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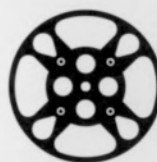
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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY JULY 13

AUTHOR SIGNING 6:30PM

MICK LASALLE *COMPLICATED WOMEN: SEX AND POWER IN PRE-CODE HOLLYWOOD;*
 DANGEROUS MEN: PRE-CODE HOLLYWOOD AND THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN MAN

PROGRAM ONE 7PM

BEAUTY SPOTS IN AMERICA: CASTLE HOT SPRINGS, ARIZONA THE STUDENT PRINCE IN OLD HEIDELBERG

Special Guest MICK LASALLE

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

SATURDAY JULY 14

PROGRAM TWO 10:30AM

HAL ROACH: KING OF COMEDY FAST COMPANY • JUST A GOOD GUY • THE BOY FRIEND • MOVIE NIGHT

Special Guests LEONARD MALTIN; ROB STONE UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE
LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

AUTHOR SIGNING 12:15PM

LEONARD MALTIN *THE LITTLE RASCALS: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF OUR GANG*

PROGRAM THREE 1:15PM

HOW THE COWBOY MAKES HIS LARIAT THE VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

PROGRAM FOUR 3:30PM

HIS WIFE'S HERO MACISTE

Special Guest ONOFRIO SPECIALE ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA
LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

PROGRAM FIVE 5:45PM

TRIBUTE TO TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES HER OBSESSION CAMILLE

Special Guests CHARLES TABESH & ROBERT OSBORNE TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES
LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY CLARK WILSON

AUTHOR SIGNING 7:30PM

ROBERT OSBORNE *75 YEARS OF THE OSCAR: THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE ACADEMY AWARDS*

PROGRAM SIX 8:45PM

HOODWINKING THE POLICE BEGGARS OF LIFE

Special Guests WILLIAM WELLMAN, JR.; PATRICK LOUGHNEY GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE
LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

AUTHOR SIGNING 10:45PM

WILLIAM WELLMAN, JR.

THE MAN AND HIS WINGS: WILLIAM A. WELLMAN AND THE MAKING OF THE FIRST BEST PICTURE

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SUNDAY JULY 15

PROGRAM SEVEN 10:30AM

MORE AMAZING TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Special Guests PATRICK LOUGHNEY GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE
MIKE MASHON THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
ROB STONE UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE
LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

PROGRAM EIGHT 12:45PM

RETOUR DE FLAMME (SAVED FROM THE FLAMES)

Special Guest SERGE BROMBERG LOBSTER FILMS
LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY SERGE BROMBERG

PROGRAM NINE 3:35PM

IN THE SHADOW OF THE PYRAMIDS MISS LULU BETT

Special Guest MIKE MASHON THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

AUTHOR SIGNING 5:10PM

AMELIE HASTIE
CUPBOARDS OF CURIOSITY: WOMEN, RECOLLECTION, AND FILM HISTORY
TODD HAYNES: *A MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION*

PROGRAM TEN 6PM

LONESOME LUKE'S LIVELY LIFE A COTTAGE ON DARTMOOR

Special Guest EDDIE MULLER FILM NOIR FOUNDATION
LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

AUTHOR SIGNING 7:45PM

EDDIE MULLER
DARK CITY: THE LOST WORLD OF FILM NOIR
THE ART OF NOIR

PROGRAM ELEVEN 8:45PM

MUSHROOM GROWING THE GODLESS GIRL

Special Guest SCOTT SIMMON NATIONAL FILM PRESERVATION FOUNDATION
LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

The San Francisco Silent Film Festival is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public about silent film as an art form and as a culturally valuable historical record. **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
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THE STUDENT PRINCE IN OLD HEIDELBERG

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

CAST: Ramon Novarro (Prince Karl Heinrich), Norma Shearer (Kathie), Jean Hersholt (Dr. Juttner), Gustav von Seyffertitz (King Karl VII), Philippe de Lacy (Young Karl), Edgar Norton (Lutz), Bobby Mack (Kellermann), Edward Connelly (Prime Minister von Haugk), Otis Harlan (Old Ruder) 1927 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Corporation PRODUCER-DIRECTOR: Ernst Lubitsch SCENARIO: Hans Kraly, based on the play *Old Heidelberg* by Wilhelm Meyer Forster TITLES: Marian Ainslee, Ruth Cummings CINEMATOGRAPHER: John Mescall EDITOR: Andrew Marton ART DIRECTION: Cedric Gibbons, Richard Day PRINT SOURCE: Warner Bros.

When they made *The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg*, the director and leading stars all had something to prove. Ernst Lubitsch was already a famous director by the time he came to MGM, and was known for his sophisticated, stylish and satirical films. *The Student Prince*, based on the Wilhelm Meyer-Forster play *Old Heidelberg*, was his chance to show that he could handle a sentimental period piece which would appeal to the masses. Ramon Novarro needed a strong follow-up to his 1925 hit, *Ben-Hur*. And Norma Shearer, who was involved with MGM production head Irving Thalberg, needed to prove

that she was more than the boss's girlfriend.

Born in Berlin in 1892, Ernst Lubitsch entered show business in his late teens as a member of Max Reinhardt's troupe at the Deutsches Theater, where he perfected "Meyer," a comic, stereotypical Jewish character. After writing and directing several films featuring himself as "Meyer," he abandoned acting, for fear of being typecast. His first international hit was *The Eyes of the Mummy* (1918), but it was his 1919 satire of American manners, *The Oyster Princess*, in which he first demonstrated what a studio publicity man would later dub "The Lubitsch Touch"

– sophistication, subtle humor and light comedy.

As appealing as "The Lubitsch Touch" was for audiences, creating it was often a source of exasperation for his actors. In 1922, Mary Pickford brought Lubitsch to the United States as part of a so-called "European Invasion" of film talent to direct her in *Rosita*. Pickford, who poked fun at Lubitsch's heavy German accent on set, called him a "frustrated actor." *Student Prince* costars Norma Shearer and Ramon Novarro occasionally found themselves at odds with Lubitsch during the filming. Both objected to his insistence on minimal or no rehearsal for a more spontaneous effect, only to then shoot multiple takes – reportedly filming one scene in *The Student Prince* 102 times. The already jittery Shearer was reduced to tears after Lubitsch exploded at her in

"The Lubitsch Touch"

– sophistication, subtle humor,
and light comedy.

frustration, remarking that he could get a studio commissary waitress to do a better job of playing a barmaid. Shearer called on Thalberg to come to her rescue, but he reportedly told her, "Everyone has a lot to learn from Mr. Lubitsch." Ramon Novarro had an even tougher time. Lubitsch knew of Novarro's homosexuality and he was amused at the prudish attitudes of American men and women. In an effort to poke fun, Lubitsch forced Novarro to endure multiple takes of an ultimately deleted scene with an effeminate extra. Shearer feigned a fainting spell to put a stop to it. In spite of these problems, both actors gave performances that surpassed expectations, and the film itself was a great success.



The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg, based on the Wilhelm Meyer-Forster play *Old Heidelberg*

Novarro had not had a hit since *Ben-Hur* two years earlier. To maintain his star status at MGM, *The Student*



Norma Shearer and Ramon Novarro occasionally found themselves at odds with Lubitsch during the filming.

Prince needed to be a hit as well. Born Ramon Gil Samaniego in Mexico in 1899, he was the eldest of 13 children. In 1914 his family moved to Los Angeles, where Ramon tried his hand in vaudeville and as a singing waiter. By 1917 he had begun to land the odd bit part in movies, including an uncredited appearance in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921). Director Rex Ingram noticed Novarro's good looks and talent, and gave him a small role in 1922's *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Ingram advised Novarro to change his name, and then launched him into stardom in *Scaramouche* (1923). The director and his wife Alice Terry became Novarro's lifelong friends, and were constant in their efforts to nurture his career. Originally promoted as another Valentino, Novarro proved to be a versatile actor, playing all-American types in addition to Latin lovers. The monumental *Ben-Hur* (1925) was Novarro's greatest success. *The Student Prince* proved to be the perfect next step.

The careers of Lubitsch, Novarro and Shearer all survived the transition to sound. Novarro appeared in several early MGM musicals and starred opposite Greta Garbo in the 1931 *Mata Hari*, his best-known sound film. He left MGM in 1935. His accent, which had not been an obstacle during the silent era, now limited the roles available to him. The official story for his departure from MGM was stated as "artistic differences," but the real reason was most probably Novarro's homosexuality. Rumors circulated that he was either caught in *flagrante delicto* with another man, or the studio demanded that he find a wife. An independent production company, stage work abroad, and a 1937 contract with Poverty Row studio Republic Pictures failed to revive his stardom.

In his personal life, Novarro moved in a relatively small social circle and indulged in only the occasional male romance. His greatest confidante remained his cousin, RKO star Dolores Del Rio. Novarro's Catholic faith, which condemned his sexual orientation, and his anxiety over his fading stardom fueled an

alcohol problem that provided fodder to the papers throughout the 1940s.

In 1949, Novarro entered a second, shorter stage of his career in the form of a character actor, thanks to director John Huston, who put him in the suspense thriller *We Were Strangers*. The role earned Novarro some of the best reviews he ever received. He appeared in a few more films, and then played character roles on television. His final feature was *Heller in Pink Tights* (1960), starring Sophia Loren.

On October 30, 1968, Novarro made headlines once again when he was tortured and killed by two brothers he had hired for sex who attempted to rob him. Several of Novarro's closest friends, unaware of his homosexuality, were shocked to find he had been using male escort services for years. It was a

**“No more Lubitsch,” to which
Wyer famously responded,
“Worse than that, no more
Lubitsch pictures.”**

sad postscript to a fine career that transcended the limits of the Latin Lover stereotype.

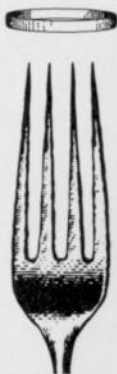
Both Norma Shearer and Ernst Lubitsch went on to greater success in the sound era. After completing *The Student Prince*, Shearer married Irving Thalberg and became “The Queen of the Lot” at MGM, appearing in many popular films throughout the 1930s. Widowed in 1936, she retired from films in 1942. That same year she married a young ski instructor, and they remained together until her death in 1983.

“The Lubitsch Touch” continued to delight audiences in classics such as *Ninotchka* (1939) with Greta Garbo, *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940) and *To Be or Not to Be* (1942). Lubitsch died in 1947 after suffering a sixth heart attack during filming of *That Lady in Ermine*. At the funeral, director Billy Wilder lamented to fellow director William Wyler, “No more Lubitsch,” to which Wyler famously responded, “Worse than that, no more Lubitsch pictures.”

All involved in *The Student Prince* achieved their goals. Novarro proved his marquee status, Shearer silenced the “just an ingénue” critics, and Lubitsch demonstrated his skill with a traditional love story. As Mordaunt Hall of the *New York Times* pointed out in his review of the film: “In this new offering Mr. Lubitsch lives up to all that has been written about him...the satirical shafts, the careful attention to telling details, the half-second notes and the keeping within certain bounds inform the spectator, even though the name of Lubitsch were not emblazoned on the screen, that it is the master from Berlin who has directed this splendid shadow story.”

— SCOTT BROGAN

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Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

HAL ROACH: KING OF COMEDY

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

FAST COMPANY

CAST: Mickey Daniels, Walter Wilkinson, Allen “Farina” Hoskins, Jack Davis, Jackie Condon, Joe Cobb, Ernest “Sunshine Sammy” Morrison, Mary Kornman
1924 Hal E. Roach Studios DIRECTORS: Robert F. McGowan, Charles Parrot (Charley Chase, uncredited)

JUST A GOOD GUY

CAST: Arthur Stone, Olive Borden, Katherine Grant, Kewpie Morgan, Fay Wray, Noah Young
1924 Hal E. Roach Studios DIRECTOR: Hampton del Ruth

THE BOY FRIEND

CAST: Max Davidson, Gordon Elliott, Marion Byron, Edgar Kennedy, Fay Holderness
1928 Hal E. Roach Studios DIRECTOR: Fred Guiol

MOVIE NIGHT

CAST: Charley Chase, Eugenia Gilbert, Edith Fellows, Spec O'Donnell, Tiny Sandford, Anita Garvin
1929 Hal E. Roach Studios DIRECTOR: Lewis R. Foster
PRINT SOURCE (all films): UCLA Film & Television Archive

Gold prospector, mule skinner, construction worker, ice cream man. These are the qualifications of one of Hollywood's most prolific producers, and all the experience that was needed to enter the movie business in 1912. When Hal Roach came to

Southern California at the age of 20, he had reached the tail end of a four-year trek across America, which took him from his hometown of Elmira, New York to Alaska, and down the Pacific Coast. Along the way, he picked up the know-how necessary to land work



Glamorous stars and high-tone directors were not Roach's bread and butter. His house was built on laughs.

as an extra in a J. Warren Kerrigan western, which was being filmed on location in the desert. It was here that he first met fellow player Harold Lloyd, the first of many talents whom Hal Roach would nurture and build a fortune on. During the filming of a roulette sequence, Roach got himself promoted to the position of technical advisor by pointing out that the ball has to travel in the opposite direction of the wheel - knowledge he had gained in San Francisco's Barbary Coast. As a producer, Roach would weather not only the transition from silents to sound, but also the switch from slapstick to story-driven comedy, one and two-reel shorts to feature films, and movies to television. By the time the buildings were razed in 1963, the likes of Fay Wray, Frank Capra, Leo McCarey, Jean Harlow, George Stevens and Cary Grant had worked for the studio known in Hollywood as the Lot of Fun. But glamorous stars and high-tone directors were not Roach's bread and butter. His house was built on laughs.

When Pathé-Frères accepted one of nine Rolin Film Company productions to distribute in 1915, Roach and his partners Dan Linthicum and Dwight Whiting experienced their first success. The film, *Just Nuts*, was a one-reeler starring Harold Lloyd as Willie Work, a character inspired, like many others of its day, by Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp. Distributors then, as now, held great power over filmmakers, and Pathé

agreed to distribute more Willie Work films only if they could pre-approve every scenario. Upon the success of Lloyd's subsequent character, Lonesome Luke, Roach and company were freed from this restriction, and their scripts became "a loose string of scribbled ideas." Everything was improvised on set.

During Hal Roach's years as a fledgling producer, the movie business underwent great changes. The all-powerful Motion Picture Patents Company, which had maintained a stranglehold on the making and distribution of movies in the east, faced challenges from upstarts like Carl Laemmle (who would found Universal Pictures), and defections from partners like Pathé-Frères. Production houses left hubs like Chicago, Florida and New York City for the sunny, remote climes of the Southern California desert. Savvy studio heads were consolidating the production, distribution and exhibition processes, first with block-booking, a practice that forced theater owners to accept all proffered product no matter what the caliber, and finally with studio-owned theater chains. Stars began to assert their box office power by demanding name recognition, which had previously been subjugated to that of the studio, along with bigger salaries and the right to cherry-pick the best projects, writers and directors.

Audiences too were changing. They had become accustomed to the nearly 20-year-old medium and were no longer impressed with the novelty of the nickelodeon. They expected a polished narrative, which they could watch unspool in the air-conditioned comfort of a genuine movie palace. Short films, even of the comedic variety, had to reflect a certain sophistication to gain acceptance with this new, discerning audience. By 1920, when

Scripts became "a loose string of scribbled ideas." Everything else was improvised.

Roach bought out his two Rolin Film Company partners and moved his newly-dubbed Hal E. Roach Studios into an expansive Culver City facility, only four independent production-line comedy studios were still in operation. The movie business was beginning to solidify into the mogul-dom that it is today.

Roach held his own during all this upheaval by constantly trying to upgrade and diversify the films he produced. He created an all-animal series - the Dippy Doo Dads - and branched out into the serial market, producing two of Ruth Roland's multi-episode cliffhangers. Aware of how dangerous it was to depend solely on Harold Lloyd to keep the studio in the black, Roach pilfered ideas from the more well-known comedy producer Mack Sennett.

Beatrice LaPlante was modeled after Mabel Normand, and Dee Hampton's Skinny Comedies played off the success of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle.

To groom talent and test audience appeal, Roach would dip into his stable of contract players and assign them to series of their own. Snub Pollard, the Australian-born Harold Frasier who headlined with "Pollard's Lilliputians" on the vaudeville circuit, was given his own series after Harold Lloyd was sidelined in an on-set accident that resulted in the loss of two fingers. Alongside Pollard, Roach cast Ernest "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison, an African American child actor, and he also tried him out in his own series. After one film, *The Pickaninny* (1921), the series was abandoned at the insistence of the California Pathé representative, who thought films starring children were "box-office poison." Roach would soon prove him wrong. In 1923, Ernest Morrison premiered in a new series featuring a pack of "regular" kids - Hal Roach's Little Rascals, which quickly came to be known as the Our Gang comedies. The popularity of this series, along with that of comedy duo Laurel and Hardy, buoyed Roach throughout the transition to sound and the Great Depression.

Feature-length comedies starring Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy also made it possible for Roach to meet the exhibitors' new policy of double-feature booking.

He had produced his first feature-length film in 1920 - Harold Lloyd's *A Sailor-Made Man* - and he indulged his love for the great outdoors by turning out four adventure films starring Rex the Wonder Horse. The first in the series, *King of Wild Horses*, was voted one of the top ten films of 1924 by exhibitors.

During World War Two the Lot of Fun went through its leanest years. Roach served as an honorary major in the Signal Corps, and he taught filmmaking on the east coast. The studio was rented out to the Army - it was known as Fort Roach - and he brought in extra income by loaning his contract players out to other studios at exorbitant rates. Television proved to be a boon for Roach, and he devoted his entire studio to the production of such popular programs as *The Stu Erwin Show* and *My Little Margie*.

He invested in a Chevrolet dealership and a string of jewelry stores, and profited handsomely from reissues of the Our Gang comedies, first for television and then the home video market. When the studio was finally demolished by new owners in 1963, a reporter asked Roach if he had any regrets. "It's just bricks and mortar," he replied. Then in the next breath, offered, "They could invest in making comedies and make a million a year. They won't make that kind of money in markets or apartments."

- SHARI KIZIRIAN



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Courtesy of Photofest

THE VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

CAST: Milton Sills (Bryce Cardigan), Doris Kenyon (Shirley Sumner), Arthur Stone (Buck Ogilvy), George Fawcett (John Cardigan), Paul Hurst (Jules Rondeau), Charles Sellon (Seth Pennington), Yola D'Avril (Felice), Phil Brady (Half-Pint) 1927 First National Pictures PRODUCER: Wid Gunning DIRECTOR: Charles J. Brabin STORY: Peter B. Kyne SCENARIO: L.G. Rigby CINEMATOGRAPHER: Ted McCord TITLES: Garrett Graham, Sidney Lazarus EDITOR: Frank Ware PRINT SOURCE: UCLA Film & Television Archive

It's often lamented that only ten to twenty per cent of films made in the silent era still exist. So whenever a coveted film thought lost suddenly turns up, it's just cause for celebration. But what of the many worthy films no one is looking for, their directors neglected, their stars forgotten, which may be sitting on a shelf in an archive, waiting to be shown? Given the sheer number of silent films produced—10,000 features and 50,000 short films, conservatively speaking—one could theoretically see a silent film every day for thirty years without repetition. Of course, for many films just one viewing would suffice, but at the other end of the scale there are still wonderful

rediscoveries; *The Valley of the Giants* is one of these, preserved by the UCLA Film & Television Archive from an original nitrate print in 1989.

Perhaps what's most surprising about *The Valley of the Giants* is that it was ever forgotten at all. The inspiration for the novel by San Francisco author Peter B. Kyne was William Carson, a real 19th century lumber baron who lived in Humboldt County. The tale was first serialized by *Red Book* magazine in 1918, then published as a bestselling novel later that year. In 1919, James Cruze directed a successful adaptation for Paramount starring Wallace Reid and Grace Durmond. First National faithfully remade the

story on the same locations among the redwoods of Humboldt County in 1927, with Charles Brabin as director and the popular team of Milton Sills and Doris Kenyon (Sills's wife) in the lead roles. Further versions were filmed on location in 1938, with Wayne Morris, and in 1952, as *The Big Trees*, with Kirk Douglas. Despite its many revivals, the story has passed from public consciousness, and the first version starring Wallace Reid remains lost.

The path taken by the book and its many film adaptations—quick success, decades of popularity, then a fall into obscurity—reflects a similar journey taken by its author, Peter B. Kyne. He was born near Mission Dolores in 1880, grew up in San Mateo County, left school at 16 and got a job as a clerk in a general store. The following year he claimed he was 21 so he could join the Army, and he served in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. On his

The Valley of the Giants: a wonderful rediscovery.

return to San Francisco he became a bookkeeper for a lumber company, and was inspired to try his hand at writing after he read a Jack London story. The 1906 earthquake and fire ended his employment at the lumber company, and, after two failed business ventures, he caught pneumonia and almost died. While a convalescent, he wrote "A Little Matter of Salvage," a short story that found publication in the September 25, 1909 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. His writing career took off. His first contact with the movie industry came after publication of "The Three Godfathers" in the November 23, 1912 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and it was not a pleasant experience; he sued the Biograph studio for unauthorized use of his story to make *The Sheriff's Baby* (1913). "The Three Godfathers" would eventually serve as the basis of at least five credited films, one of which, William Wyler's *Hell's Heroes* (1930), was shown at The San Francisco Silent Film Festival in 2002. Kyne was prolific, turning out 25 novels and, by some estimates, more than 1,000 short stories in his lifetime. His ability to produce work quickly can best be illustrated by an incident that occurred while he was writing *The Valley of the Giants*. He had just begun when America declared entry into World War One. Given a commission as an artillery captain and ordered overseas, he decided to try and finish the entire book before departure. He succeeded, by producing 30,000 words in just two days. His stories were the basis for more than 100 movies from the teens to the thirties, but, following his last novel in 1942, his popularity declined. In the fifty years since his death in 1957, Kyne's stories have been largely

neglected and forgotten.

The film's director Charles Brabin has fared no better than Kyne. If Brabin is known at all today it's as the husband of legendary screen vamp Theda Bara. Born in Liverpool, England in 1882, he became a stage actor upon coming to America in 1900. His first film role was as Abraham Lincoln, in a film produced by the Edison studio, *The Blue and the Gray* (1908). He then graduated to stage manager, assisting the four Edison film directors, until he started directing in 1911. He made Edison's first serial, *What Happened to Mary?* (1912), and after building his reputation for three years, he moved to the Essanay studio in Chicago to direct features, including *The Raven* (1915) starring Henry B. Walthall. He then worked at Vitagraph, Metro, Fox and Goldwyn before he was hired to direct the most ambitious production of the time, *Ben-Hur*. He spent a year in Italy working on the film, but he was replaced by Fred Niblo. Brabin was terribly disappointed by this defeat, but it didn't ruin his career; he continued to work regularly and effectively. *The Valley of the Giants* was the third of four movies Brabin directed that starred Milton Sills, one after another in less than a year. Brabin continued to make films into the sound era, and the most famous of these is *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932). He retired in 1938, and outlived his famous wife by two years, dying in 1957.

Milton Sills, born in Chicago in 1882, was a



The successful team of Milton Sills and Doris Kenyon—popular co-stars on screen, happily married off screen.

philosophy student at the University of Chicago and he acted in amateur stage plays. He was discovered by a theatrical producer in 1905, and spent the better part of a decade on Broadway. He made his movie debut with a supporting role in *The Pit* (1914), but his breakthrough came with *The Honor System* (1917), directed by Raoul Walsh. Steady work as a leading

man quickly followed. Sills was a forceful presence on the screen, and his public persona changed over time from sensitive portrayals in films like *The Faith Healer* (1921) and *Miss Lulu Bett* (1921) to strong "he-man" roles in *The Spoilers* (1923) and *The Sea Hawk* (1924). He made just four talkies, including *The Barker* (1928) and *The Sea Wolf* (1930), but the problem wasn't the new sound technology. He had a fine voice; it was his heart that was failing. After a period of deteriorating health, a rest cure seemed to revive him. He wrote an article on motion picture acting for the 14th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and he was an active founder of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. But he died suddenly of a heart attack on September 15, 1930 at his home in Santa Barbara while playing tennis with his wife and frequent co-star Doris Kenyon. He was 48. His death was a front-page story across the nation and a shock to his many fans, who identified him with his strong and invincible on-screen image. An equally famous actor, Lon Chaney, had died just one month before, but while Chaney is still remembered and championed today, Sills, Brabin and Kyne are not. If we can see more films from their body of work as impressive as *The Valley of the Giants*, they may yet be back again.

— DAVID KIEHN



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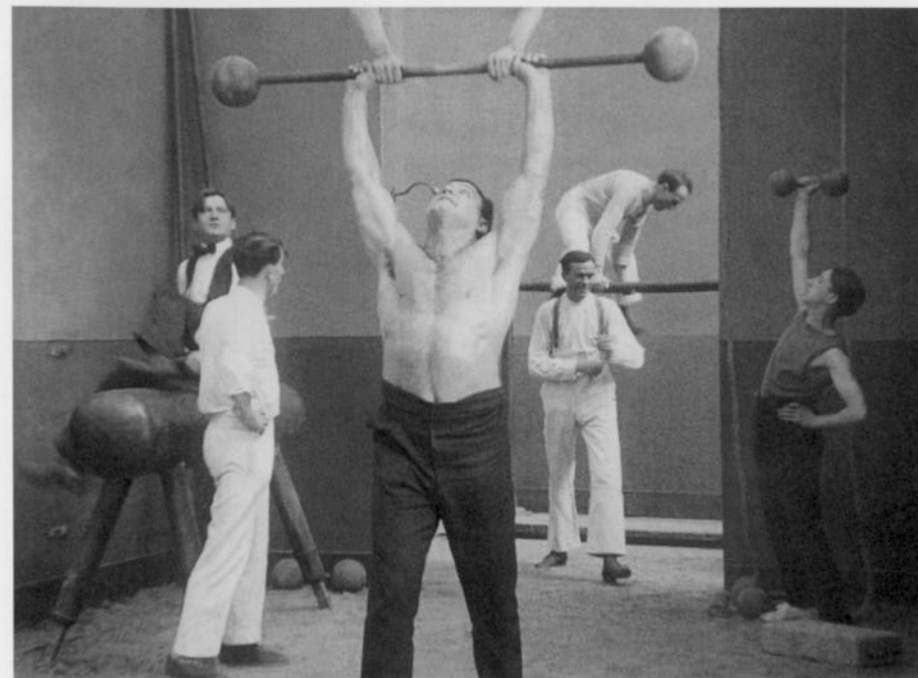
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Courtesy of Cineteca di Bologna

MACISTE

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

CAST: Bartolomeo Pagano (Maciste), Ada Marangoni, Amelia Chellini, Didaco Chellini, Arline Costello (Josephine), Louise Farnsworth (Josephine's Mother), Leone Papa (Ercole), Clementina Gay, Robert Ormand (Duke Alexis), Leone Papa (Ercole) 1915 Itala Film PRODUCER: Giovanni Pastrone DIRECTORS: Luigi Romano Borgnetto, Vincenzo Denizot CINEMATOGRAPHERS: Augusto Battagliotti, Giovanni Tomatis PRINT SOURCE: Cineteca di Bologna

The phenomenon known as Maciste was first introduced in the film *Cabiria* (1914), the most famous of all the early Italian epics. This immensely popular blockbuster was nearly upstaged by one character, Maciste the Nubian slave, portrayed by Bartolomeo Pagano. Maciste proved so popular and charismatic that Pagano was showcased in his own film the following year, *Maciste*, and a series of Maciste productions would continue through the silent era. In this, Pagano's second appearance as Maciste, the line between character and actor blurs. The heroine, in need of a hero, hides from her pursuers in a movie theater showing *Cabiria*, where she witnesses the on-screen derring-do of the strong and benevolent Maciste. She seeks him out at the real-life Itala Film studio, believing she will find the heroic qualities

she needs in the actor who plays Maciste. She turns out to be correct.

Bartolomeo Pagano, sometimes billed as Ernesto Pagani, was born on September 27, 1878. Little is known about his life prior to the day he was discovered by Giovanni Pastrone, director of *Cabiria*, who saw him working on the docks in Genoa. Pastrone offered Pagano twenty lire (about three dollars) a day to play the minor character. At the height of his fame, Pagano earned 750,000 lire a year. As Maciste, Pagano became an international star, although in his homeland he was loved for being uniquely Italian. A 1927 article in the Italian film magazine *Cinema-Star* describes his appeal: "[Italian audiences] prefer, above all the heroes of the screen, our Maciste who, in anatomy and character, is Latin."

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Famed spaghetti western director Sergio Leone claimed that his father, the actor-director Roberto Roberti (née Vincenzo Leone), discovered Pagano. While there's no proof of such a claim, Roberti did direct Pagano in the 1918 *Maciste poliziotto* (*Maciste the Detective*) in between his longstanding working relationship with the Italian diva Francesca Bertini. "Divismo" was the description for Italy's female-dominated star system. Pagano's immense popularity made him the rare male superstar, or "divo."

Pagano starred in a little more than thirty films in his short career, which ended in 1928. All but four were part of the Maciste series. Many of these films were called "peplum" films, after the short skirt or tunic worn by characters in films that took place in ancient times. Though variations on Maciste often appear in historical or classical tales, he was very much a modern invention, the creation of director Pastrone and *Cabiria* screenwriter Gabriele D'Annunzio. D'Annunzio – a flamboyant Italian dramatist, poet, writer, and novelist – was a highly respected literary and political figure, who had been in the public eye since the 1880s. He gave a number of speeches that, according to the 1929 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, nudged Italy closer to World War One, which it finally entered in 1915 – the year *Maciste* was released. Throughout the 1920s



An ordinary man in possession of extraordinary strength and bravery – a true mythical hero of the masses.

Cabiria laid the foundation for the Maciste phenomenon, which melded the character and the actor who played him into one of the modern world's first superheroes. In *Maciste*, we first see the actor demonstrate his great strength by lifting a dumbbell with another man on it. This was standard fare in the age of the Strongman, or *Uomo Forte*, who extolled the virtues of physical training, good health and exercise. Throughout the film, Pagano performs

"Maciste is the Douglas Fairbanks of Italy. As a matter of fact, he out-Fairbanks Fairbanks. Maciste makes the whole Austrian army shake in its boots."

feats of astonishing strength, which, combined with the numerous tests of heroic bravery that confront the character as contrived by D'Annunzio's script, succeeds in transforming the actor himself into Maciste. The name Bartolomeo Pagano all but disappeared from the media, to be replaced by the name Maciste – onscreen and off.

Whether the setting of the film was historical, as in *Cabiria*, or contemporary, as in *Maciste*, the character came to represent a nationalistic ideal of virile and paternal strength. Film historian Pierre Sorlin points out that "the same description applies perfectly to his contemporary, Benito Mussolini." And Sorlin goes on to say, "Fascists never used Maciste for their propaganda, but the character perfectly fitted the kind of human being they wanted to promote." Mussolini himself did not use movies to spread propaganda until the 1930s, relying instead on a combination of personal appearances, self-penned newspaper articles and radio. He did finally open the Cinecittà film studio in 1937 to promote Italian and fascist ideals. Perhaps the cinema didn't interest Mussolini until he, through it, could talk.

Many members of the *Cabiria* crew also found employment on the Maciste series. Set decorator Luigi Romano Borgnetto and cinematographer Vincenzo Dénizot went on to co-direct *Maciste*. Cinematographer Giovanni Tomatis lensed a number of Maciste films for Dénizot. Although the crew was somewhat consistent throughout the series, Pagano's co-stars rarely appeared in more than one film. Leone Papa and Clementina Gay both had brief movie careers, and the first *Maciste* is the only production they ever appeared in together.

The legend of Maciste spread with the international distribution of his films. According to a 1917 *New York Times* article, "Maciste is the Douglas Fairbanks of Italy. As a matter of fact, he out-Fairbanks Fairbanks, since he is almost twice as big as our own favorite athletic actor... Maciste makes the whole Austrian army shake in its boots." Just how exaggerated the perception of Maciste's prowess became is evident in excerpts from two further 1917 *New York Times* articles: "Film fans the world over know Pagano as Maciste, who, being eight or nine feet in height, is the possessor of strength in proportion," and, "Maciste and a company of players were in Austria [and] were interned before they could return to Italy, but, through the ingenuity and daring of Maciste, finally succeeded in escaping and crossing the border."

Pagano retired from the movies in 1928, before the introduction of sound. In 1941, Carlo Campogalliani, the director of *La trilogia di Maciste* (*The Maciste Trilogy*, 1920), tried to convince Pagano to appear in an adventure film so he could re-introduce Maciste to contemporary audiences. Pagano refused, supposedly due to an arthritic condition. The "peplum" or "sword and sandal" genre was revived in 1958 by the Italian production *Hercules*, starring American bodybuilder Steve Reeves. Maciste continued to haunt Campogalliani, so two years later he re-launched the hero with his 1960 production *Maciste nella valle dei re* (*Maciste in the Valley of the Kings*, also known as *Son of Samson*), with Brooklyn bodybuilder Lou Degni filling the role of Maciste. In order to capitalize on the popularity of Steve Reeves, Degni was given the more Americanized name of Mark Forest.

Unlike Hercules or Samson, who are heroes from a distant, mythical past, Maciste came to life in the twentieth century. From his first appearance in his own film, he wasn't a hero of ancient Rome but merely a working-class actor, employed by the Itala Film studio. He was an ordinary man in possession of extraordinary strength and bravery, who was, in the words of film scholar Monica Dall'Asta, "a true mythical hero of the masses."

– AIMEE PAVY



The Strongman, or Uomo Forte, who extolled the virtues of physical training, good health and exercise.

and 1930s, D'Annunzio was closely tied to politician and future *Il Duce*, Benito Mussolini. Pastrone fully understood the prestige his production of *Cabiria* would gain by employing D'Annunzio to write the scenario and intertitles.



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Courtesy of British Film Institute

CAMILLE

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY CLARK WILSON

CAST: Alla Nazimova (Marguerite Gautier), Rudolph Valentino (Armand Duval), Arthur Hoyt (Count de Varville), Zeffie Tilbury (Prudence), Rex Cherryman (Gaston), Edward Connelly (Duke), Patsy Ruth Miller (Nichette), Consuelo Flowerton (Olympe), William Orlamonde (Monsieur Duval), Mrs. Oliver (Manine) 1921 Nazimova Productions DIRECTORS: Ray C. Smallwood, Alla Nazimova (uncredited) SCENARIO: June Mathis, based on *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas, fils CINEMATOGRAPHER: Rudolph Bergquist ART DIRECTION and COSTUME DESIGN: Natacha Rambova PRINT SOURCE: Warner Bros.

She was a legendary Russian-born stage performer who studied with Stanislavsky, popularized the works of Ibsen and Chekov, and achieved acclaim as the first "modern" actress in the American theater. She became the highest-paid film actress of her era, and was also a true auteur with unprecedented control over scripts, directors and co-stars. Yet by the time she died in 1945, Alla Nazimova was all but broke, playing only occasional supporting roles, and living in a bungalow on the grounds of her former palatial estate. Nearly forgotten for 50 years, Nazimova was brought to vivid life in a 1997 biography by Gavin

Lambert, who sorted out the dramatic facts from the myths, which he called "fictions less strange, and less compelling, than the truth of her life."

Nazimova was born Mariam Edez Adelaida Leventon in Yalta in 1879, into a family of Sephardic Jews. She endured a Dickensian childhood with an abusive father who had divorced his flighty, unfaithful wife when Alla was six years old. Nazimova studied drama at Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre. Later, she joined the theater company of famed actor-producer Pavel Orlenev, touring Europe and, in 1905, going to the United States. The troupe

performed in Russian to immigrant audiences. One of the first reviews, in the New York American, was prescient: "We could not understand the language of the play, but the language of Alla Nazimova is universal. It is the language of the soul. Her name will be a household word." In 1906, Nazimova accepted a contract with impresario Lee Shubert which gave her the right to choose her own material. Her first two plays were both by Ibsen: *Hedda Gabler* and *A Doll's House*, and both did well. For her third, Shubert convinced her to try a frothy comedy. Over the next decade, she would alternate between challenging works by Ibsen or Chekov, and lightweight comedies or lurid melodramas.

In 1915, with Europe at war, Nazimova accepted the lead in the pacifist play, *War Brides*, which gave her another success. The film adaptation, which was her movie debut, was also a hit. In 1917 she signed a contract with Metro, and over the next three years she became one of the most popular stars in Hollywood. Charles Bryant, an English actor she had met in 1912 and then led the world to believe she had married, co-starred in *War Brides* and many of her subsequent films. He was also her business manager, and his main talent was spending her money. In 1919, the couple bought a lavish Spanish-style estate, which they named the Garden of Alla. They played the role of a loving couple, but actually led separate lives.

Nazimova had lovers of both sexes, including a series of young female "protegeses."

As she became ever grander – she was now referred to by everyone as "Madame" – her films became ever more melodramatic and ridiculous. Both the public and the critics began to lose interest. Alarmed, executives at Metro demanded that she turn the writing chores over to a professional, and replace Bryant as her leading man. Nazimova agreed, as long as she could keep artistic control. To write the *Camille* script, she chose June Mathis, Metro's top scenarist. To design the costumes and sets, she hired Natacha Rambova.



Alla Nazimova as the infamous courtesan; Rudolph Valentino as her young paramour Armand.

Born Winifred Shaughnessy in Salt Lake City, Rambova was educated in Europe, and studied ballet



Rambova's designs were an innovative blend of Art Nouveau, Expressionism and geometric Art Deco.

in Paris and New York. A former dancer with the Theodore Koslov company, she was involved in a destructive affair with the domineering Koslov, who had taken credit for Rambova's design of the 1920 Nazimova film, *Billions*. Rambova left Koslov, and the two women formed the most fulfilling creative alliance either would ever have. Whether the two women were lovers remains unclear to this day, but they shared an emotional and intellectual intimacy.

To play the young paramour Armand in *Camille*, Mathis suggested her discovery Rudolph Valentino, who had just completed his first starring role in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921). Nazimova shrewdly realized that the buzz from *Horsemen* would help *Camille*, and she agreed. To direct, she chose Ray C. Smallwood, chief cameraman at Metro and nominal director of her last three films – though everyone knew Madame was in charge. Patsy Ruth Miller, who played Nichette, told biographer Lambert, "We called [him] poor Mr. Smallwood." On the set, according to Miller, Nazimova was "cold and businesslike, a tiny czarina with an eye on every detail." A detail Madame didn't miss was Valentino's superb performance, which she feared could steal the picture away from her. She found a solution: unlike every other *Camille*, Armand is absent from his beloved's bedside when it's time for her death scene.

Rambova's designs for the film were an innovative blend of Art Nouveau, Expressionism and a geometric style soon to be known as Art Deco. Nazimova's performance, too, was a mixture of the naturalism she had learned from Stanislavsky and a choreographed

dance of stylized movements, poses and gestures. Together, she and Rambova were creating their own vision of artistic cinema. As Brian Taves of The Library of Congress has written, "Camille succeeds as an example of the art film, and yet one that also retains the fundamental element of melodrama which appeals to audiences in a manner that the more avant-garde Nazimova-Rambova collaborations do not achieve."

Critics at the time were less impressed. "More or less freakish throughout...there are so-called impressionistic settings...these seem to us merely bizarre backgrounds, suggestive of a Broadway ladies' shop," stated Motion Picture Classic. "What has happened to the great actress, the splendid genius, the incomparable artiste?" moaned Photoplay.

Camille did fairly well at the box office, but Metro had had enough of Madame and did not renew her contract. Once she had left, the studio changed the film's publicity campaign and gave top billing to Valentino. Undaunted, Nazimova formed her own production company, whose first two productions were *A Doll's House* (1922) and *Salomé* (1923), with Rambova designing the production and costumes, and Charles Bryant receiving the credit as director. Nazimova wrote the screenplays herself, under the name Peter M. Winters. *A Doll's House* restored

Nazimova's reputation as an actress but flopped at the box office, and *Salomé* was beset with distribution problems, achieving only a limited release. After a few more unsuccessful films, Nazimova, plagued by financial problems, returned to the New York stage. She allowed a financial manager to turn the Garden of Alla into a hotel, but that too was a failure, and she ended up losing her home as well as her film career. Her "marriage" came to an end at that time and was exposed as a sham, drawing scandalous headlines. In the 1930s, after further financial setbacks, she returned to Hollywood and took up residence in a bungalow at the renamed Garden of Allah. She played small roles in a few films and died in 1945, having outlived her fame.

Rambova and Valentino fell in love during the production of *Camille* and married in 1922. But his pop idol success clashed with her artistic aspirations, and they divorced in 1926. Valentino died that same year. Rambova married a Spanish aristocrat in 1934, divorced him five years later, became a disciple of Georges Gurdjieff, traveled in Egypt and the Far East, and collected art. In the end, she became delusional and refused to eat because she thought people were poisoning her food. She died in 1966 of a heart attack brought on by malnutrition.

— MARGARITA LANDAZURI



Courtesy of Photofest

BEGGARS OF LIFE

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

CAST: Wallace Beery (Oklahoma Red), Louise Brooks (Nancy), Richard Arlen (Jim), Robert Perry (Arkansas Snake), Edgar "Blue" Washington (Black Mose), H.A. Morgan (Skinny), Roscoe Karns (Hopper), Jacque Chapin (Ukie) 1928 Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation DIRECTOR: William A. Wellman SCENARIO: Benjamin Glazer and Jim Tully, based on the novel by Jim Tully TITLES: Julian Johnson CINEMATOGRAPHER: Henry Gerrard EDITOR: Alyson Shaffer PRINT SOURCE: George Eastman House

For today's viewers, the "hobohemia" so vividly portrayed in *Beggars of Life* conjures an image of the vagabonds set adrift during the Great Depression. Yet, the movie was released more than a year before the cataclysmic stock market crash of 1929. The film was loosely based on Jim Tully's novel *Beggars of Life: A Hobo Autobiography*, published in 1924, which describes his hardscrabble existence on the rails during the recession years of the 1890s and 1900s. By the time the film was made, Tully had established himself across America as the "Mighty Oak of Profane Letters" and throughout Hollywood as an *enfant terrible*. Born in Kansas in 1888, the scrappy red-haired eleven-year-old ran away from the orphanage his father had sent him to following his mother's death. He held a variety of jobs before moving to

Hollywood in 1921, where he held a variety of jobs including freelance journalist and, for more than a year, publicist for Charlie Chaplin.

Beggars of Life is one of five autobiographical books Tully wrote which detail his transient childhood, and it contains the stories of the menacing criminal tramp Oklahoma Red, who takes the young boy under his wing, and the prostitute Nancy, who shoots and kills her abusive father and brother. A narrative loosely based on these stories was woven into the 1925 Broadway play *Outside Looking In* by Maxwell Anderson, starring Charles Bickford and James Cagney and produced by a group of investors that included Eugene O'Neill. Louise Brooks remembers attending a performance of the play in the company of Charlie Chaplin, though she later said she would

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have paid more attention if she had known she would later star in the film adaptation. Brooks bore little affection for Tully. She described him as "short and fat with his belly hanging over his belt, yellow teeth to match his face and hair, full of the vanity of *Vanity Fair* and H.L. Menken."



Beggars of Life author Jim Tully with Louise Brooks, Wallace Beery and Richard Arlen during location filming.

The cast and crew of *Beggars of Life* were as colorful as Tully himself. The seventeen days of location filming in Jacumba, a small California town near the Mexican border, were filled with hair-raising stunts, hard-drinking nights and countless fights – the norm for a William Wellman picture. The extras on the set, as recalled in an account of the film's production by Louise Brooks, "were twenty riotous hobos selected by Billy [Wellman] from among the outcasts who financed leisurely drunks by working as extras in films." They were fond of pranks, such as hiding a lit cigarette in a sleeping hobo's pants pocket, or,

**"...hair-raising stunts,
hard-drinking nights and
countless fights..."**

according to Brooks, "lighting newspaper fires under people sitting in canvas chairs." As they idled away their free time, Wellman would be busy rehearsing dangerous stunts on the trains. He was determined to stage the action scenes as realistically as possible in real time, and not resort to undercranking the camera, a trick used by many filmmakers to create the illusion of speed. Brooks remembers that the train engineers were "dazed by the unconcern with which a runaway flatcar and the caboose were plunged into the gorge, taking with them the second camera and missing the second cameraman by inches."

Brooks had made only lightweight American comedies before taking on the role of Nancy in *Beggars of Life*, and it was the first film to capitalize on her androgynous appeal by dressing her in boy's

clothing. The August 1928 issue of *Motion Picture Classic* ran a full-page spread of Brooks in her boy's outfit and reported, "Many a girl has wished – or said she wished – she were a boy. Louise Brooks goes one better and becomes one in her portrayal of one of the Beggars of Life in Jim Tully's screen story. Any time Louise wants a nickel for a cup of coffee, she has only to come to us. In fact, if she'd let us have one with her, we'd go as far as to wrench loose a dime." Brooks would depart Hollywood for Germany in 1929 to star in two films directed by G.W. Pabst that, years later, would make her into an icon: *Pandora's Box* and *The Diary of a Lost Girl*.

Director William Wellman had earned a reputation as a "man's man," known for bullying

***Beggars of Life* presaged the
journey that multitudes of men,
women, boys and girls would take.**

actors and spinning tales of his exploits as a flyer in World War One. He had worked his way up in Hollywood after being introduced to the industry by Douglas Fairbanks, who wrangled him a role in *The Knickerbocker Buckaroo* (1919). One year later he made his directorial debut with *The Twins of Suffering Creek*, and he continued in the same vein, directing westerns and the occasional comedy, until 1927, when Paramount entrusted him with the World War One aviation epic *Wings*. The film was enormously



Louise Brooks and Richard Arlen had built up a certain enmity during their previous movie together.

successful, and received the first Academy Award for Best Picture. It also gave actor Richard Arlen his first big break. When Wellman invited him to join the cast of his next prestige picture *Beggars of Life*, Arlen was more than happy to go along for the ride.

Brooks and co-star Arlen had built up a certain enmity during their previous movie together, *Rolled Stockings* (1927), and the hostility between them escalated to a boiling point on *Beggars of Life*. One night, Brooks reports, Arlen confronted her after he had downed a shot of whisky and said, "Funny thing,



I've been working at Paramount for three years – a damned fine actor, too – and I make a stinking four hundred dollars a week, while you ride around in your damn Lincoln town car with its damn black satin finish. You – why, you can't even act!" Arlen would appear in two other movies directed by Wellman, and he played minor parts in film and on television into the 1960s. After *Beggars of Life*, Wellman achieved enormous success with *The Public Enemy* (1931) and the original *A Star Is Born* (1937). He even made another great hobo movie, *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933), casting future wife Dorothy Coonan as the cross-dressing girl lead.

Wallace Beery brought both his real-life tramp

experience and his legendary temper to the role of Oklahoma Red in *Beggars of Life*. As part of an acting family that included brother William and half-brother Noah, Beery had forged a career out of playing villains and heavies with a comic edge. Brooks and Beery had worked together in *Now We're in the Air* (1927), and she marveled at his single-mindedness amidst the wild partying that went on during the filming of *Beggars of Life*: "Neither God nor the Devil could have influenced Beery's least gesture before the camera. His Oklahoma Red is a little masterpiece." He is perhaps best remembered today for his Academy Award performance as the has-been boxer in King Vidor's *The Champ* (1931), and as Long John Silver in Victor Fleming's *Treasure Island* (1934).

Made in the final months of the silent era, *Beggars of Life* was modified to capitalize on the success of Warner Brothers' part-talkie *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Paramount inserted synchronized music and sound effects, as well as a song, "Don't You Hear Them Bells?" which Beery himself sings while carrying a cask of White Mule into a hobo jungle. Only the silent version survives. *Beggars of Life*, set in the 1890s and filmed in 1928, presaged the journey that multitudes of men, women, boys and girls would take during the Great Depression, which hovered just around the corner.

– LAURA HORAK

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LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

In March 1898, the pamphlet *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire: création d'un dépôt de cinématographie historique* began to circulate around Paris. Written by

Boleslas Matuszewski, it outlined the first known vision for a motion picture depository and a lending library, what we now know as the film archive. Matuszewski, a Polish cameraman, likened the films being made in cinema's infancy to paper documents used in the study of

history. He went further, rhapsodizing that the three-year-old medium is a superior form of documentation: "This simple band of printed celluloid constitutes not only a proof of history, but a fragment of history itself, and a history which has not grown faint, which does not need a genius to resuscitate it."

While Matuszewski held no illusions for the immediate receptivity of his idea, he remained optimistic. "The creation of this foundation is indispensable," he wrote, "and will sooner or later come to pass in some great European city." It would take another 30 years and many more advocates before the first archives opened in Europe and the United States. It would take another 40 years for these institutions to earn the trust of private collectors and major studios. By then, much of that "proof of history" had been lost forever.

Made to turn a profit, films took up valuable space once they were no longer in circulation, and they also presented real danger, as a fire hazard and an invitation to piracy. Even after the creation in the mid-1930s of the first archives – New York's Museum of Modern Art, the Cinémathèque Française headed by Henri Langlois and Georges Franju, the forerunner to the Swedish Film Institute

started by critic Bengt Idestam Almqvist, Berlin's Reichfilmarchiv and Britain's National Film Library – the priorities for preservation varied with each



institution. Berlin's Reichfilmarchiv, which did not survive World War Two, was concerned with furthering the aims of the Thousand Year Reich. The British Film Institute grew out of the Imperial War Museum's Film Library. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library, headed by

Iris Barry, lobbied Hollywood studios for prints of their productions. The Cinémathèque Française under Langlois was mainly concerned with collecting and exhibition, and not cataloguing or preservation.

Overwhelmed by the quantity of films, along with the pressure to save money-making features as well as those that carried a special imprimatur of acclaim, these archives and their descendants did not have the staff, space, or funding to save all the fragments of history for which Matuszewski advocated. Today, however, actualités, newsreels, documentaries, dramas, comedy shorts, travelogues, trailers, films on obscure gauges, industrial and educational films, even home movies and pornography, are acknowledged to have a value beyond the price of a movie ticket or DVD rental. If Matuszewski had been heeded earlier, we might be privy today to the history

he lived, as cinematographer for the Tsar and later, in Paris, for the Frères Lumière. Instead, what remains of him is his still-relevant plea to save the celluloid past for future generations: "First we must accumulate these exterior manifestations of history," wrote Matuszewski, "so later they can be unfolded before the eyes of those who did not witness them."

–SHARI KIZIRIAN





Courtesy of Lobster Films

RETOUR DE FLAMME

(SAVED FROM THE FLAMES)

PRESENTED BY SERGE BROMBERG

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY SERGE BROMBERG

PRINT SOURCE: Lobster Films, Film Preservation Associates

Turn-of-the-century Paris was the amusement capital of Europe, if not the world. All manner of spectacle and diversion commanded the attention of Parisian society, from diorama and panorama displays and wax museum tableaux to magic shows and public exhibitions at the Paris Morgue. Commerce, too, became spectacle, as improvements in plate glass and electric lighting allowed department stores to create vast window displays for sidewalk consumption. Soaring over this wonderland was the most visible marvel of all, the Eiffel Tower, which opened to the public in 1889.

Just as the industrial revolution enabled mass production of consumer goods, technological

advances prompted the production of mass entertainment. New developments in lithography and photography made illustrated books and newspapers cheap and accessible. Into this era was born the most remarkable innovation in entertainment: the ability to project "animated photographs." In the hands of a small group of highly imaginative pioneers, this new technology would revolutionize mass communication, entertainment, and the performing arts.

On May 14, 1894, American inventor Thomas Edison presented his cinematic invention, the Kinetoscope, to a Paris audience. Among those in attendance were magician Georges Méliès and photographer Antoine Lumière. Méliès, who owned

the Robert-Houdin Theatre where Edison presented his marvel, saw great potential for the new invention as an addition to his magic act. Méliès' theater was equipped with trap doors, pulleys and mechanical devices designed to perform illusions. In time, Méliès would find the inspiration to use these mechanisms for the creation of images that far exceeded the limitations of physical possibility.

Situated on the upper floor of Méliès' theater was the photographic studio of Antoine Lumière. In 1883, Lumière established a manufacturing plant to produce photographic plates. His sons Auguste and Louis took over the business in 1893, only one year before Edison's presentation. If Méliès saw the artistic possibilities of the new medium, the Lumières saw a business opportunity in the manufacturing of cameras and raw film stock, as well as the distribution of their own finished films.

Less than two years after seeing Edison's Kinetoscope, the Lumières presented the first motion picture exhibition to a paying clientele on December 28, 1895, at the Grand Café. The astonished audience of thirty-three, which again included Georges Méliès, viewed a program of twelve short films, each less than a minute in length. The subjects ranged from a street scene of workers leaving a factory (*La Sortie des usines Lumière*), to a comic episode in which a gardener is sprayed with his own garden hose (*L'Arroseur arrosé*). Méliès described the experience: "A horse pulling a cart started to walk towards us, followed by other vehicles, then passers-by – in short, all the hustle and bustle of a street. We sat there with our mouths open, without speaking, filled with amazement."



The "cinema of attractions" did not necessarily strive for narrative structure or characterization.

When the Lumière brothers introduced cameras and film for purchase, the final requisite for commercial cinema was in place. In March 1897, Méliès opened his new "glass house" studio, designed exclusively for the production of moving pictures. It was the first such studio in Europe. Over the next



"We sat there with our mouths open, without speaking, filled with amazement." – Georges Méliès

ten years Méliès made more than 500 movies, and, along with a battery of artists who experimented endlessly with the new medium in the early years, he established the techniques, technology, and language of film as we know it today.

An astonishing variety of styles and genres appeared during this period. *Actualités* (non-narrative reality sequences), trick films, fantasies, short comedies, dances, magic acts, Biblical scenes, dramatic episodes, travelogues and even erotic scenes could be found screening all over Paris. This "cinema of attractions," so named by historian Tom Gunning, did not necessarily strive for narrative structure or characterization. Instead, the "attraction" consisted of figures, landscapes, tricks, or the wonders of motion picture technology itself. The actors simply conveyed broad physical action or played stock theatrical stereotypes; it was too soon for nuanced portrayals of characters with individual motivations.

By 1898, Méliès had mastered fantasy, magic and trick films. Not only did he perform magic in front of the camera, he also performed magic in the editing room, where he discovered how to create spectacular effects also told a story, as in *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). Among his many innovations were the fade-in, fade-out, cross-fade, double exposure, dissolve, and stop-action cinematography. As Méliès' fame and influence grew, other pioneering artists began to develop around him, such as Segundo de Chomón of Barcelona, who had originally been hired by Méliès to distribute his films in Spain and Latin America. After a stint in the Spanish army, Chomón moved to Paris in 1897, where he and his wife were employed by Méliès to hand-color films, frame by frame. In 1901 Chomón left the Méliès studio and joined the fledgling Pathé Laboratories, where he continued to specialize in the coloring of film.

Practically unknown today, Chomón became an important innovator himself and originated many new filmmaking techniques, such as single-frame

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camera tricks, optical dissolves and complex camera movement. In 1902, he was the first to put live action into a scale model environment with his film *Choque des Trens*. Chomón used stop-motion photography to make inanimate objects "come alive" on screen, and he developed a matte technique that allowed him to seamlessly insert a miniature human figure into the same frame with a life-sized person. He also developed the traveling shot, first used in a scene for *La Vie et la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ* (1907), directed by Ferdinand Zecca. He perfected the technique, which had become known as a "dolly shot," while filming *Cabiria* for Italian director Giovanni Pastrone in 1914.

Between 1904 and 1907, the Pathé studio began its surge to industry dominance. Regular film programs became the norm, as permanent venues were established for their presentation. The transition to narrative cinema was underway, with more complex plots, fully realized characters and longer films. Individual actors were increasingly identified in film credits and soon developed their own fan bases, which were targeted by studio marketing. Filmed spectacle itself was no longer enough; audiences clamored to see movie stars. The "cinema of attractions" gave way to a new art form.

As the public appetite for trick films declined,

so did Méliès's popularity. He made his last film in 1913, and the shuttering of theaters prompted by the onset of World War One led to his financial ruin. He closed his Theatre Robert-Houdin in 1915, reopened it briefly after the war, and gave his final performance there in 1920. It was demolished three years later.

In contrast to Méliès, Segundo de Chomón flourished throughout the silent era. He worked in Italy, France, Spain and the United States with seminal directors like Ferdinand Zecca, Giovanni Pastrone and Abel Gance. His film credits number in the hundreds, and his innovations in cinematography and special effects are evident in such classics as *Cabiria* (1914), *Maciste all'inferno* (1925) and *Napoleon* (1927).

Fascinated by the combination of color and film ever since his days of hand coloring movies for Méliès, Chomón continued to explore new possibilities until the end of his life. He died in Paris in 1929 shortly after an excursion to Morocco, where he had gone to shoot experimental color footage.

Georges Méliès died in 1938 at the age of seventy-two. The man that had defined an art form, whom Charles Chaplin referred to as "the alchemist of light" and of whom D.W. Griffith said "I owe him everything," spent his final years selling toys and candy from a kiosk in the Gare Montparnasse.

— ROB BYRNE



Courtesy of British Film Institute

MISS LULU BETT

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

CAST: Lois Wilson (Lulu Bett), Milton Sills (Neil Cornish), Theodore "Daddy" Roberts (Dwight Deacon), Helen Ferguson (Diana Deacon), Ethel Wales (Grandma Bett), Clarence Burton (Ninian Deacon), Mabel Van Buren (Ina Deacon), Mae Giraci (Monona Deacon), Taylor Graves (Bobby Larkin), Charles Ogle (Station Agent) 1921 Famous Players-Lasky Corporation DIRECTOR: William C. de Mille SCENARIO: Clara Beranger, based on a novel and play by Zona Gale CINEMATOGRAPHER: L. Guy Wilky PRINT SOURCE: The Library of Congress

In February of 1920, Wisconsin author Zona Gale published her sixth novel *Miss Lulu Bett* to great acclaim and popularity. Critics praised the book's naturalistic dialogue, its critique of small-town conformity, and its relevance. At a time when the women's suffrage amendment was marching toward its eventual ratification, readers were eager to embrace what scholar Deborah Lindsay Williams has called a "self-actualized Cinderella" story. It depicts the life of Lulu Bett, a thirtythree-year-old woman living in the home of her sister's husband. Treated as the "family beast of burden," she longs to take steps toward independence.

Gale adapted her novel into a play, which

premiered on December 26th in front of an audience of inmates at Sing Sing Prison. The following day *Miss Lulu Bett* settled in for an acclaimed 198-show run at New York's Belmont Theatre, before going on the road for hundreds of performances nationwide. In 1921, Zona Gale became the first woman playwright to win a Pulitzer Prize.

Though Jazz-Age Hollywood was producing increasingly grandiose films to fill its motion picture palaces, filmmakers were also looking for properties like *Miss Lulu Bett* that could be made on a modest budget. One such filmmaker was William C. de Mille, whose younger brother directed some of the most grandiose films of all. Cecil B. DeMille – he preferred

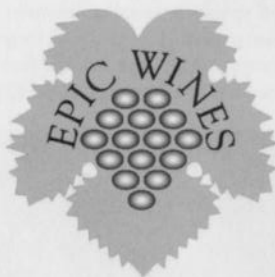


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Theodore Roberts, Lois Wilson and Milton Sills.
William de Mille was Lois Wilson's favorite director.

to double-capitalize the family name for dramatic effect – had co-founded Famous Players-Lasky (later Paramount Pictures) in 1913, and he asked William to come to California and write scenarios for him. The elder de Mille brother, a successful New York playwright and collaborator of theater impresario David Belasco, had recently suffered a string of disappointments, and so he accepted Cecil's offer. Upon his arrival in Hollywood, he wrote an adaptation of his Broadway hit *The Warrens of Virginia*, as well as several other scripts, including a treatment of *Carmen*, for his brother to direct. Within a year he had grown frustrated by the restricted role of the writer in the motion picture machine, and he turned to directing with his original story *The Ragamuffin*, starring Blanche Sweet. Immediately he began to carve out an approach to directing very different from that of his brother. By the early 1920s, the type of film projects that attracted the two couldn't have been further apart.

If Cecil B. DeMille favored spectacle even at the expense of dramatic coherence, William C. de Mille favored human drama. The political content of the pair's films diverged as well, with the elder brother interested in the exploration of realistic, socially conscious themes, while the younger brother took his moral cues from a more idealized realm. Robert Benchley once called William "the subtle and intelligent member of the de Mille family." William, however, resisted such praise. He disliked being used by critics as a "hammer with which to whack Cecil."

Both brothers liked to film in continuity, but Cecil's increasing reliance on complicated set pieces and flashbacks often prevented it. William preferred to focus exclusively on the momentum of the unfolding drama, and he liked to have his sets specially built to accommodate simultaneous filming from multiple camera angles.

Lulu Bett was Lois Wilson's favorite role, and William de Mille her favorite director – it was the fourth of six collaborations between the two at Paramount. His preference for understated acting drew him to her natural, low-key performance style. A former schoolteacher, she had been discovered in 1915 by Lois Weber, who met her after Wilson had taken part in a beauty pageant put on by Universal Pictures. Weber hired Wilson as an extra for the Anna Pavlova showcase *The Dumb Girl of Portici*, and Wilson soon established herself as a sensitive actress, though not a glamour girl. She became J. Warren Kerrigan's leading lady, first at Universal, and later at the Paralta Company. After making three pictures for the California Motion Picture Company in San Rafael, she signed an extended contract with Paramount, for whom she would appear in dozens of silents including *Miss Lulu Bett*, Cecil B. DeMille's *Manslaughter* (1922) and James Cruze's *The Covered Wagon* (1923). She even shed her good girl image to play Daisy Buchanan in the original film version of *The Great Gatsby* (1926), directed by Herbert Brenon. Her career in the talkies began with a contract at Warner Brothers; however she made films at nearly every

William de Mille disliked being used by critics as a "hammer with which to whack Cecil."

studio during the thirties, starring in *Seed* (1931) for Universal and *The Deluge* (1933) for RKO, and most memorably of all, as Shirley Temple's mother in *Bright Eyes* (1934) for Fox. In 1937 she moved to New York, where she continued her career largely on stage and later on television. She died in 1988, at the age of 93.

The screen version of *Miss Lulu Bett* took both Zona Gale's novel and play into account. It included numerous incidents described vividly in the novel but diminished in her adaptation for the stage, which confined nearly every scene to the family household. She also changed the explicitly happy ending of the novel to a more ambiguous and arguably more feminist conclusion for the play. This proved so unpopular that, after just ten performances, she composed a third, completely different final act, which was used for the remainder of the run. William de Mille's *Miss Lulu Bett* synthesizes its predecessors

into a fourth version, with a different ending.

After directing *The Ragamuffin* from his own scenario, de Mille preferred to partner with another scenarist, usually a woman. His regular collaborator, Olga Printzlau, was unavailable for *Miss Lulu Bett*, so Clara Beranger, who had written many scenarios for Famous Players-Lasky, stepped in. Clara became de Mille's closest associate, and remained so for the rest of his career – both professionally and personally. In August 1928, just three days after the finalization of

Miss Lulu Bett may be his best-known work, but it is scarcely remembered in the shadow of his brother's big-budget spectaculars.

the director's divorce from Anna George de Mille, the couple were married on a train in New Mexico.

His younger brother would continue to direct into his seventies, but William spent the last years of his life more quietly. Though never as successful as Cecil, he was well respected among his peers, and in 1929 they chose him to succeed Douglas Fairbanks as president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. With the transition to sound, de Mille expected that his Broadway experience would make him particularly suited to direct talkies, once he

conquered the intricacies of the new technology. He signed up to be Roy Pomeroy's assistant director on the first all-talking picture at Paramount, *Interference* (1928), and, after he had directed a few talkies on his own – including Ruth Chatterton's first sound picture *The Doctor's Secret* – de Mille moved east and helped to set up the Eastern Service Studios in Astoria, Queens. He directed Miriam Hopkins in the Manhattan melodrama *Two Kinds of Women* (1932), but his movie career fizzled. He contented himself with writing and lecturing, and he even revisited Broadway to produce and direct the 1936 comedy *Hallowe'en*. Upon publishing his memoir *Hollywood Saga* in 1939, he returned to California, but never again did he direct a film.

In 1945, Cecil provided an endowment to USC for the founding of a theater department. William de Mille accepted the position of Department Chair, and, apart from directing a few student productions, he played tennis, fished and smoked cigars until his death in 1955 at the age of 76. Unlike Cecil, who had the clout to obtain personal prints of his films, William's fifty-film legacy was entrusted to a largely indifferent studio. *Miss Lulu Bett* may be his best-known work, but it is scarcely remembered in the shadow of his brother's big-budget spectaculars.

– BRIAN DARR



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Courtesy of British Film Institute

A COTTAGE ON DARTMOOR

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

CAST: Norah Baring (Sally, a manicurist), Uno Henning (Joe, a barber's assistant), Hans Schlettow (Harry, a Dartmoor farmer), Anthony Asquith (Bespectacled Man in Cinema), Judd Green (Customer) 1929 British Instructional Films PRODUCER: H. Bruce Woolfe DIRECTOR: Anthony Asquith SCENARIO: Anthony Asquith, from a story by Herbert Price CINEMATOGRAPHERS: Stanley Rodwell, Axel Lindblom ART DIRECTION: Ian Campbell-Gray, Arthur B. Woods PRINT SOURCE: British Film Institute

British director Anthony Asquith is best remembered today for his elegant film adaptations of plays by George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde and Terence Rattigan, and also for the star-studded international melodramas he made at the end of his career, such as *The VIPS* (1963) and *The Yellow Rolls-Royce* (1964). However, the film that firmly established Asquith's credentials as a filmmaker was a silent-era psychological thriller which has only lately been rediscovered by contemporary audiences. *A Cottage on Dartmoor* was one of the last silent films produced in Britain, and only the third film of Asquith's career. Completed and released the same year as Alfred

Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, Asquith's *A Cottage on Dartmoor* was greeted as proof of a resurgent British cinema, which had floundered since World War One.

Anthony Asquith was born in 1902 to Herbert Henry Asquith, a Liberal Party politician who would become Prime Minister of England just four years later, and Margot Tennant Asquith, a free-spirited woman who gave her beloved son the nickname "Puffin." He was a pampered and privileged youth who grew up in the official residence of the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street, and from his earliest age he was surrounded by the elite of British society. Asquith initially aspired to a career as a composer,

rather than follow his family's tradition of politics and law. However, as a student at Oxford University he was inexorably drawn to the cinema. He saw some films as many as six times in a single day, and he took particular interest in the technical aspects of filmmaking. As a founding member of the Film Society of England he was able to gain access to films never released in Britain, including German and Russian masterpieces such as *Metropolis* and *The Battleship Potemkin*. It was at Film Society screenings that Asquith acquired a detailed knowledge of avant-garde films from around the world.

Following his graduation from Oxford in 1925, Asquith went to New York to visit his sister Elizabeth, a playwright who had many friends in the American film industry. They traveled to Hollywood together, where they were guests of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, and they met such stars and directors as Lillian Gish, Ernst Lubitsch and Charlie Chaplin. Asquith also spent time on the set at the United Artists studio, where we watched and studied Fairbanks, Pickford and Chaplin at work.

Chaplin was of special interest to Asquith, and we owe a particularly memorable moment in *A Cottage on Dartmoor* to a scene filmed and rejected by Chaplin during the making of *The Circus*. Chaplin had instructed his cameraman - the legendary Rollie Totheroh - to film a scene by attaching a camera to a trapeze bar, which would serve to represent the point of view of The Little Tramp as he swung high above the audience. Chaplin declared the result to be little more than an "irritating trick" because it did not show the scene objectively, and it drew too much attention to itself. Asquith responded by arguing that it could well be used to transport the viewer directly into the character. Chaplin disagreed, but the scene stayed with Asquith, who was fascinated by the many tools a director has at his disposal to manipulate the image in a way that can profoundly affect the experience of the viewer. It was this fascination that led him to make films himself, and, consequently, to use a similar "trick" to great effect in *A Cottage on Dartmoor*.

On his return to England, Asquith managed to get hired onto a film, and his enthusiasm rapidly earned him multiple assignments: property master, make-up assistant, stunt man and assistant editor. Within a year, Asquith was directing his first film, *Shooting Stars*. A film about filmmaking, *Shooting Stars* is both a study in contemporary film technique and a satirical look at the lowly state of British cinema in the 1920s. When Asquith made *A Cottage on Dartmoor* two years later, he would confidently employ many of the techniques he absorbed from the rich tradition of European silent film - just as it was buckling under the strain of the new sound technology.

When Asquith began work on *A Cottage on Dartmoor*, the state of British cinema reflected that of the nation itself: economically and culturally exhausted, slow to recover from a devastating war. 80 percent of all films shown in British theaters in 1915 were domestically produced, but the war effort had crippled the industry. By 1925, the number of domestic productions had plummeted to 20 percent, as Hollywood and continental Europe grew increasingly dominant. The downturn in domestic film production, coupled with a continuing economic recession, grew so severe that, in 1927, the British government passed the Cinematograph Film Act. The act mandated that five percent of films shown in British theaters had to be from domestic sources in the first year, and that the percentage would have to increase annually until 1935, when theaters would be required to attain a domestic exhibition rate of twenty percent. While this legislation spurred investment



Uno Henning as Joe, the seemingly ordinary barber's assistant in *A Cottage on Dartmoor*.

in the film industry, it also led to the production of an enormous number of cheaply and quickly made movies by incompetent artists and inexperienced actors. These films existed solely to satisfy the quotas, which kept British movie theaters open so they could continue to show the more popular Hollywood product. While it is true that "quota-quickies" were responsible for giving life to an entire generation of filmmakers and actors, and it is fair to acknowledge their development as a significant factor in the growth of British cinema, it is equally important to note that many of these films earned their derisive nickname all too well.



Asquith structures the story around a dramatic juxtaposition of cityscape and wild nature.

A *Cottage on Dartmoor*, however, was a leading indicator of a new wave in British filmmaking, which would serve to redeem the unfortunate reputation of the domestic cinema of the 1920s. It was also one of

the first films to be produced at a newly constructed studio in Welwyn, Hertfordshire – a facility built specifically as a result of the Film Act to capitalize on the public's desire for talkies.

Right on the cusp of the sound era, Asquith pays homage to the silent films that inspired him to pick up a camera in the first place. Many of the most impressive sequences in the film favor the use of metaphorical imagery over explanatory intertitles, which gives the film a visual sophistication much beyond that of the emerging, technologically crude sound movie. Asquith conveys mood and suspense by using chiaroscuro lighting techniques that recall such great works of German Expressionist cinema as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1921). He makes extensive use of the powerful montage techniques innovated by Sergei Eisenstein in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and Dziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). And he structures the story around a dramatic juxtaposition of cityscape and wild nature, characteristic of the Swedish director Victor Sjöström in films like *The Outlaw and His Wife* (1918). Asquith takes those who are lucky enough to see *A Cottage on Dartmoor* today on a whirlwind tour of high artistry from the silent era, as it was enjoyed then and is celebrated now.

– BENJAMIN SCHROM

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Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

THE GODLESS GIRL

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE MIGHTY WURLITZER BY DENNIS JAMES

CAST: Lina Basquette (The Girl), Marie Prevost (The Other Girl), James Duryea (The Boy), Noah Beery (The Brute), Eddie Quillan (The Goat), Mary Jane Irving (The Victim), Gertrude Quality (A Matron), Hedwig Reicher (A Matron), Julia Faye (An Inmate), Viola Louie (An Inmate), Emily Barrye (An Inmate), Jacqueline Dyre (An Inmate), Clarence Burton (A Guard), Richard Alexander (A Guard) 1929 Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation PRODUCER-DIRECTOR: Cecil B. DeMille STORY AND TITLES: Jeanie Macpherson TITLES: Beulah Marie Dix CINEMATOGRAPHER: J. Peverell Marley EDITOR: Anne Bauchens ART DIRECTION: Mitchell Liesen COSTUME DESIGN: Adrian PRINT SOURCE: George Eastman House

The films of Cecil B. DeMille offer a spectacle of extremes. Success was never more opulent than in a DeMille film, nor was poverty more grinding. Reared on Bible stories and the romance sagas that appealed to his preacher/playwright father, DeMille's films relied on a pattern of sex, sin, damnation and redemption that played well with audiences at the crossroads of the Victorian Era and the Jazz Age.

The Godless Girl was DeMille's final silent picture. The production values fit comfortably on a typical DeMille scale – massive sets and literally hundreds of extras – but the subject matter is the stuff of social problem films, and its treatment is that of an exploitation picture.

In 1927, the idea of treating juvenile offenders differently from adult criminals was still fairly new.

The first juvenile court was established in 1899, in Chicago. As the juvenile reform system spread throughout the nation, reports of abuse began to circulate, and DeMille conducted research that uncovered water torture, restraint with chains, ropes and straitjackets, corporal punishment, and the use of bloodhounds and electric fences to deter escape. During the same period, DeMille read of an atheist organization that was actively scouting for recruits at Hollywood High School. For *The Godless Girl*, DeMille had scenarist Jeanie Macpherson combine abusive juvenile reform, atheist evangelism and fundamentalist Christian zealotry into one story.

As boys growing up, Cecil de Mille and his brother William were taught Bible stories on a daily basis by their father, who would follow this catechism with

grand tales of romance, opulence and adventure. Henry de Mille, a schoolteacher who gave lay sermons at an Episcopal church in Brooklyn, was also the author of numerous stories and plays, as well as a partner of the theater impresario David J. Belasco. His two sons, born three years apart, inherited his love of romantic literature, his passion for the stage, and his faith. Belasco produced the plays that William wrote. Cecil sought, with little success, work on the stage as an actor, director and producer.

In 1913, he left New York for California, where he set up a motion picture studio – the first in Hollywood. He glamorized his name by capitalizing the “D” in de Mille and adding his middle initial, transforming himself into Cecil B. DeMille, and he discovered his calling as a movie director with the success of his very first production, *The Squaw Man* (1914).

By 1928, DeMille was among the most recognized of all film directors. For the title role of *The Godless Girl*, he chose Lina Basquette, a San Mateo native whose life story rivals any DeMille picture for sheer spectacle and implausibility. Christened Lena Baskette, she spent her childhood dancing to records in her father’s drugstore, which was San Mateo’s first Victrola outlet. After a representative of the Victor Recording Company saw her informal act, the eight-year-old Baskette found herself promoting phonographs at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition



Lina Basquette suffers the consequence of her rampant pamphleteering for atheism in *The Godless Girl*.

in San Francisco. A year later, she was making “Lena Baskette Featurettes” for Universal Pictures. By 1923, the uncommon sixteen-year-old had become the singular Lina Basquette, featured dancer in the Ziegfeld Follies, where she performed alongside a nineteen-year-old Louise Brooks in 1925.

That same year Basquette wed Sam Warner, second youngest of the four Warner brothers, who transformed cinema when he joined with Western Electric and Vitaphone to develop talking pictures.

In October of 1926, Basquette gave birth to her first child, Lita Warner, and on October 5, 1927, Sam Warner died unexpectedly – just one day before the New York opening of *The Jazz Singer*. Harry, Albert and Jack Warner stopped Basquette from inheriting Sam’s share of the company, and, more significantly, they took Lita away from her. Basquette tried in vain for years to regain custody of her daughter.

In 1930, Adolf Hitler, then leader of a minority party in Germany, wrote a fan letter to Basquette, praising her for her performance in *The Godless Girl*. In her autobiography, Basquette describes a 1937 meeting with Hitler in Munich, at which the Nazi leader made it clear that he was interested in more than her screen presence: “I said, Adolf, surely you wouldn’t have relations with a woman whose grandfather is a Jew!”

“A document of American police brutality and the glorious spreading of atheism among American youth.”

Basquette’s acting career all but ended in 1943 with the Poverty Row film noir, *A Night for Crime*. A few after that she became a trainer of show dogs, and developed into a recognized authority on the Great Dane, even authoring a classic text on the subject in 1972 entitled *Your Great Dane*. She made one final appearance on screen in the 1991 drama *Paradise Park*, an independent production filmed in West Virginia. She died, at the age of 87, in 1994.

Marie Prevost gives a remarkable performance in *The Godless Girl* as a born-again Christian whose faith in God is tested by the brutality of incarceration. A native of Canada, she got her start in the movies as one of Mack Sennett’s Bathing Beauties in 1915, when she was just seventeen years old. Her flair for comedy earned her star billing in Sennett’s madcap Keystone shorts, followed by a contract with Universal in 1921.

Regularly typecast as a free spirit in the flapper mold, she starred in a 1922 adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Beautiful and the Damned* opposite Kenneth Harlan, who would become her second husband. They shared in common with Basquette a fondness for dogs, and raised Cairn Terriers that they showed at competitions all across the West Coast.

The death of Prevost’s mother in 1926 proved to be a source of great distress, and both she and Harlan took to drinking heavily, which led to the dissolution of their marriage in 1927. Her alcoholism caused her to gain weight, which greatly reduced her appeal to casting agents. By 1935, the only work she could find was alongside fellow Keystone alumni Ben

Turpin, Ford Sterling and Chester Conklin in a Sennett pastiche, *The Keystone Hotel*. Her final film was the Poverty Row production *Ten Laps to Go* (1936).

On January 23, 1937, in response to complaints of a dog’s persistent bark, police went to Prevost’s Los Angeles home to investigate, and found her dead. Her death was attributed to heart failure prompted by malnutrition and alcoholism. She was just 39 years old. The police report, which stated that her pet Dachshund “had chewed at her arms and legs in a futile attempt to awaken her,” was exaggerated to ghoulish effect by Kenneth Anger in his sensationalized account of film colony scandals, *Hollywood Babylon*. His suggestion that Prevost’s corpse was eaten by her dog demonstrated a DeMille-like penchant for the spectacular, but it effectively reduced Prevost’s life to a morbid joke.

In his autobiography, DeMille recounts a 1931 visit to the Soviet Union, where *The Godless Girl* was a hit. Why his film had proved to be so successful in a country devoted to Communism and atheism was a mystery, until he made the following discovery: “The Russians simply did not screen the redeeming reel, but played the rest of the picture as a document of American police brutality and the glorious spreading of atheism among American youth.”

– RICHARD HILDRETH

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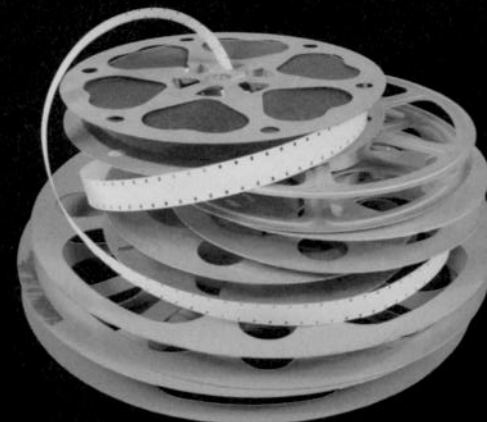
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