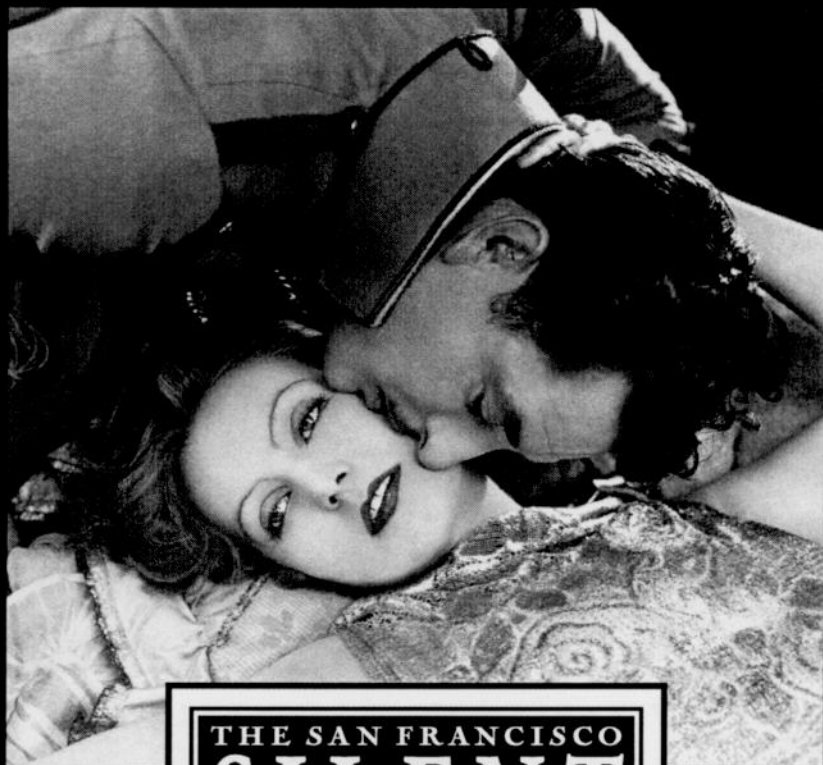


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THE SAN FRANCISCO
SILENT
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PRESENTS

VITAPHONE VAUDEVILLE
INTOLERANCE
FLESH AND THE DEVIL

December 1, 2007
Castro Theatre

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

PROGRAM ONE 11:00AM

VITAPHONE VAUDEVILLE

Special Guest ROBERT GITT UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE

AUTHOR SIGNING 12:40PM
ANTHONY SLIDE

NOW PLAYING: HAND-PAINTED POSTER ART FROM THE 1910S THROUGH THE 1950S
AND INCORRECT ENTERTAINMENT OR TRASH FROM THE PAST

PROGRAM TWO 2:00PM

INTOLERANCE

Special Guests RUSSELL MERRITT; PATRICK STANBURY PHOTOPLAY PRODUCTIONS
LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

AUTHOR SIGNING 5:15PM
MATTHEW KENNEDY JOAN BLONDELL: A LIFE BETWEEN TAKES

PROGRAM THREE 8:00PM

RIVALINDER (A WOMAN'S DUEL)

FLESH AND THE DEVIL

Special Guest CHRISTEL SCHMIDT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES



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George Burns and Gracie Allen in LAMB CHOPS (1929) Courtesy of Photofest

VITAPHONE VAUDEVILLE

BETWEEN THE ACTS AT THE OPERA (1926)
starring Willie and Eugene Howard

CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK (1928)
starring The Foy Family

HARLEM MANIA (1929)
starring The Norman Thomas Quintette

YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT (1928)
starring Butler and Brennan

DICK RICH AND HIS
MELODIOUS MONARCHS (1928)

THE OPRY HOUSE (1929)
starring The Mound City Blue Blowers

LAMB CHOPS (1929)
starring George Burns and Gracie Allen

THE HARD GUY (1930)
starring Spencer Tracy

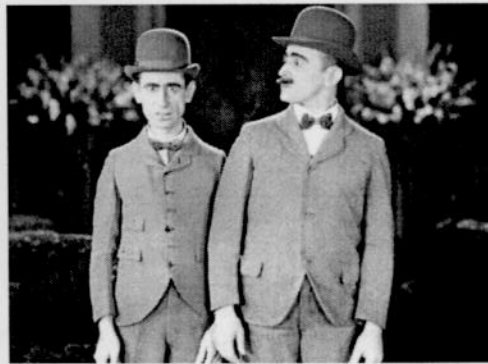
GOING PLACES (1930)
starring Shaw and Lee

"You ain't heard nothing yet." According to legend, silent films died the instant moviegoers heard Al Jolson say those five words. Yet a full year before the 1927 release of *The Jazz Singer*, Jolson had already spoken that very same phrase in *A Plantation Act*, which was shown at the premiere of Warner Brothers' synchronized sound system, the Vitaphone. There were some 200 Vitaphone films produced prior to *The Jazz Singer*.

Vitaphone does occupy a place in film history as the first synchronized-sound-and-image system to meet with commercial success. Its predecessors had failed, tarring the concept of "talking pictures." Thomas Edison's Kinetophone – introduced in 1913, abandoned by 1915 – attempted to synchronize phonograph cylinders with movies. There was also the Phonofilm and the Vivaphone, among others. France had the Chrono-Phonograph and the Phonorama. Germans endured the Synchronoscope and the Biophon.

A key to Vitaphone's success was its use of electrical recording and amplification. Originally, the phonograph was a mechanical device, which utilized a cone as both microphone and loudspeaker. Sound waves transmitted via the cone would vibrate a stylus traveling through a rotating surface of soft wax, to produce a groove. When transferred to the firmer surface of a shellac record and played, it could reproduce a tolerable copy of the original sound, loud enough to be heard in a small room. But without amplification, it could not fill even a 100-seat theater. Electrical recording and reproduction technology gave Vitaphone the power to reach the back row of a 3,000-seat movie palace, with unprecedented audio fidelity.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) created most of the technology that would make Vitaphone possible. Western Electric, the manufacturing arm of AT&T, had built a system for electrical sound recording and playback in synchronization with a motion picture as early as 1925. Yet the national telephone



Vitaphone replaced the live vaudeville acts that appeared before and between films - such as Shaw and Lee, seen here.

monopoly couldn't figure out how to sell this invention to the movie business. All the major film studios had witnessed the failure of previous "talking picture" gizmos. None of them wanted to upset their profitable apple cart by throwing away money on some new version of a proven folly.

Warner Brothers Pictures was a minor studio with major ambitions. Formed in 1910 by four brothers - Harry, Abe, Sam and Jack - it was known for producing reliable programmers. With the support of financial brokerage firm Goldman, Sachs and Company, Warner Bros. began an aggressive growth campaign in 1923, borrowing heavily to finance the acquisition of showcase theaters in New York and Hollywood and companies like American Vitagraph, one of the oldest movie studios. The Warners were after Vitagraph's North American and European film distribution exchanges, as part of their campaign to break the control over

exhibition venues held by the major studios. By the time it completed the Vitagraph deal, Warner Bros. had taken on more than five million dollars in debt.

Sam Warner would today be considered an "early adopter" of new technology. While other movie moguls viewed the advent of broadcast radio as either an annoyance or a threat, Warner realized that it could be used to sell pictures. Radio station KFWB - owned and operated by Warner Bros., equipped and engineered by Western Electric - started to broadcast on the Los Angeles airwaves in March of 1925 (and still does today).

After Sam Warner saw a demonstration of the Western Electric synchronized sound system, he convinced eldest brother Harry and Goldman-Sachs to purchase the new toy. The September, 1925 deal resulted in the creation of the Vitaphone Company, which was located in the former Vitagraph Studios in Brooklyn. Warner Bros. owned the majority interest in Vitaphone, and Western Electric - who saw no other interested parties upon the horizon - granted Vitaphone

an exclusive license to the sound system, which included the right to sublicense the technology to other producers.

Legend has it that Harry Warner responded with "Who wants to hear actors talk?" The primary selling point of all previous efforts had been the phrase "talking picture." Invariably, poor synchronization and sound quality had disappointed. Warner Bros. made a concerted effort to distance the Vitaphone system from these failures. An article in the April 26, 1926 *Film Daily* demonstrates this approach: "The invention is in no sense a 'talking picture' but a method whereby a film can be accompanied by the music cue and other musical and vocal numbers given by means of what is now known as the recording machine..." Not coincidentally, if Vitaphone proved a success, Warner Bros. would profit further by firing all the musicians and entertainers it currently had to pay to perform at their theaters.

The movie-going experience of the 1920s was different from that of the 21st century. There was always live music. Short films accompanied features. And vaudeville acts appeared before and between films. Vitaphone replaced all these elements. Their films ranged from the highbrow (Giovanni Martinelli, an Italian tenor touted as the new Caruso, who made 15 Vitaphone films between 1926 and 1931) to the lowbrow (there are better adjectives to describe a 1927 film titled *Buddy Doyle, Popular Black Faced Comedian*, but lowbrow will do). Warner Bros.' Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons started life as Vitaphone shorts.

Western Electric realized in early 1927 that other studios were unlikely to license its technology from one of their own competitors, so it forced the heavily-leveraged studio to relinquish control of the synchronized sound system. Warner Bros. was allowed to keep the Vitaphone Corporation, but it had to forfeit its partnership with AT&T, and become just another licensee of the proprietary technology.

When Western Electric first developed the Vitaphone system, it also discovered a way to encode sound on the same strip of 35mm film that contained the picture. Problems with reproduction - the granularity of film stock in use at the time didn't provide good audio fidelity, and dust on the sound track made unwanted noise - combined with unfamiliarity - the phonograph record was by now a commonly accepted object, while the idea that light could emit sound was still seen as strange - had convinced Warner Bros. to reject sound-on-film as a viable option. Much like the format wars of our time - Betamax vs. VHS, Blu-Ray vs. HD-DVD, etc. - the battle of sound-on-disc vs. sound-on-film was fought in the marketplace. Studios released movies in both formats until it became clear that exhibitors preferred the sound-on-film system, which didn't depend on an expensive phonograph disc limited to 20 plays. Warner Bros. was the

last studio to switch exclusively to sound-on-film, in 1931.

Sam Warner didn't live to see the triumph of Vitaphone. Refusing to consult a physician despite a chronic, severe headache, Sam died of infection from an abscess tooth on October 5, 1927 - one day before the New York premiere of *The Jazz Singer*.

The sound-on-disc system has left archivists and film preservationists with the difficult task of locating two separate forms of media for each film. The 1987 discovery, by Robert Gitt of the UCLA Film & Television Archive, of some 2,000 Vitaphone discs hidden at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, was a monumental event in the restitution of the Vitaphone catalogue. In response, The Vitaphone Project, a consortium

of record collectors, preservationists and expert enthusiasts founded in 1991, has located some 3,000 additional discs, and provided monetary aid in the restoration of 80 shorts and 12 features. Films and their discs are known to exist for as many as 70 shorts that are yet to be restored.

The rediscovery of the Vitaphone films provides us

with a window into a time that experienced technological and social change of a type that most of us consider unique to the present era. Yet with 1993's *Jurassic Park*, sound-on-disc returned with the debut of the Digital Theater System (DTS), which stores the soundtrack on a compact disc and uses a time code to synchronize itself to the film. Unlike the Vitaphone phonograph record, the DTS compact disc purportedly suffers no wear when played repeatedly. In a further continuation of the format wars, DTS is rivalled by Dolby Systems' AC-3, a digital sound-on-film technology.

For those interested in learning more, a wealth of information can be found on the website of The Vitaphone Project at www.vitaphoneproject.com, or by contacting Vitaphone Project founder Ron Hutchison at ron@vitaphoneproject.com.

- RICHARD HILDRETH



The Vitaphone system depended on an expensive phonograph disc limited to 20 plays.



Lillian Gish in INTOLERANCE (1916). Courtesy of Photofest

INTOLERANCE

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

UNDERWRITTEN BY TRACEY AND JIM DOYLE

CAST: Lillian Gish (The Woman Who Rocks the Cradle) JUDEAN STORY (27 A.D.): Howard Gaye (The Nazarene), Lillian Langdon (Mary the Mother), Olga Grey (Mary Magdalene), Gunther von Ritzau (Pharisee), Bessie Love (The Bride of Cana) FRENCH STORY (1572 A.D.): Margery Wilson (Brown Eyes), Eugene Pallette (Prosper Latour), Spottiswoode Aitken (Brown Eyes' Father), Ruth Handforth (Her Mother), Frank Bennett (Charles IX, King of France) BABYLONIAN STORY (539 B.C.): Constance Talmadge (The Mountain Girl), Elmer Clifton (The Rhapsode), Alfred Paget (Prince Belshazzar), Seena Owen (Princess Beloved, Attarea), Carl Stockdale (King Nabonidus) MODERN STORY (1914 A.D.): Mae Marsh (The Dear One), Fred Turner (Her Father), Robert Harron (The Boy), Sam De Grasse (Arthur Jenkins), Vera Lewis (Mary T. Jenkins) 1916 Wark Producing Corporation DIRECTOR, PRODUCER and STORY: D.W. Griffith CINEMATOGRAPHER: G.W. Bitzer EDITORS: D.W. Griffith, James Smith, Rose Smith ART DIRECTION: Walter L. Hall SET DESIGN: Frank "Huck" Wortman TITLES: D.W. Griffith, Anita Loos, Frank E. Woods RELIGIOUS ADVISORS: Rabbi Meyers, Rev. Neal Dodd PRINT SOURCE: Photoplay Productions, Ltd.

It is not surprising that D. W. Griffith set some of the great scenes in *The Birth of a Nation* during the Civil War, given his next project. Interested in conflicts that tear at the fabric of society, Griffith fought a battle within himself that pitted his vision, his talents and his nagging doubts against each other to produce one of the great movie phenomena of all time: *Intolerance*. He released it in 1916 and struggled with its financial burden and

its disappointing popular reception for the remainder of his career. *Intolerance* was not, however, the ruinous career-ending venture it is reputed to be – indeed, it was following *Intolerance* that Griffith made *Broken Blossoms* (1919) and *Way Down East* (1920), two of his most successful and popular films. Certainly Griffith never lived to see his colossal movie ensconced as an artistic landmark, considered by many as among the most influential films

ever made. There is, however, little doubt that he had fun making it. Interweaving four historical epochs over three hours in a non-linear feast of cross-cutting (there are more than 50 transitional edits between the four plot lines), *Intolerance* was a radically new film that, despite ultimately leaving some viewers confused by Lillian Gish and her rocking cradle, opened the world's eyes to the power of an emerging and increasingly complex cinematic grammar and technique.

While *Intolerance* was meant to be an epic blockbuster, it had comparatively humble origins. As was his tendency, Griffith began work on an entirely new film while still wrapping up *The Birth of a Nation*. This new film, *The Mother and the Law*, was far from a historical epic, concerning as it does the contemporary plight of a young couple torn apart by injustice amidst a tense and desperate labor strike. Unlike *The Birth of a Nation*, it did not cry out for elaborate costumes, battles scenes or historical figures. Yet, by the time

it was concluded, *The Mother and the Law* had metamorphosed into *Intolerance*; a hail of images that sweep from the fall of Babylon to the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day, from Christ's crucifixion to a modern-day public execution. As the enigmatic Griffith left little in the way of a definitive statement to explain why his modest six-reeler *The Mother and the Law* became the reeling fourteen-reeler *Intolerance*, many critics have had to look to the particular characteristics of the man behind it, in order to gain insight.

David Llewelyn Wark Griffith was born on January 22, 1875 near La Grange, Kentucky to Mary Oglesby and "Roaring Jake" Griffith, a local hero who had achieved fame as a Confederate Colonel and later as a delegate to the Kentucky Legislature. His father's death in 1885 deprived Griffith and his family of their money and privilege, forcing them to move to Louisville. It was here that David Wark discovered the theater, and he began

to alternate odd jobs with attempts at playwriting and acting. Finding success elusive in the traditional theater, Griffith gravitated to the burgeoning movie business in New York City, where he was given abundant opportunities to act, write and eventually direct. Between 1908 and 1913, Griffith was the driving force behind the Biograph Company, where he made in excess of 450 films, many of which refined fundamental camera and editing techniques. It was also at Biograph that Griffith met many of the people with whom he would collaborate for his entire career as a director, most notably cameraman Billy Bitzer. In 1914, frustrated with Biograph's tepid response to his feature-length period narrative *Judith of Bethulia*, Griffith left to form his own production company, and he immediately began work on *The Clansmen*, or *The Birth of a Nation*.

If the multiple million-dollar success of *The Birth of a Nation* gave Griffith the reputation and financial resources to do whatever he



Between 1908 and 1913, Griffith was the driving force behind the Biograph Company, where he made in excess of 450 films.

pleased in its wake, the enormity of the response and the ardency of the backlash to its controversial theme complicated his subsequent projects. Remarking on the film in 1915, Francis Hackett of the *The New Republic* called it "spiritual assassination," and the April 6th *New York Globe* referred to Griffith as "willing

to pander to depraved tastes and to foment a race antipathy that is the most sinister and dangerous feature of American life." Griffith himself vehemently defended it as a tribute to American history and a homage to the bygone Southern culture that had haunted him ever since his family's fall from privilege. Confronted with the film's overt racism, few viewers today can disagree with either Mr. Hackett or the *New York Globe*. However, the *Evening Mail* observed that the film's New York premiere "swept sophisticated audiences like prairie fire," and theaters across the country were filled for months. Amidst this outpouring of enthusiasm, the relatively humble and

most-precedented *The Mother and the Law* must have appeared very small to Griffith, and the same expansive imagination and drive to innovate that had spurred him throughout his career now compelled him to outdo himself.

The first to go was a linear plot line. In place of the chronological structure of *The Birth of a Nation* or Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914) – a source of inspiration – Griffith undertook an arching historical sweep that found its common thread in an ideologically driven theme. He had previously cut multiple story lines together around a single theme in *A Corner in Wheat* (1909) and *Home, Sweet Home* (1914). This time, Griffith's theme was intolerance or, specifically, society's tendency to restrict and defile

human freedom, love and honor. In part a thinly-veiled indictment of those who criticized *The Birth of a Nation*, in part a continued response to the perceived loss of Southern pride and personal dignity, and in part a loose framework upon which to make a single behemoth out of four separate films, *Intolerance* has few equals in film history for its sheer resourcefulness and audacity of vision.

Engaging himself in a contentious struggle to make the world's largest film, Griffith continued to work, as he always had, without any script. Only a handful of Griffith's crew were even aware that a single film, and not four separate ones, was being made. As Griffith's vision grew in scale, so too did the need for prodigious quantities of sculptors, assistant directors, elephant handlers, pyrotechnicians, and real estate. The French and Judean stories, lavish productions all by themselves, were thoroughly dominated in stature and detail by the Modern and Babylonian sequences.



D.W. Griffith's *INTOLERANCE*: The French and Judean stories were lavish productions all by themselves.

Construction grew to such a point that Griffith had Set Designer Walter L. Hall's office built on high stilts, to afford him a better view of the increasingly expansive set. To film the Babylonian sequences, many thousands of extras were transported daily on streetcars out to the Domiguez Slough (itself pressed into duty as the Euphrates) to serve as the Persian Army. Bemused onlookers marveled at the walls of Babylon towering 160 feet high over Sunset Boulevard. Large dollies and cranes, along with platforms mounted on vehicles, allowed for radical filming techniques that thrilled audiences and cameramen alike.

Griffith ultimately found that his greatest challenge lay in the editing room.

He assembled, took apart, and re-assembled the footage, as he fought to bring coherence to his vision. The critical reception that greeted the version he released in late 1916 was uncertain, as many viewers found the film to be spectacular but inscrutable. Daunted by the challenge of an authoritative, final edit, Griffith

continued to cut and re-cut the film over the course of the next two decades: for foreign audiences, for revival screenings, for release of versions taken from the separate story lines. There remains no definitive copy of the film, and the 1989 reconstruction produced by the Museum of Modern Art in New York is itself the source of some critical controversy, as it contains roughly 20 minutes more footage than any version that Griffith himself ever exhibited. These issues, however, fade when placed beside the sheer kinesthetic power of the film, a power that continues to rock audiences today as forcefully as it did almost a century ago.

– BENJAMIN SCHROM



John Gilbert, Greta Garbo and Marc McDermott in *FLESH AND THE DEVIL* (1926)

FLESH AND THE DEVIL

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

UNDERWRITTEN BY McROSKEY MATTRESS COMPANY

CAST: Greta Garbo (Felicitas), John Gilbert (Leo von Harden), Lars Hanson (Ulrich von Eltz), Barbara Kent (Hertha von Eltz), William Orlamond (Uncle Kutowski), George Fawcett (Pastor Voss) 1926 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Corporation
 PRODUCER: Irving Thalberg DIRECTOR: Clarence Brown SCENARIO: Benjamin F. Glazer, based on the novel *The Undying Past* by Hermann Sudermann TITLES: Marion Ainslee CINEMATOGRAPHER: William Daniels EDITOR: Lloyd Nosler ART DIRECTION: Cedric Gibbons, Frederic Hope COSTUME DESIGN: André-ani PRINT SOURCE: The Library of Congress

Reflecting on a career that included 26 years at MGM and six Academy Award nominations, director Clarence Brown summed up the studio system under which he both thrived and bristled: "In those days we didn't just make movies. We made myths, and they had to be protected and helped." Hollywood's most enduring myth was also its most unlikely. A slightly overweight actress with crooked teeth and a stubborn streak, Greta Garbo arrived in the United States in 1925 at age 19, with her own director in tow and a \$100-a-week contract at MGM. Less than two years later, she was the studio's most prized female player,

boasting a \$5,000-a-week contract – and declining all requests for photo shoots and interviews. The story of how this shy teenager from Sweden conquered Hollywood, then the world, begins with her third American film *Flesh and the Devil*, for which the MGM mythmakers converged.

Garbo, née Greta Gustafson, quit school at the age of 13 to care for her sick father. She always considered herself a misfit, dressing in her brother's clothes as a child and introducing herself as "Gustafson's youngest boy." Given to solitude and fantasy, she later said her sole wish growing up "was to creep inside

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the magic stage door." She became a clerk at a department store, which featured her in its magazine ads and publicity shorts. Later, while studying under scholarship at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, she caught the eye of director Mauritz Stiller, who saw in her a captivating innocence. He cast her in *The Saga of Gösta Berling* (1924) and took complete control of her career. She accompanied him to Germany, where she further demonstrated her onscreen pathos in G.W. Pabst's *The Joyless Street* (1925).

After signing a contract in Berlin with Louis B. Mayer himself, Garbo arrived in Los Angeles to a bewildered studio who did not know how to use her type-defying, androgynous beauty.

Before making her first two pictures—formulaic potboilers about seductresses—Garbo spent her idle hours on the set of Victor Sjöström's *The Scarlet Letter* (1926), mingling with compatriots. The time was well-spent, as she learned about camera angles, how correct lighting could enhance emotion—and how star Lillian Gish managed to



Cinematographer William Daniels put a pencil-size carbon light in Gilbert's palm to mimic the effect of a flickering match.

avoid participating in publicity stunts. In her third MGM picture, she would learn much more from co-star John Gilbert.

A vaudeville orphan, John Gilbert learned about the movies alongside Clarence Brown on the sets of Maurice Tourneur's films. He co-wrote *The Great Redeemer* with Brown in 1919, and became Tourneur's assistant when Brown moved on. The multitalented Gilbert later made his way to MGM, where he starred in a string of popular films. By the time he appeared in King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925), he was considered the most-known man in America, where stores stocked John Gilbert long-collared shirts with French cuffs, and John Gilbert ties. His pairing with Garbo in *Flesh and the Devil* was the idea of new MGM production head Irving Thalberg, who banked on his highest paid player to help define an unknown entity.

Neither Garbo nor Gilbert liked their assigned roles in *Flesh and the Devil*. Garbo

feared further typecasting as a vamp, and wanted to hold out for serious roles like she had had in Europe. Gilbert, who was about to inherit the Great Lover mantle following Valentino's death, was afraid he would never see another well-rounded role like the one he had played in *The Big Parade*. Yet he was curious about Garbo, and agreed not only to the film but also to equal billing. Garbo was less willing to concede, and requested a better project. MGM saw it differently, and ordered her back to work. After a 48-hour boycott, Garbo acquiesced.

Assigned director Clarence Brown arrived at MGM in 1925. Besides his seven years under Maurice Tourneur, his pedigree included a run of five successful movies at Universal. The chosen cinematographer was William Daniels, a veteran of Erich von Stroheim's films who had photographed Garbo in her first MGM picture, *Torrent*. For *Flesh and the Devil*, which features the very first horizontal love scene and close-up, open-mouth kiss in American movie history, Daniels put

heavy gauzes and filters over the lens, to make the illicit lovers shimmer in luminescence. He created Garbo's signature look, lighting her long eyelashes so they cast a shadow on her face, and, in one scene, he put a pencil-size carbon light in Gilbert's palm to mimic the effect of a flickering match. Further enhancing the erotic imagery was the fact that the two principal actors were falling in love on the set. So intense were Garbo and Gilbert's encounters that Brown later admitted he was too embarrassed to call cut during their love scenes—he would just move the crew away until they stopped. When Daniels worked again with Gilbert and Garbo on 1927's *Love*, he requested a closed set. "She was so shy," he recounted later, "so I did it to protect her."

Mad for the mysterious young actress who barely spoke English, Gilbert did all he could to help her, calling for retakes when he thought Garbo didn't come off well, and deferring to her on camera angles. The grateful

Garbo credited Gilbert with improving her performance. "If he had not come into my life at this time, I should probably have come home to Sweden at once, my American career over." But she also possessed something innate that was only revealed on film, and director Brown learned early to print takes even if he was initially unhappy with them. "She had something behind the eyes that told the whole story, that I couldn't see from my distance. On the screen Garbo multiplied the effect of the scene I had taken. It was something she had that nobody else ever had."

The heat between Garbo and Gilbert also multiplied on screen, and audiences responded with record-breaking ticket sales. Off the set, the Garbo-Gilbert romance blossomed, to the delight of the publicity office. Garbo continued to withhold details of her personal life, and the couple was hounded by paparazzi—which most likely provoked the reclusive lifestyle Garbo clung to for the rest of her life. Yet the mystery only fed the myth, to the irritation of MGM publicity chief Howard Dietz. Years later he would concede that it was "the best publicity notion of the century."

Gilbert's assistance extended to advising her on managing her career, and standing up to MGM's notorious Louis B. Mayer. Gilbert offered her the services of his business manager Harry Edington, who handled her affairs free of charge. Her \$400-a-week contract, while unprecedented for a new player, paled in comparison to Gilbert's \$250,000 per picture. With profits from *Flesh and the Devil* rolling into the studio, Garbo felt emboldened enough to stage a second boycott. It lasted seven months and yielded her the best deal for a female player in the business, including back pay for the months she refused to work.

By the time Gilbert and Garbo were teamed for a second time in *Love*, Garbo had already rejected several marriage proposals by Gilbert, declaring, "I will die a bachelor." The two

remained friends, however, and appeared opposite each other again in *A Woman of Affairs* (1928). The film offered a relatively small part to Gilbert, which director Brown suggested be expanded. Always the professional, Gilbert declined: "I'd rather play the part of a butler in a good picture than have every foot in a film that's a flop." Any further success for Gilbert was sabotaged by Mayer, who took every opportunity to discredit the expensive and strong-willed star. Gilbert made a few sound films and did fine work, as in 1932's *Downstairs*, which he himself wrote. However, the mythmaking machine had already turned his story into one of failure. Garbo remained loyal to Gilbert throughout his declining fortunes, staging another boycott until he was cast opposite her in *Queen Christina* (1933). Broken-hearted by the business he had helped to create, Gilbert made his last film in 1934, dying two years later at age 38.

Garbo ended her own film career in 1941. After *Two-Faced Woman* lost money, she released MGM from her lucrative contract and moved to New York City, where she continued to feed the publicity machine by ignoring it. She looked back only once, in 1949, when she agreed to star opposite James Mason in Max Ophul's *The Duchesse*. The skittish financiers of the doomed project demanded a screen test of the 44-year-old actress. William Daniels was hired to film it, along with James Wong Howe. "When the camera started to roll," recalled Howe, "she started to come to life. You could see her personality come out, her mood change. She became more beautiful." After several hours in front of the camera, the Divine Miss Garbo made her usual retreat. "Thank you," she said. "I go back to the beach now." Returning to Manhattan, she spent her life as "the hermit about town." Rare glimpses of her would provide fodder for the gossip columns until her death in 1990, at age 85.

— SHARI KIZIRIAN



DENNIS JAMES

During his 40-year career as a silent film accompanist, James has toured extensively with Lillian Gish and Charles "Buddy" Rogers for revival screenings of their films. He also directs and performs with chamber ensembles and symphony orchestras. In his role as House Organist, he presents Silent Movie Mondays at Seattle's Paramount Theatre, and the Silents, Please! series at the Everett Theatre in Washington. He also appears regularly at the Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto.

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 And many thanks to all our wonderful event volunteers!

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