Daring and Suffering: A History of the Great Railroad Adventure* **Photography** Dev Jennings and Bert Haines **Technical Director** Fred Gabourie **Lighting Effects** Denver Harmon **Print Source** Cohen Film Collection

No silent moviemaker ever engaged with the machinery of modern life as resourcefully as Buster Keaton did. From *One Week* (1920), his debut as a solo director after his apprenticeship with Fatty Arbuckle, to *The Cameraman* (1928), his final masterpiece, Keaton routinely sparred with the mechanized world. He could be confounded in his early shorts—sometimes modern conveniences got the best of him—but as Keaton moved into feature films and matured as a filmmaker, his characters persevered in the struggle, thanks to a combination of curiosity, commitment, and ingenuity. Whereas Chaplin waged war against the machines with underdog defiance, Keaton mastered the magnificent marvels of modern engineering to triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds. In *The Navigator* (1924), Keaton tamed an abandoned luxury liner and emerged with one of the biggest hits of his career. After making three features of a more modest scope, *The General* (1926) marked his return to filmmaking on an ambitious scale. Built around a majestic prop that becomes a character in its own right—a locomotive steam engine—it is still filled with intimate moments. It is a grand achievement.

The story of *The General* comes from a chapter of Civil War history, a true tale of Union spies who infiltrated the South, stole a passenger train in Georgia,

and drove it north pursued by Southern conductors who eventually captured the raiders. According to Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, his reliable collaborator and gag man, handed him William A. Pittenger's account of the incident as a potential project. Keaton streamlined the story to a deceptively simple structure of two mirrored chases—one north to recapture

Keaton routinely sparred with the mechanized world.

the stolen engine and another back south—as well as added a love interest and a kidnapping to make the rescue personal. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he took on the perspective of the South. Pittenger was a Union soldier who participated in the

operation, and his book describes an ambitious failure that ended with the Union heroes captured and hanged. In Keaton's version, the underdog Southern railroad engineer Johnnie Gray is the hero and the story ends with the Confederates triumphant.

Keaton wanted to shoot the film on location in Georgia putting into action the original engine, which was preserved and on display at a railroad station in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The owners (understandably) refused permission. Keaton also discovered that the Southern locations had changed too much to represent Civil War-era Georgia, so set designer Fred Gabourie found the perfect stand-in: Cottage Grove, Oregon, a small town in Willamette Valley with railroad tracks left over from the lumber boom. Kea-

ton hauled two vintage engines, remodeled railroad cars, Civil War artillery, more than one thousand costumes, and all the equipment needed to shoot a film and settled in Cottage Grove with his crew to shoot over the summer of 1926. Locals were recruited as extras and 500 members from the Oregon National Guard were outfitted in Confederate gray or Union blue for the battle scenes.

The General is admirably faithful to authenticity in costumes and props—the imagery evokes Matthew Brady's Civil War photography—and its visual scope is not simply impressive, it is also dramatic and, at times, awe-inspiring. Keaton's Johnnie Gray fights the Northern army practically single-handedly and Keaton the director frames it as a David and Goliath battle aboard charging locomotives, with Johnnie as a one-man crew scrambling over the engine. Leave it to Keaton to turn a "cast of thousands" moment of an advancing army into a background gag while the

oblivious Johnnie toils away chopping firewood for the engine. The sheer scale of the scene gives what could have been a tossed-off gag and rudimentary piece of exposition a powerful sense of place and threat.

Keaton had delighted in the comic possibilities of a locomotive in miniature in his 1923 feature *Our Hospitality*, another period piece set in the South, this one built around a Hatfield and McCoy-style feud. For *The General*, he had the real thing, not a lampoon of a rural railway pattering cartoon-like through a comic strip of the rural South, but a full-size engine on a working track. (In interviews, Keaton maintained that Civil War trains were narrow-gauge and that the Cottage Grove lumber railway tracks were chosen in part because they were also narrow-gauge; silent film historian Kevin Brownlow points out that neither is correct and suggests that Keaton may have confused *The General* with *Our Hospitality*.) Keaton

learned to drive the engine himself and before long, according to the publicity of the time, he could stop the train on a dime.

Responding in 1960 to an interviewer who called Keaton's character in *The General* "a schlemiel," Keaton countered, "In *The General*, I'm an engineer." It's a simple statement of fact that speaks volumes about Keaton the filmmaker. He plots the comic geometry and action sequences in line with the design of the tracks and the landscape with exacting precision. There are no miniatures or rear-projection backdrops here. Every scene plays out on real engines charging past Cottage Grove's actual forests and hills, and the sequences depend on the intricate planning of a mechanical engineer—for instance, a snub-nose cannon that threatens to blow Johnnie and his engine away until a fortuitous bend in the track provides a more opportune target.

For the scene in which Johnnie sets fire to a bridge to prevent the North's engine from crossing the river, Keaton had Gabourie construct a stunt trestle designed to collapse under the train's weight. It was the only sequence that did not use existing track and it has been called the most expensive single shot in silent film history (Keaton biographies put the cost at \$42,000). It is certainly the most expensive that Keaton ever executed. He had only one shot at the scene and ran six cameras to capture the spectacle. The engine that plunged into the river was one of the doubles used to stand in for the working engines and it rested there in the water, rusting away for 15 years until it was hauled out for salvage in the scrap drives of World War II.

Keaton counted *The General* among his favorite films and it has since been hailed a masterpiece. But, in 1926, it was not so well received. It faced harsh reviews and slow attendance, and thanks to a budget



larger than any previous Keaton feature, it lost money. It took decades for its reputation to rise from failure to classic. In 2012, it was ranked 35th in *Sight and Sound's* "Greatest Films of All Time" poll, and it placed in the magazine's top ten in 1972 and 1982.

Two historic finds relating to *The General* recently surfaced: a treasure trove of photographs and nitrate negatives taken by a local Cottage Grove photographer during the production of the film, and a copy of the original script that belonged to co-screenwriter Clyde Bruckman. Both were acquired by the Buster Keaton Society, which will present the material to the public for the first time at its 2014 Convention in October. Together, these finds will enrich our knowledge of the production of *The General* and perhaps offer more insight to the working methods of Keaton. The Buster Keaton Society has plans to publish a book showcasing the discoveries, but, as of this screening, the secrets of these invaluable documents remain a tantalizing promise.

—SEAN AXMAKER





THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

Live Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

Directed by Robert Wiene, Germany, 1920

Cast Werner Krauss (Dr. Caligari) Conrad Veidt (Cesare) Friedrich Fehér (Francis) Lil Dagover (Jane) Hans Heinrich von Twardowski (Alan) Rudolph Lettinger (Dr. Olsen) Ludwig Rex (The murderer) Elsa Wagner (The hostess) Henri Peters-Arnolds (Young doctor) Hans Lanser-Rudolff (Old man) Rudolf Klein-Rogge (Criminal)

Original Language Title *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* **Production** Decla Film **Producers** Erich Pommer and Rudolf Meinert **Scenario** Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz **Photography** Willy Hameister **Optical Effects** Ernst Kunstmann **Art Direction** Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig **Costumes** Walter Reimann

Print Source Kino Lorber Films

If cinema came to be the troubled, fanciful, sensual, neurotic unconscious of human culture in the 20th century, feeding us lurid, wild images and scenarios in response to our twisted inner hungers and greatest fears as we simultaneously feed it history, phobias, narcissism, prejudices, and lust—if then, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is something like the first nightmare, the first cave painting on the dank walls of modernity. One of the most seen and talked-about films ever made, its release instantly transformed the new entertainment medium, already evolved from a novelty into an escapist narrative engine that ran on the octane of semi-conscious empathy, into something new. Or, several somethings: an avant-garde blockbuster bomb, a radical warping of “reality,” a proto-Goth puppet-show critique of postwar trauma. Or: an undeniable visual-attack evocation of how modern, post-traditional civilization *feels*, not merely how it actually looks.

That last one is the most formidable step into the abyss. German expressionism was born here—while the generalized expressionist credo that the function of art is to manifest the artist’s feelings about her subject and/or the world had already been in play for years in other media, film was still the baby, the be-

loved bastard offspring of theater and photography. Since it was always uniquely expensive to produce and exhibit, cinema was largely defined by its ability to entertain mass audiences. This gestalt forced most movies to give priority to narrative, to develop the syntax with which to tell stories clearly, simply, and stirringly.

But Modernism had already landed, and Art became not merely a vehicle for entertainment or exaltation

CALIGARI is where moviegoers saw Modernism’s lightning strike.

or Representationalism as it had traditionally been, but an end unto itself: a higher calling, perhaps among others but surmounted by none. God was dead, and the man-made object, text, or vision became our utmost sublimity.

Caligari is where moviegoers saw Modernism’s lightning strike. Here, the modus operandi was basically

theatrical, but it is precisely that achievement—the unsettlingly fake Germany the characters walk around in, with its painted shadows and leaning walls and funhouse-mirror doorways and streets that look like cockeyed hallways—that changed everything. Suddenly, an unschooled global audience was confronted with a movie of pure aesthetic intent. As brisk as the pulpy story of *Caligari* may be, there’s no watching the film and not fathoming the larger statement made in every distinctive frame.

Most famously, that statement has been pegged as a traumatized, embittered view of the world that had just lived through the catastrophe of World War I. Seeing the fundamental physical wrongness of the movie's universe as a psychological state or as a critique of a modern society turned inside out, or both, still resounds. *Caligari's* narrative—the tale of a small Alpine town besieged by a mad carnival doctor and his prophetic, murderous somnambulist—is a Gothic horror movie template, perfectly suited to support claims on our attention made by the film's visionary conception and what it means. But the screenwriters, Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer, having first been inspired by a hypnosis sideshow act, were forced to attach a framing device by producer Erich Pommer, who was understandably squeamish about the film and the design team's revolutionary ideas. Spoiler: the framing scenes present the story as told by the hero, played by Friedrich Fehér, sitting on a park bench, in a context that's both dreamy and somewhat normal. After Caligari has been caught and the zombie-like Cesare has been eradicated, this park bench is revealed to be part of an asylum's grounds, and Fehér's eager storyteller a raving psychopath under the care of the perfectly nurturing Caligari.

You can understand the screenwriters' reluctance to include this Freudian flourish. (Director Robert Wiene, selected after Fritz Lang passed, is not on record as having cared.) On one hand, the framing story obliterates the statement made by the film's lurid, hyperbolic design—the sense that postwar society is a fractured, twisted horror—by turning it into the subjective viewpoint of a madman. “Falsifying” was the word Lotte Eisner used. On the other hand, the park bench aside, the framing story in the asylum is shot on the same sets, and brimming with the same design lunacy, as the rest of the film. This slippery but unmistakable fact negates any need for the maniac's perspective framing setup, dulling its ostensible shock value and cementing the screenwriters' original intention. The 20th century is still sick in the soul, regardless of the storyteller's dementia. Or, perhaps *Caligari's* physical essence, and whether it

represents the point of view of the filmmakers or the characters, is a question best pondered at a haunted remove and left unanswered. Any confusion that arises can only suit this qualmy little film down to its grubbiest greasepaint corners.

Form complements content in ways never seen before, but the content itself was fresh as well. Pathological creepiness with a soup-base of Freudian mystery-solving was already in the cultural mix, of course, but as in Robert Reinert's *Nerven* (1919), it was a matter of individual internal torment, some neurosis plaguing the hero or heroine. *Caligari* was the first film that dared to convert the private dramas and traumas of psychotherapeutic illness into a public object. Suddenly, the maddened landscape of the psychologically wracked becomes the world we're in, having in reality proven itself capable of self-destruction and irrationality on a humongous scale. Amid other early 20th century shock-of-the-new art movements, cinema's expressionism awakens us to the possibility of a public pathology—a state of communal lunacy.

The film bears the distinction of piloting this modernist way of seeing while also manifesting a frank terror of the new century's progress. Even the idea of a “somnambulist” as a subhuman specter trapped in a permanent state of controllable unconsciousness exhibits an old-fashioned distrust of the powers of hypnosis, which had only become well known as a therapeutic tool a few decades earlier. By any standard, *Caligari* became a vexing paradigm in contemporary culture, and its influence cannot be itemized. The film oversaw a rush of subsequent expressionism that co-opted its pessimistic dread but tempered the visual design with

real shadows, detailed miniatures, camera tricks, and semi-realistic sets. Evolving away from *Caligari's* extremes, the aesthetic became a lingua franca for ambitious filmmakers everywhere, later for film noir in America and then nearly every nation and genre. Of course, *Caligari's* screenplay totems, from the lurking stalker figure to the twist-ending framing device, became so ubiquitous it's impossible to imagine cinema history, and life, without them.

For such a well-known landmark, *Caligari* has not been the beneficiary of the greatest achievements in preservation that money can buy. In the heyday of film culture, before home video, *Caligari* was available in beat-up 16mm TV prints; in the '80s, every public-domain VHS company put out an edition, stamped from those same timeworn copies. Even the subsequent restorations available since on DVD have been muddy, decayed, and afflicted. Such is the de-

parture from the norm of this new digital restoration, accomplished in 2014 by the F.W. Murnau Foundation and Cineteca Bologna, that the most seasoned Caligarian will find his or her knees weakening in the gaslight of its clarity.

What was once an antique mirror unsilvering before our eyes is now clear as a window, and whatever you decide you miss in terms of ancient tarnish is paltry compared to being able to see the film's physical universe in stunning detail, as it was seen in 1920. It is a precise and grand tour de force, as conscientious of its effects and intents as any modern blockbuster. This *Caligari* is essentially a new film experience—if not an entirely new film. The madness lives again.

—MICHAEL ATKINSON



Werner Krauss, Conrad Veidt, and Lil Dagover

THE SCREEN IN REVIEW

CRITICAL COMMENT ON RECENT RELEASES

BY AGNES SMITH

A STRANGE new type of picture has been shown recently in New York City. Originally purchased by the Goldwyn Company merely to be studied as a model for possible new effects, it finally has been tried out on the public. Having seen it previously to its first public showing in America, I am somewhat baffled by it. I know what I personally think of it, but what the motion-picture public will think of it is another matter. If I come right out and say that it is one of the most important and significant productions of the year, some Picture-Play reader is likely to misunderstand me and ask the editor to have me committed to an insane asylum.

"Doctor Caligari and His Cabinet," as the picture is called, is a German production. It is an excellent example of the workings of a morbid, scientific Teutonic mind. And it is also an example of the imaginative stagecraft that has made the German theaters the finest in the world. No American director would have had the cold nerve to produce a futuristic picture with settings inspired by the drawings of Picasso and Matisse. In this country, futuristic art is a joke—and an old joke at that.

But to the reviewer, a picture with a story that might have been conceived by Edgar Allan Poe, and with settings that are both weird and effective, is a dazzling and beautiful novelty. To the average motion-picture patron who takes his wife and children for a quiet evening at the movies, all this scenery cut on the bias is likely to be as pleasant as a trip through a lunacy ward. And so "Doctor Caligari" may not reach the theaters throughout the country. That, I presume, will depend largely on its reception at the Capitol Theater in New York.

Although you may never see "Doctor Caligari," you ought to know about it because you will feel its influence in other pictures that are to come. It contains the germ of a great production idea and while American directors have not had the courage to blaze new trails away from convention, they probably will not be slow to follow a good road once it has been pointed out to them. "Doctor Caligari" may seem queer and ridiculous to those who have been trained to enjoy the routine movie, but it is only by experimenting with the queer, the ridiculous, and the out of the ordinary that motion pictures can hope to escape from machinelike precision and utter banality.

I have told you that the story suggests Poe. Its hero is a lunatic, and the narrative of the picture is his autobiography. He tells you the story of Dr. Caligari, a magician who goes about to country fairs exhibiting a somnambulist. The corpse-like sleep walker suggests and commits all kinds of crimes. For six reels the picture gives you a fairly



It is a dazzling and beautiful novelty.

accurate and psychologically correct idea of the workings of an insane man's mind. It is not a pretty idea, but you must admit that it is something absolutely new.

From the public's point of view, "Doctor Caligari" will be interesting because of its bizarre settings. It has no natural scenery; its backgrounds are the distorted inventions of an imagination gone mad. It is so extreme that you may take it either as a weird mystery story or as a comic novelty.

The significance of the production to American directors is the fact that it hints at a new way of telling stories on the screen. Most pictures are presented merely in terms of action. That is to say, the director tells his story in the way that the average hack fiction writer tells his story. American directors, especially, have developed a habit of dealing in externals. In adapting novels and plays to the screen, they have carefully followed the action and have told us merely what the characters did and how they looked. But they did not indicate what these characters thought, what they felt, or how their minds worked.

"Doctor Caligari" unfolds its story as a series of impressions. It tells, not the story of a man, but the story of a man's mind. D.W. Griffith succeeded in getting some impressionistic effects in "Broken Blossoms" and in "Way Down East." In "Broken Blossoms" you saw Battling Burrows not as he looked in real life, but as he appeared to his terror-stricken daughter. In "Way Down East" you see, in flashes, not Anna Moore, but a picture of idealized innocence.

"Doctor Caligari," with its weird and terrible story, is a consistent development of an idea that has been only half realized by American directors. It is an idea that is worth encouraging, because it brings to the screen a third dimension that it has hitherto lacked. It shows us that motion pictures can be made of mental as well as physical action.

If you take the children to see "Doctor Caligari" just because I have said it is an interesting picture, don't blame me if they have nightmares.

Excerpted from the June 1921 issue of Picture-Play magazine. Along with several other releases that month, Smith also reviewed another German import, Ernst Lubitsch's Gypsy Blood, starring Pola Negri; an adaptation of J.M. Barrie's Sentimental Tommy, directed by John Robertson; and a Mack Sennett comedy, which she recommended for those "who like their movies to move."



PROGRAM BOOK CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Atkinson writes on film for the *Village Voice*, *Sight and Sound*, and *In These Times* and is the author of seven books, including *Ghosts in the Machine: Speculations on the Dark Heart of Pop Cinema*.

Sean Axmaker is a contributing writer for Today.com, Turner Classic Movies, Keyframe, and Cinephiled and is the managing editor of Parallax View.

Marilyn Ferdinand, a member of the Online Film Critics Society, blogs at Ferdy on Films and Fandor. She raises funds for film preservation and has published on the subject in *Humanities* magazine.

David Kiehn is the author of *Broncho Billy and the Essanay Film Company* and historian for the Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum in Fremont, California.

Shari Kizirian is a freelance editor and writer as well as a regular contributor to Fandor's Keyframe blog. She is coeditor of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival program book.

Margarita Landazuri writes about cinema for Turner Classic Movies, International Documentary, and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, among other outlets. She is coeditor of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival program book.

Monica Nolan is a novelist who has written about film and culture for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Release Print*, *Bitch* magazine, Frameline, and the San Francisco Film Society.

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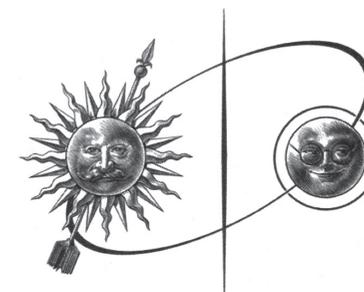
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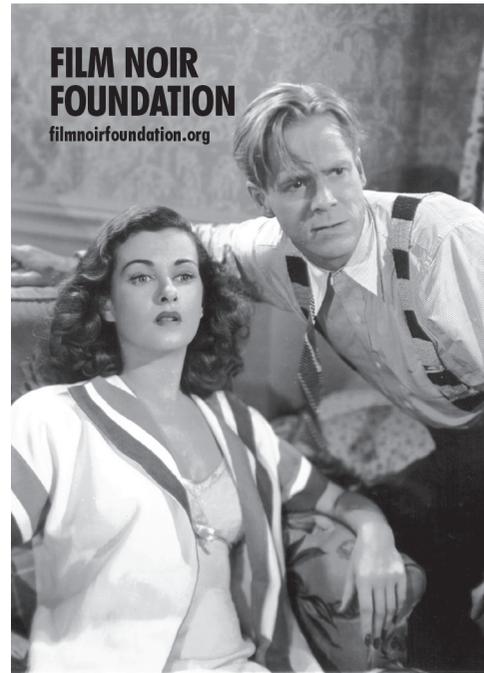


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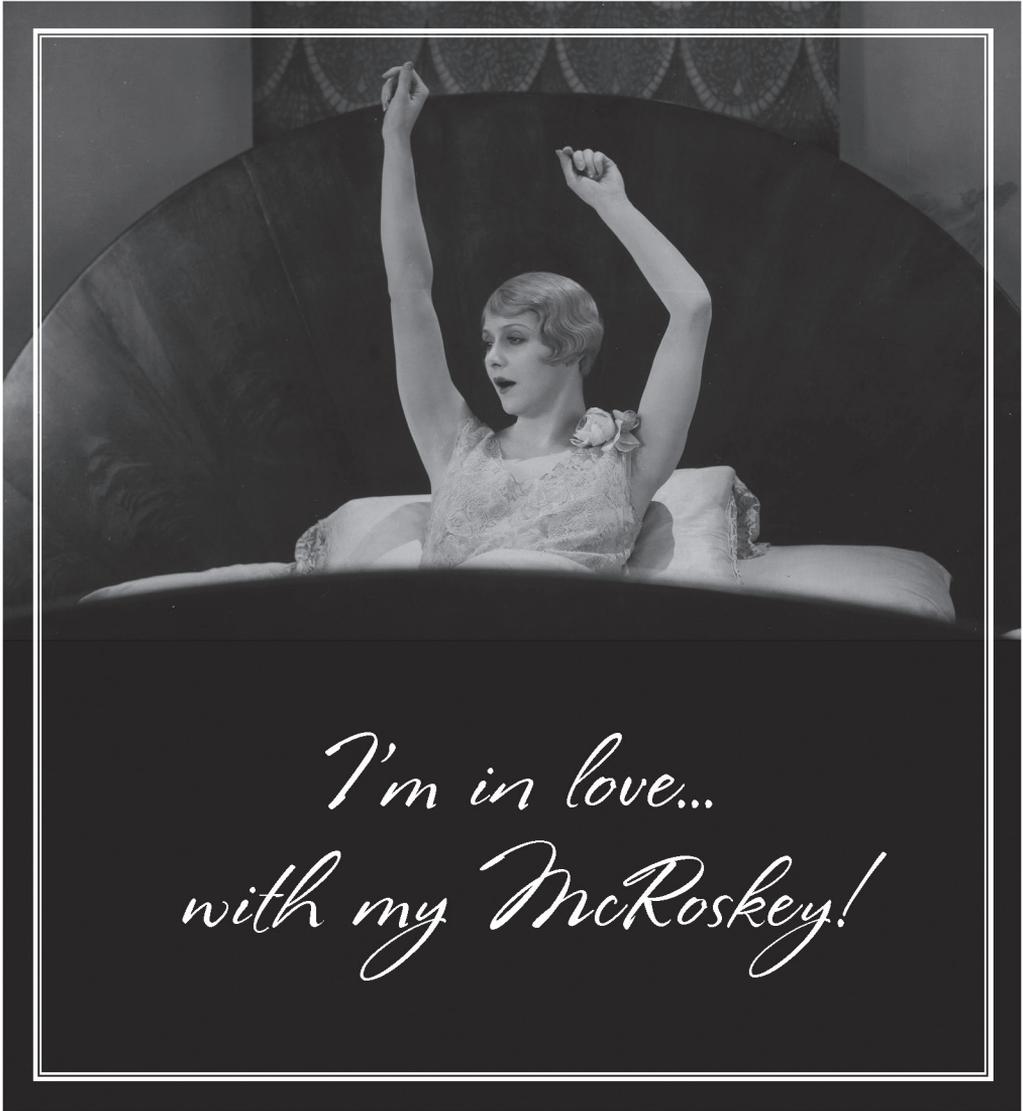
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