

THE SILENT TREATMENT

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"ALONG THE MOONBEAM TRAIL" EMERGES FROM EXTINCTION

The sci-fi fantasy picture *Along the Moonbeam Trail*, one of the earliest examples of combining stop motion animation with live actors, is undergoing preservation work thanks to the fortuitous discovery of a nitrate print reel at the Chatham Community Players theater in Chatham, New Jersey. Major Herbert M. Dawley (a co-founder of the theater in 1922) produced *The Ghost of Slumber Mountain* in 1918, and went on to produce *Moonbeam Trail* in 1920. Dawley made the animation models of the dinosaurs and then hired a young technician, Willis O'Brien, to handle the

stop motion animation. O'Brien later went on to be a leading special effects artist in the film industry, whose most distinguishable work can be found in 1925's *The Lost World* and the 1933 box office smash, *King Kong*.

It has been previously thought that the dinosaur footage for "Moonbeam Trail" was compiled from outtakes that O'Brien originally did for "Slumber Mountain." However, the discovery of the "Moonbeam Trail" footage suggests that this was not the case. Instead, it is possible that

O'Brien either worked with Dawley on both films, or that Dawley did much more than he has been given credit for, including the actual animation for "Moonbeam Trail."

Through the 1920's, Dawley went on to produce numerous stop motion films both on his own, and with famed puppeteer Tony Sarg. Unfortunately most of Dawley's films appear to be lost.



The nitrate footage was donated to the Academy Film Archive by Chatham Community Players to be properly conserved and preserved. The AFA is investigating additional

material of "Moonbeam" housed at the British Film Institute, in hopes that both elements may be combined in order to assemble a complete continuity. Once preservation is finalized, footage of "Moonbeam Trail" will be incorporated into a documentary about Major Dawley to re-establish his own contributions as producer and filmmaker in the field of stop motion animation. The doc will be produced by Stephen Czerkas, Director of The Dinosaur Museum in Blanding, UT, and author of *Cine-*

saurus: The History of Dinosaurs in the Movies based on a traveling museum exhibit of the same name.

(Info and photo courtesy of Stephen Czerkas)

SPRING FILM SERIES ANNOUNCED FOR HISTORIC ELSINORE THEATRE

Salem, OREGON. On May 28th 1926, the magnificent Elsinore Theatre first opened its doors to the public. Developed by George Guthrie, an entrepreneur and lover of art, the theatre was designed to resemble the castle in "Hamlet," Shakespeare's greatest drama. Please join us on Wednesday nights for the opportunity to see great movies, with friends, projected on the big screen as they were originally shown, in one of America's grand movie palaces, beautifully restored to its original glory.

The Historic Elsinore Theatre in partnership with the Chemeketa Community College Humanities Department and Film Studies Program presents a program of silent and classic movies. The silent series of four movie evenings begins April 9th with Fritz Lang's landmark thriller, *Spies*; continues on with the Harold Lloyd comedy *Speedy*, followed by the pre-



code jewel *Flesh and the Devil* with smoldering lovers Greta Garbo and John Gilbert, then rounds out with a John Ford western, *3 Bad Men*. The silent film presentations will feature live accompaniment by Rick Parks at the "Mighty Wurlitzer Organ."

Tickets are \$5 each and can be purchased at the Elsinore Theatre or visit www.elsinoretheatre.com.

UNITED ARTISTS TURNING 90

by **Geoffrey Macnab** (excerpted article 02/27/08)

The Hollywood majors have always had a certain disdain for their upstart rival, **United Artists**, whose 90th anniversary is being marked with a year-long celebration. The history of UA is one of the great artistic triumphs on screen.

"The lunatics have taken charge of the asylum," the Hollywood producer Richard Rowland famously quipped in 1919 when **Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks** and **D.W. Griffith** set up United Artists in the first place. Hard-nosed executives were immensely skeptical right from the outset at the idea that artists and film-makers could run a studio.

UA was essentially a distribution company. The idea behind it was that the producer-partners could finance their own productions and then release them through the new outfit. This would give them a far greater percentage of the profits. Within a few years, UA began to totter, primarily because it suffered from a severe shortage of product. Founder member D.W. Griffith quit in 1924, and Chaplin and Pickford were quickly at each other's throats.

UA's fortunes fluctuated over the following years. In the late 1920s, the fledgling studio was very profitable indeed. Chaplin was still in his pomp and Pickford and Fairbanks remained immense box-office draws.

Inevitably, given that its founders were titans of the silent era, UA struggled to make the transition to talkies. While the rest of Hollywood adjusted to sound, Chaplin famously carried on as if nothing had happened, continuing to make silent movies.



Age did for Fairbanks. Famous for doing his own stunts, Fairbanks (well in his forties by the time of the talkie revolution) could no longer scurry up trees or leap off ramparts with the same élan as in his prime. It didn't help that his relations with Pickford were beginning to fray.

By 1951, the beginning of the television era, Pickford was describing UA as a company "sick unto death". None the less, it continued to notch up plenty of hits. Then came writer/director Michael Cimino's spectacular flop *Heaven's Gate* in 1980. Cimino had the misfortune to have made a crusading Western with a socialist undertow at the beginning of the Reagan era.

Not long afterwards, the company, lurching towards bankruptcy, was sold to MGM. In subsequent years, United Artists has managed to show some of its original defiance

and originality. Under Bingham Ray, the studio supported maverick talents such as Michael Winterbottom and Mike Leigh, and released such Oscar winners as *Bowling for Columbine* and *No Man's Land*. None the less, Ray's time at the helm of the company was short-lived. He joined in 2001 and stepped down in 2004. In 2006, United Artists was revived again, this time as United Artists Entertainment LLC, a joint venture between MGM, the star Tom Cruise and his long-time production partner, Paula Wagner.

Whether UA will ever manage to turn itself into a profitable, stand-alone studio remains to be seen. On the one hand, this is a company that has been riven by boardroom battles and constant changes in ownership and identity. On the other, whatever disputes have been going on behind the screen, UA has brought us (among others) such gems as *Some Like It Hot*, *A Star Is Born*, *The Apartment*, *High Noon* and *Annie Hall*.

(Full article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/film-and-tv/features/star-makers-uk-90th-anniversary-787805.html>)

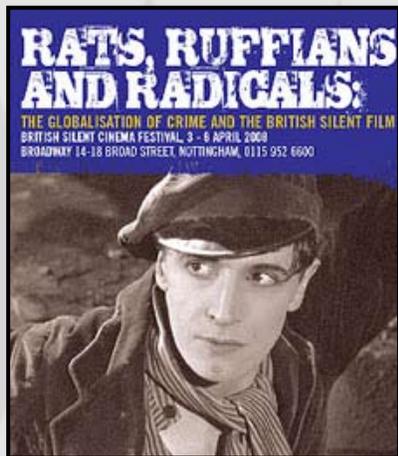
RATS, RUFFIANS AND RADICALS

(April 3-6)

The British Silent Cinema Festival, now in its 11th year, is a celebration of British cinema before 1930 and is organized in collaboration with the British Film Institute. The festival's theme for 2008 is **Rats, Ruffians and Radicals: The Globalisation of Crime and British Silent Film** and covers the gamut of crime fiction from the macabre and murderous antics of the sinister Dr.

Fu Manchu, to the rigorous detection methods of Sherlock Holmes.

Beginning April 3rd to the 6th at the Broadway Cinema in Nottingham, festival highlights include *At the Villa Rose* (1920) - director Maurice Elvey's locked-room murder mystery set in the fashionable and decadent expatriate community in Monte Carlo; *The Hillpark Mystery* (1923) - the story of a detective trying to clear the name of a woman accused of murder, who finds matters complicated when he becomes romantically attached to his client; and Graham Cutts' classic, *The Rat* (1925), starring Ivor Novello as the eponymous anti-hero in the first of the trilogy set in 1920s Parisian low life and underworld. Mae Marsh is the Rat's long-suffering girlfriend, Isabel Jeans, the infinitely more interesting vamp who seduces him.



Presentations will take place throughout the festival on subjects such as the history of the detective in cinema, crimes of passion, the white slave trade, street crime, diamond smuggling and international crime. As ever, the festival draws from the excellent and extensive collection at the BFI National Archive.

All films are accompanied with live music from world-renown musicians Neil Brand, Gunter Buchwald, Philip Carli, Stephen Horne and John Sweeney.

(Full festival schedule & details, www.british-silentcinema.com)



BETZWOOD FILM FESTIVAL BLUE BELL, PA

The 19th Annual **Betzwood Silent Film Festival** will be held on Saturday, **May 3, 2008**, at 8 PM, in the Science Center Theater at Montgomery County Community College in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania.

This year's program, *Toonerville and Beyond*, is a celebration of the life and art of Wilna Hervey, who portrayed "The Powerful Katrinka" in the Betzwood *Toonerville Trolley* films. Hervey was a woman of many parts. In addition to her film and Broadway credits, she was a noted American artist who spent most of her decidedly-unconventional life in the Maverick Art Colony in Woodstock, New York, where she is remembered to this day. In addition to her Betzwood Toonerville films, we will be screening some of the *Plum Center* films she made with her Toonerville co-star, Dan Mason, in San Francisco after Betzwood closed. The films

will be shown at the correct projection speed with live accompaniment on the organ by Don Kinnier. Tickets are \$8,

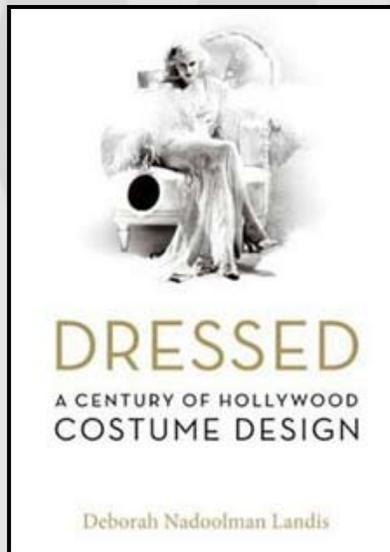
(General Admission may be purchased by phone at 215-641-6518, or online at http://www.ticketleap.com/Member/event.aspx?event_id=73DDAF65-B36F-4A0A-8569-38442C6ECFC.)

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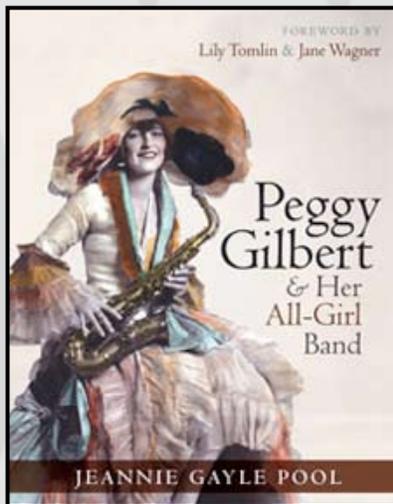
DRESSED: A CENTURY OF HOLLYWOOD COSTUME DESIGN

By *Deborah Nadoolman Landis*

From the lavish productions of Hollywood's Golden Age through the high-tech blockbusters of today, the most memorable movies all have one thing in common: they rely on the magical transformations rendered by the costume designer. Whether spectacular or subtle, elaborate or barely there, a movie costume must be more than merely a perfect fit.



Each costume speaks a language all its own, communicating mood, personality, and setting, and propelling the action of the movie as much as a scripted line or synthetic clap of thunder. More than a few acting careers have been launched on the basis of an unforgettable costume, and many an era defined by the intuition of a costume designer - think curvy Mae West in *I'm No Angel* (Travis Banton, costume designer), Judy Garland in *A Star is Born* (Jean Louis and Irene Sharaff, costume designers), Diane Keaton in *Annie Hall* (Ruth Morley, costume designer), or Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Deborah Nadoolman Landis, costume designer). (Visit www.dressedthebook.com for details)



PEGGY GILBERT AND HER ALL GIRL BAND

By Jeannie Gayle Pool

In *Peggy Gilbert & Her All-Girl Band*, Jeannie Gayle Pool profiles the fascinating life of this multi-

talented saxophone player, arranger, bandleader, and advocate for women instrumental musicians. Based on oral history interviews and Gilbert's collection of photographs, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia, this book includes many materials not previously available on all-women bands from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. This volume also includes a chronology, bibliography, filmography, and a list of all of Peggy Gilbert's columns for *Overture*. Thoroughly documented, this book highlights the contributions of Gilbert and other notable West Coast female jazz musicians. It should have a major impact on the research of the history of American jazz and of female jazz musicians, in particular. (www.amazon.com)

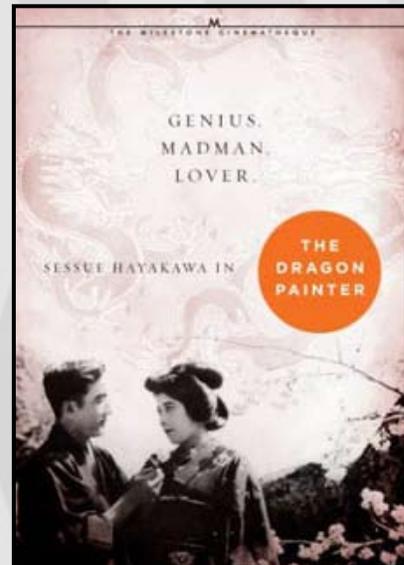
ON DVD

THE DRAGON PAINTER

Sessue Hayakawa was one of the great stars of the silent cinema. In many films he played a dashing, romantic lead - a rarity for Asian actors in Hollywood, even today. Hayakawa became so popular and powerful that he was able to start Haworth Pictures to control his own destiny. *The Dragon Painter* was the finest of the Haworth productions.

Beautifully acted, gorgeously shot (with Yosemite Valley filling in for the Japanese landscape), and lovingly directed, the film is an absolute marvel. Hayakawa plays Tatsu, an artist living as a hermit in the wilds of Japan. Thought mad by the local villagers, he believes that his princess fiancée has been captured by a dragon. His obsession leads to artistic inspiration. It isn't until a surveyor comes across Tatsu in the mountains

that his genius is discovered. The surveyor informs the famed artist Kano Indara about his discovery.



Kano is desperate to find a male heir to teach his art, but when Tatsu meets Kano's daughter (played by Hayakawa's wife, Tsuru Aoki) and sees only his lost princess, a clash of wills brings the household to the brink of disaster. (milestonefilms.com)

MOMENTS IN SILENCE

April 6, 1925 - *Lufthansa* shows first in-flight movie.

April 14, 1894 - *First Kinetoscope parlour* opens in New York.

May 5, 1908 - *Kalem* loses lawsuit to story rights for *Ben Hur*.

May 19, 1927 - *Grauman's Chinese Theater* has Grand Opening.

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