



THE 5TH ANNUAL
SAN FRANCISCO
SILENT
FILM FESTIVAL

July 9th 2000 · Castro Theatre



THE MAJESTIC

AmericanAirlines®

PROGRAM ONE · 11:00AM

THE CLASH OF THE WOLVES

Piano Accompaniment by Jon Mirsalis

Special Guest Ariel Gilbert and Deanne of Guide Dogs for the Blind

AUTHOR SIGNING · 1:05PM

William Mann *The Biograph Girl*

PROGRAM TWO · 1:20PM

THE PEACH GIRL

Piano Accompaniment by Kevin Purrone

AUTHOR SIGNING · 3:30PM

William Drew *At the Center of the Frame*

Emily Lieder *Becoming Mae West*

PROGRAM THREE · 4:00PM

THE WEDDING MARCH

Chris Elliott on the Mighty Castro Wurlitzer

Special Guest Fay Wray

AUTHOR SIGNING · 6:30PM

Arthur Lennig *Stroheim*

AUTHOR SIGNING · 8:00PM

John Bengtson *Silent Echoes*

PROGRAM FOUR · 8:30PM

STEAMBOAT BILL, JR.

Accompaniment by Alloy Orchestra

Special Guest John Bengtson *Silent Echoes*

IRONSTONE
VINEYARDS



THE CLASH OF THE WOLVES (1925)

Piano Accompaniment by Jon Mirsalis

Introduction by Stephen Salmons

CAST Rin-Tin-Tin *Lobo* Nanette *Lobo's Mate* June Marlowe *May Barstowe* Charles Farrell *Dave Weston* William Walling *Sam Barstowe* Heinie Conklin *Alkali Bill* Pat Hartigan *William "Borax" Horton*
DIRECTED BY Noel Mason Smith PHOTOGRAPHY Alan Thompson and E.B. Dupar SCREENPLAY
Charles A. Logue FILM EDITING Clarence Kolster ART DIRECTION Lewis Geib and Esdras Hartley
SPECIAL EFFECTS F.N. Murphy ART TITLES Victor Vance PRODUCTION COMPANY Warner
Brothers Pictures PRINT SOURCE The Library of Congress

COMING ATTRACTION TRAILERS *Blood and Sand* (1922) *In the Days of Daniel Boone* (1923) *The Silent Flyer* (1926) CARTOON *Koko Plays Pool* (1927) an Inkwell Imps cartoon produced and directed by Max and Dave Fleischer PRINT SOURCE The UCLA Film & Television Archive

Rin-Tin-Tin started his life in an unlikely and dangerous place: in the back of a bombed-out German bunker in September of 1918. His mother was a member of the German Dog Corps, which participated in the rescuing of

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GUARDIAN

injured soldiers. Rin-Tin-Tin would have starved along with his four litter mates if Corporal Lee Duncan of the 136th Aero Division hadn't been on patrol that morning with his Commanding Officer. Rescuing the family from behind a collapsed wall, they each adopted two of the pups. Lee named his two new friends Rin-Tin-Tin and Nanette.

Many airmen in WWI wore a good luck charm featuring a pair of small dolls, named for two lovers who had reportedly survived the collapse of a railway tunnel during an air strike. Little figurines of the couple, named Rin-Tin-Tin and Nanette, appeared all over France, created by peasant women who sold them to American airmen. Rin-Tin-Tin would indeed become Lee Duncan's good luck charm.

Nanette died of pneumonia after the war, and Lee decided to move to California. He provided Rinty with a new companion, which he named Nanette II, and started entering him in competitions. In September of 1922 Rinty appeared at the Ambassador show in Los Angeles, where he won the event with a record-breaking jump of 11½ feet. A photographer from Novograph Pictures captured the jump on film, and the footage was released in a short featuring the

wonder dog known as Rin-Tin-Tin. Upon receiving an unsolicited check from Novograph for \$350, Lee decided to get Rinty into the movies. He quit his day job and devoted himself to pitching the wonder dog to all the studios.

They were met with little interest until they visited a new studio located in an old barn, owned and operated by the Warner brothers. A crew was attempting to film an uncooperative wolf that had been borrowed from the Los Angeles Zoo. Boasting that his German Shepherd could do better, Lee persuaded the director to give Rinty a try. The movie was *The Man from Hell's River* (1922), and Rin-Tin-Tin was hailed for his innate acting ability. The Warner brothers took notice and immediately signed Lee and Rinty to a contract. He was given his first starring role in *Where the North Begins* (1923), and he instantly became America's favorite screen dog.

Rinty's initial contract was for \$250 a week plus 10% of the gross. At the height of his success he was earning \$6,000 a month, and he had his own limousine, valet and chef.

The Clash of the Wolves (1925) was Rin-Tin-Tin's seventh film and also stars Charles Farrell, who became a popular romantic lead opposite Janet

Gaynor in the late twenties, and June Marlowe, who is best remembered as the teacher in the *Little Rascals* shorts of the 1930's. This was Rinty's first film with comedic content, and he was directed to show a lighter side in many of the scenes. Cast in the familiar role of a wolf, Lobo, he had to do all the usual stunts, including running, falling and jumping, but he was also made to suffer the indignity of wearing a fake beard and leather booties. This appalled one critic at *The New York Times*, but the populace seemed to enjoy it. *The Clash of the Wolves* turned out to be as big a box office success as his six previous films.

Warner Bros. produced 15 Rin-Tin-Tin films in all, including two successful talkies, then released Rinty and Lee Duncan from their contract on December 31, 1929. According to a memo from a high ranking executive at Warner Bros., "the making of any animal pictures is not in keeping with the policy adopted by [Warner Bros.]

for talking pictures...because dogs don't talk."

On August 8, 1932, while playing with Lee Duncan on the front lawn of their Beverly Hills home, Rin-Tin-Tin suddenly collapsed. According to legend, Jean Harlow, who was living across the street at the time, witnessed Rinty's trouble, ran over to help, and cradled him in her arms as he passed peacefully away. This is almost certainly the stuff of studio publicity, but more than one source has confirmed it as true.

Rinty was returned to Europe and interred in the Cimetière des Chiens (et Autres Animaux Exotiques) in the Parisian suburb of Asnieres by the river Seine. Lee Duncan continued to raise and train descendants of Rin-Tin-Tin, one of whom starred in a popular television series in the 1950's. He died at his ranch near Riverside, California in 1960.

—MATTHEW LIPSON

The Clash of the Wolves was preserved by The Library of Congress Motion Picture Conservation Center from a nitrate positive donated to the library as part of the AFI/National Film Board of South Africa Collection. It is the mission of the Center to actively conserve, preserve and restore film held in the collections of the Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. Since 1970 the MPCC has preserved over 15,000 feature films, television programs and short subjects, making the Library the largest publicly funded motion picture preservation organization in the United States.



桃花泣血記

PEACH BLOSSOM WEEPS TEARS OF BLOOD/THE PEACH GIRL (1931)

Piano accompaniment by Kevin Purrone

Introduction by Richard J. Meyer

CAST Lily Yuen (Ruan Lingyu) Miss Lim Raymond King (Jin Yan) King Teh-en SY.Li Mrs. King Wong Kwai-ling Loo Chi Chow Lee-lee Lim's Mother Y.C. Lay Chow Chuen Chuen Han Lan-ken Slim Liu Chi Chuen Fatty SUPERVISED BY Lo Ming Yau WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY Richard Poh (Bu Wancang) PRODUCTION MANAGER Lay Min Wei PHOTOGRAPHY Wing Siao Fen SETTINGS F.L. Chao PRODUCTION COMPANY Lianhua Film Company PRINT SOURCE The China Film Archive

Ruan Lingyu, the ill-fated star of *The Peach Girl*, lived a life that could have been lifted from one of her films. Born into poverty in Guangdong province, she escaped to Shanghai just as it was blossoming into the

Hollywood of the East. She achieved instant stardom and inspired a fanatical devotion from the moviegoing public. But the beloved Lily Yuen, as she was also known, who had portrayed so many tragic women in movies, was dead at the age of 25, a deliberate overdose of sleeping pills the cause of her demise. Her funeral was attended by tens of thousands of adoring fans. Enraptured by her celebrity and distraught by her death, three women killed themselves in tribute, leaving suicide notes despairing that life was no longer worth living without Lily Yuen.

Since the first screening of Lumière *actualités* at the Xu Yuan teahouse on August 11, 1896, Shanghai had been at the center of the Chinese film industry. Although a fragmented China was contending with feudalism, civil strife, the greed of Western powers and invasions by Japanese military, Shanghai somehow remained a thriving, cosmopolitan city.

Ruan Lingyu came to Shanghai in 1921, a year of terrific growth in the Chinese film industry – 140 production companies registered as new businesses in Shanghai that year alone. Just sixteen years old and with no formal training, she auditioned for Bu Wancang, a young director at the Mingxing (Star) Film Company. He

hired Ruan without hesitation, based purely on her screen presence.

Chinese cinema in the twenties was drawn mostly from a style of popular fiction known as Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies (Yuanyang hudie), which consisted of melodramatic love stories, martial arts and murder mysteries. After a year of playing small parts in a series of these Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly films, Ruan's career took off, and she was given her first leading role.

Problems, however, took root in her personal life. Ruan's husband, who was abusive and irresponsible, left her and their adopted daughter, but continued to rely on her financial success to bail him out of trouble. She agreed to support him privately in order to avoid shameful publicity.

Just as in Hollywood, Chinese production companies learned the value of promoting popular stars like Ruan Lingyu in movie magazines with doctored tales of real life that the stars were expected to emulate. This studio practice placed great demands on her, exacerbating her personal troubles.

In the 1930's, the social and political climate in China changed. Chiang Kai-shek and Koumintang seized Shanghai and began consolidating their power throughout China.

Censorship became a priority for the new government as soon as it realized the influential role of movies in shaping public opinion. A review board similar to the Hays office was established to approve screenplays and films.

Those with opposing political ideologies were also beginning to see the potential for social change in films. Luo Mingyou, founder of the largest production company in China at the time, Lianhua Studios, hoped to improve the lives of the Chinese people by making films that rejected Western influences and emphasized China's own rich cultural history. He replaced the Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly films with rural dramas that depicted the corrupting effect of Western ideas and the often tragic results. *The Peach Girl* is one example of Mingyou's efforts.

Ruan Lingyu thrived in this socially conscious environment. Her natural ability "to evoke passion in her every expression," as one contemporary reviewer noted, won the hearts of filmgoers. She worked with the most respected directors and the most popular actors, such as her co-star in *The Peach Girl*, Jin Yan.

The Peach Girl foreshadows Ruan's own unhappy end, with its tale of a

country girl who is seduced by the promise of a love that leads only to her ruin. Following the success of *The Peach Girl*, considered by many contemporary critics to be the best film by Lianhua Studios, Ruan fell in love with a wealthy tea merchant. Unfortunately he turned out to be just as unfaithful and abusive as her first husband, who reappeared at this time and attempted to sue her for more money. All of it was reported in the insatiable tabloids, compounding her personal and legal problems.

On the night of March 7, 1935, after attending a studio party, Ruan Lingyu prepared a bowl of rice porridge containing 30 barbitone-sodium pills. She composed two suicide notes, one for her boyfriend and one for the media. In her note to the press she lamented her situation as a public figure, writing that "gossip is fearful."

Tragedy may have followed Ruan Lingyu both onscreen and off, but her fans were always devoted to her, even to this day. In 1992, the celebrated Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan created the cinematic paean *Actress* (Centre Stage), and as recently as 1998 the city of Shanghai erected a statue in her honor.

—SHARI KIZIRIAN



THE WEDDING MARCH (1928)

Chris Elliott on the Mighty Castro Wurlitzer
Introduction by Judy Sheldon

CAST Erich von Stroheim Prince Nicki Fay Wray Mitzi Schrammell ZaSu Pitts Cecelia Schweisser Mathew Betz Schani Eberle George Fawcett Prince von Wildeliebe-Rauffenburg Maude George Princess von Wildeliebe-Rauffenburg Dale Fuller Mrs. Schrammell Cesare Gravina Martin Schrammell Hughie Mack Schani's father
PRODUCED BY Pat Powers DIRECTED BY Erich von Stroheim SCREENPLAY Erich von Stroheim and Harry Carr PHOTOGRAPHY Hal Mohr ART DIRECTION Richard Day DISTRIBUTED BY Paramount Pictures PRINT SOURCE Photoplay Productions and The Library of Congress

Fay Wray spent the first three years of her life in Alberta, Canada, where her father ran a sawmill. The family came to America in 1911 and settled first in Arizona, then moved to Utah following a reversal of family fortune. In

1923 she was brought to Los Angeles by a family friend who introduced her to people working in the still-fledgling film industry of Hollywood.

Her first job was as an extra at the Century comedy studio, where she made her debut appearance in the movies as a Charleston-dancing clown. By 1926 she had become a contract player at Universal Pictures, where she was featured mostly in westerns, including *Lazy Lightning* directed by William Wyler, and she was named to the Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers "WAMPAS Baby Stars" list of up-and-coming starlets, along with Joan Crawford, Dolores Del Rio and Mary Astor.

Erich Oswald Stroheim was born in Vienna in 1885 and emigrated to America in 1909, altering his name to Erich Oswald Hans Carl Maria von Stroheim. He entered pictures in 1914 as an actor and assistant to D.W. Griffith, whom he always claimed as his mentor, and in 1919 he directed and played the lead in his first film, *Blind Husbands*. His keen attention to detail, composition, gesture and character quickly earned him a reputation for producing the most sophisticated adult dramas on the American screen. Fay Wray has said that if there was an aura of quality at Universal at the time she worked there, it was left over from

the films Stroheim had made there a few years earlier.

Stroheim's quest for perfection led to extravagance in every detail of his productions, putting him in constant conflict with his budget-minded producers. Studio heads did not share Stroheim's penchant for shooting extensive footage, which he saw as necessary to ensure complete artistic control during the editing process, nor were they enthused by his desire to make films that were much longer than the commercial norm, in order to explore the psychology of his characters in greater depth.

The critical and popular success of *The Merry Widow* (1925), enabled Stroheim to attract an independent producer, Pat Powers, to his next project, a melancholic homage to Hapsburg Vienna which was to be the culmination of themes he had explored in many of his films against a backdrop of pre-WWI European society. Filming started in June of 1926, with Stroheim assembling the cast from his stock company of players: Maude George from *The Devil's Pass Key* and *Foolish Wives*, ZaSu Pitts from *Greed*, George Fawcett from *The Merry Widow*, and Dale Fuller and Cesare Gravina from nearly all his films.

For the crucial role of Mitzi, Stroheim felt a new face was needed, a girl with the right combination of innocence and sensuality. Among the numerous applicants was a 19-year-old named Fay Wray, who remembered the meeting in Stroheim's office years later, calling it "a really tremendous experience for me. He paced up and down telling the story, and I simply listened. Finally he said to me, 'Do you think you could play Mitzi?' and I said 'I know I can!' He extended his hand and said, 'Good bye, Mitzi.'" Overcome at having won the part, Wray spontaneously burst into tears, which Stroheim responded to with joy ("Oh! Oh! I can work with her!"). He signed her without a test.

Stroheim had originally envisioned his project as two films, with *The Wedding March* serving as part one. Part two, *The Honeymoon*, was partially completed when Pat Powers had to abandon the financing, and the entire production was turned over to Paramount. Further shooting was cancelled, and Stroheim spent the next seven months assembling the footage into a six hour film, which was then taken away from him and edited down to two hours. Paramount chose to release *The Wedding March* by itself in America, and an 81-minute version of *The Honeymoon* was distributed briefly in Europe. The sole surviving

print of *The Honeymoon* was destroyed in a fire at the Cinematheque Francaise in 1957, five days after Stroheim's death.

The Wedding March made Fay Wray a star, and she went on to become a prominent leading lady in the 1930's. Though she occupies a very special place in film history as the heroine in *King Kong* (1933) and the imperilled Scream Queen of such films as *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932), *Doctor X* (1932), and *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933), she also delivered memorable performances in *The Unholy Garden* (1931), *One Sunday Afternoon* (1933), *The Affairs of Cellini* (1934) and *Viva Villa* (1934), among many others. She retired from the movies in the late fifties to devote herself to writing, and her aptly-named autobiography *On the Other Hand* appeared in 1989.

In 1997, Kevin Brownlow and Patrick Stanbury of Photoplay Productions undertook a restoration of *The Wedding March*, inspired by Fay Wray's vivid account of the production. Working with The Library of Congress, they have produced a print that matches the reedited version created by Erich von Stroheim at the Cinémathèque Française in 1954.

—REBECCA PETERS



The
Booksmith



STEAMBOAT BILL, JR. (1928)

Accompaniment by Alloy Orchestra
Introduction by Frank Buxton

CAST Buster Keaton William Canfield, Jr. Ernest Torrence *Steamboat Bill* Tom Lewis Tom Carter Tom McGuire John James King Marion Byron Mary King PRODUCED BY Joseph M. Schenck DIRECTED BY Charles F. Reisner PHOTOGRAPHY Dev Jennings and Bert Haines SCREENPLAY Carl Harbaugh FILM EDITING J.S. Kell TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Fred Gabourie ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Sandy Roth DISTRIBUTED BY United Artists PRINT SOURCE Film Preservation Associates

It's appropriate that the elaborate set-piece of *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* is a cyclone. Legend has it that when Joseph Francis "Buster" Keaton was born in Piqua, Kansas on October 4, 1895, there was a gigantic windstorm.



THE MAJESTIC
San Francisco's Leading Hotel

And when he was just twenty months old, he was supposedly sucked out of an open dressing room window by an actual cyclone, which deposited him unharmed some four blocks away. These incidents not only presaged Keaton's tumultuous career, but they also served as fodder for his comedic imagination, to be used and re-used in many of his films.

Buster Keaton was born into a theatrical family. His parents, Joe and Myra, had a traveling medicine show, and Buster joined the act as soon as he knew how to crawl. The Three Keatons became a vaudeville sensation, touring the United States and England from 1897 to 1917.

A popular part of the act involved Joe throwing Buster around the stage, into the wings, and even at the audience on occasion. Buster became known as "The Human Mop" and "The Child That Cannot Be Damaged" because he was able to take falls with comedic, acrobatic skill and without serious injury. His name, in fact, derived from the observation of a fellow performer who, witnessing Buster do a fall down a flight of stairs, declared the kid "a buster." Buster attributed his famous frozen face to the early years of being batted about, claiming he got knew at a very young age that he got bigger laughs if he didn't smile.

When Joe finally broke up the act in 1917, Buster continued his stage career as a solo performer in *The Passing Show of 1917* on Broadway. A chance meeting – and his own natural curiosity about the mechanics of filmmaking – propelled him into the world of cinematic comedy.

Invited to visit the Talmadge Studios on East 48th Street in Manhattan, he was asked to join the cast of *The Butcher Boy* (1917), in which he played a supporting role to the very popular Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. Arbuckle would become Buster's teacher, mentor and friend. "Everything I know about making movies I learned from Roscoe," Keaton always said.

Enraptured by filmmaking, he made 15 two-reelers with Arbuckle's Comique Film Corporation over the next three years. In 1920 Arbuckle signed a lucrative contract with Paramount Pictures, and the Comique Film Corporation was turned into the Keaton Studios.

Steamboat Bill, Jr. (1928) was the last film Keaton made over which he had writing and directorial control. Set on the banks of the Mississippi (and filmed on the Sacramento River), the climactic set-piece was originally conceived as a flood, and construction

LA NOUVELLE PATISSERIE

for the sequence was nearing completion when a devastating flood of the real Mississippi caused the studio to cancel Keaton's plan. Forced to go over schedule and over budget, Keaton proposed a cyclone, and he began preparing for the new scenes. He brought in airplane engines to simulate the cyclone effect and constructed break-away buildings which could fly apart or collapse when needed.

The cyclone has its roots in Keaton's past, and there are many such autobiographical references in the film. In the sequence where Buster is caught in an abandoned theater during the cyclone, he shows us several artifacts of his vaudeville days: the magician's disappearing cabinet, the secret to which Buster reveals in the film, and the frightening ventriloquist's dummy, which refers to an incident from Buster's childhood when he was trapped in a suitcase with just such a doll for several hours.

One of the most iconic images in *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* involves a break-away building that was carefully constructed to collapse around Keaton without harming him. By strategically positioning himself beneath a second-story window, he was able to create a death-defying visual gag that still invokes awe. Had his calculations been off by even two inches he would

have been driven into the ground like a tent peg.

There has been much speculation about why Buster would attempt such a potentially suicidal stunt. During the production of *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* Keaton learned that his production company was being disbanded and his services were being sold to MGM, where he would no longer have creative control. In addition his wife was divorcing him, changing the names of his children so they would no longer bear his name. He himself was quoted as saying he was angry and didn't much care what happened to him.

This amazing sight gag continues to inspire filmmakers and artists to this day. Jackie Chan paid homage to Buster Keaton by restaging the stunt in his 1987 action farce *Project A, Part II*, and in 1997 the British artist Steve McQueen recreated it in his video piece *Deadpan*, for which he won the prestigious Turner Prize.

Buster Keaton made many more films, but he was rarely given the opportunity to create the breathtaking comedy that he produced in the twenties. He died in 1966 at the age of 71.

—FRANK BUXTON

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