

THE SILENT TREATMENT

ALL THE NEWS FIT TO HEAR • VOLUME 06 • NUMBER 01 • JAN/FEB 2012



THE "FLYING A" A Centennial Celebration

Before Hollywood, Santa Barbara became the center of the movie-making world when the Chicago-based **American Film Manufacturing Company** opened the largest production facility in the country there in 1913. Known as the "Flying A" due to its winged logo, the studio produced over twelve hundred films.

Santa Barbara offered a wide variety of film backdrops, including mountains, urban scenes, great estates, and the ocean. While located there, the Flying A cranked out two to three movies a week and specialized in short films of less than 30 minutes. Eventually the studio produced feature films, such as *Purity* (1916), which featured some of the industry's first nude scenes. Its star, Audrey Munson, was a famous model who had posed for statuary in New York and Washington, D.C.

The studio's biggest star was Mary Miles Minter (1902-1984) who ap-

peared in twenty-six films from 1916 to 1919, and rivaled Mary Pickford in popularity. The Flying A was also a training ground for major talent. Allan Dwan went on to direct Douglas Fairbanks in *Robin Hood* (1922) and John Wayne in *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949). In 1939, Victor Fleming directed *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. As the industry centered in Hollywood, the studio hit hard times and ceased operations in 1920.

On display from **January 26th through August 19th, 2012**, The Flying A exhibition presented at the **Santa Barbara Historical Museum** will focus on the studio's influential and prolific operation in Santa Barbara between 1911 and 1921 when nearly one thousand silent films were made before it disbanded. The exhibition features original Flying A artifacts, documents, photographs and a selection of original Flying A silent

films which will play on the Sala Gallery Wall Theatre. Two lectures about the Flying A studios are also scheduled for **February 1st at 11am** and **February 3rd at 11am and 2pm** to kick off this groundbreaking exhibit. (Further info available at www.santabarbaramuseum.com)

NIGHT HUNTER Hits Festival Circuit

Meticulously crafted from approximately 4000 handmade collages and images of Lillian Gish, Colorado based animator Stacey Steers has conceptualized the disquieting short subject *Night Hunter* where transitions both biological and metaphorical are central themes in a dreamscape drawn from allegory, myth, and archetypes.

Night Hunter was shot on an Oxberry animation stand using a Mitchell 35mm camera where images from four silent films featuring actress Lillian Gish are combined with 18th and 19th century engravings to create rich, timeless, imaginative environments where the narrative unfolds intuitively and reveals itself in the process of construction.



Night Hunter

The subsequent fluidity of character becomes a critical element in the texture of the film and the identity of the principal character. In some instances Gish is cut out of specific scenes and reconfigured in collage environments, while collage materials are applied directly to film frames in others.

Completed in 2011, *Night Hunter* is now making the rounds on the festival circuit where previous stops have included the Telluride Film Festival and the AFI Festival, and upcoming presentations are scheduled at the Sundance Film Festival, the IFF Rotterdam, and the Schnitzer Museum at the University of Oregon. (www.staceysteers.com)

THE EDISON STREET ORGAN LOFT: 2012 WINTER PROGRAM

SALT LAKE CITY. In the heart of Salt Lake City is one of today's most unique and fascinating places—the **Edison Street Organ Loft**. Inside a building that began as chicken coop, the Organ Loft contains a 175-seat theater that regularly screens silent movies and has been entertaining audiences since 1984. The signature element of the theater is the colossus five keyboard console stationed under the screen that interprets films through the language of sound. With 2,400 pipes, an assortment of bells and whistles, and even a siren from a 1946 Cadillac fire engine, the Wurlitzer organ on South Salt Lake's Edison Street brings the ultimate entertainment experience.

The story of the Organ Loft is the story of the late Lawrence Bray—one man's dedication to the restoration and preservation of the Theatre Pipe Organ. His passion for pipe organs began as a young man, when he heard

and met George Wright and Gaylord Carter performing on the Wurlitzer at the San Francisco Fox Theatre. Intrigued with the sound of the organ, he determined he would search for old theatre organs in Utah.



The Beloved Rogue

The 2012 Winter Film Program is already underway with organist Blaine Gale accompanying the remaining silent film presentations with the comic romance of *Ella Cinders* (1926) starring Colleen Moore and Lloyd Hughes on February 9th and 10th; followed by John Barrymore, Conrad Veidt, and Marceline Day in the swashbuckling adventure *The Beloved Rogue* (1927) on the 23rd and 24th; then jump on into the month of March with William S. Hart starring in *Sand* (1920) on the 8th and 9th, and round out the month with one of the greatest silent comedies ever made featuring Buster Keaton in *The General* (1926) on the 22nd and 23rd. All shows begin at 7:30 PM. (www.organloftslc.com)



The General

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA PRESENTS: **FAUST**

LONDON. Southbank Centre is proud to announce a unique cinematic and musical event—a special film screening of the epic silent masterpiece *Faust* (1926) on **Monday, February 27th, 2012**. This special screening features the Philharmonia Orchestra performing the worldwide premiere of Aphrodite Raickopoulou's new soundtrack score and will be conducted by Emmy Award winner Benjamin Wallfisch, with live piano improvisations by Gabriela Montero. The evening will open with a foreword by acclaimed British actor Hugh Grant.



Faust

One of the greatest stories ever told, the film was created in 1926 by one of the most celebrated and influential directors of the late silent era, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. The Faust legend, which has been immortalized by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe and Christopher Marlowe, portrays a fierce and immaculately orchestrated battle between good and evil. Destiny dictates the epilogue with a universal message: "Love is and forever will triumph over all."

The cast includes Emil Jannings as the howling Mephisto, Camilla Horn with her startling acting debut as the innocent Gretchen, and the celebrated Gösta Ekman in the title role. (www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

SILENT TRIBUTE

The "Shocking" Miss Maas

By Luke McKernan (excerpted article, 01/8/12)

No one cares about a screenwriter. It's brutal, but it's true. They toil away at a keyboard for months, then see their precious work mangled and abused in its conversion to the screen. They are unwelcome on the set. Their brightest ideas get attributed to the director, their sharpest lines end up credited to some dumb actor. Frequently they get dropped from the credits entirely, particularly when they have undertaken essential remedial work on someone else's botched script that needs urgent surgery. No one writes books about them, no one studies them, and film history mostly ignores them.



That's how it is with screenwriters, and it's certainly how **Frederica Sagor Maas** recorded it, one of the pioneers of Hollywood screenwriting who lived more than three times longer than the silent era itself, finally passing away January 5, 2012 at the remarkable age of 111. At the sprightly age of 99 she published a memoir, **The Shocking Miss Pilgrim: A Writer in Early Hollywood**, having

been encouraged to do so by film historian Kevin Brownlow.

It is no rose-tinted autobiography. She was contemptuous of the film industry and some of its most vaunted figures (such as Irving Thalberg and Louis B. Mayer), finding Hollywood corrupt, debauched and dishonest. Her cynicism was undoubtedly accentuated by years of seeing her work and that of her co-writer husband Ernest Maas unacknowledged, plagiarized or rejected. Being investigated by the FBI for alleged communist sympathies in the 1950s didn't help much either.



Born in 1900 as the child of Russian emigrants in the USA, she studied journalism at Columbia University, and joined Universal Pictures in New York as an assistant story editor at age 20. She moved to Hollywood and Preferred Pictures in 1923, later working for Universal Pictures, MGM, Fox and Paramount. Films she wrote included *Flesh and the Devil* (1926) with Greta Garbo, *His Secretary* (1925) and *The Waning Sex* (1926) with Norma Shearer, *The Plastic Age* (1925) with Clara Bow, and *Rolled Stockings* (1927) with Louise Brooks. Much of her writing—as it appeared on the screen—is now lost, while other work never went acknowledged in the first place.

Work dried up in the sound era, and the film *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim* (1946)—based on the serious

issues of women and employment by Frederica and her husband—was turned into a silly musical rather summing up her film industry experience. So she became an insurance adjuster instead, and stated that if she had her time to do over again she would have never have gone into the movies.

Is that true? Probably not. You don't stick at a business for thirty years without feeling some sort of commitment to it, and the passing of time can sour memories just as it can sugar-coat it for others. At any rate, her memoir is of particular value for providing an insight into Hollywood's silent heyday from the perspective of someone who had experienced the changes of a century and found herself writing for a 21st century audience which likes its histories to have warts. (Full article at <http://bioscopic.wordpress.com/>)

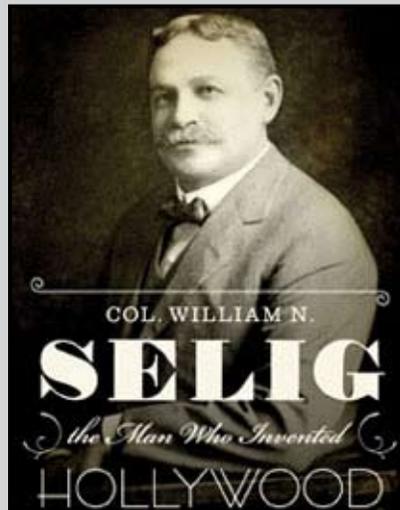
BOOK CORNER

COL. WILLIAM SELIG: The Man Who Invented Hollywood

All histories of Hollywood are wrong. Why? Two words: Colonel Selig. This early pioneer laid the foundation for the movie industry that we know today.

Active from 1896 to 1938, William N. Selig was responsible for an amazing series of firsts, including the first two-reel narrative film and the first two-hour narrative feature made in America; the first American movie serial with cliffhanger endings; the first westerns filmed in the West with real cowboys and Indians; the creation of the jungle-adventure genre; the first horror film in America; the first successful American newsreel (made in partnership with William Randolph Hearst); and the first permanent film studio in Los Angeles. Selig was also among the first to cultivate extensive international ex-

hibition of American films, which created a worldwide audience and contributed to American domination of the medium.



In this book, Andrew Erish delves into the virtually untouched Selig archive at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library to tell the fascinating story of this unjustly forgotten film pioneer. He traces Selig's career from his early work as a traveling magician in the Midwest, to his founding of the first movie studio in Los Angeles in 1909, to his landmark series of innovations that still influence the film industry.

As Erish recounts, Selig first recognized that Southern California is the perfect place for moviemaking, and convincingly demonstrates that while others have been credited with inventing Hollywood, Colonel Selig is actually the one who most deserves that honor. (www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/ericol.html)

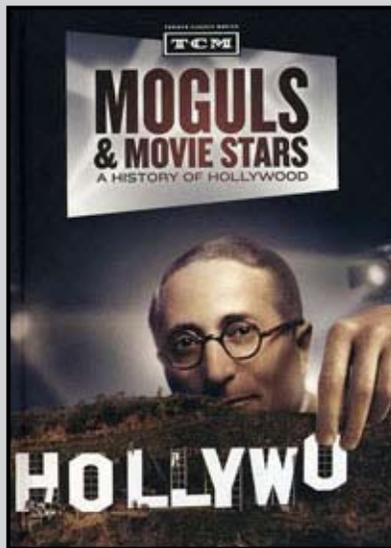
ON DVD

MOGULS & MOVIE STARS:
A History of Hollywood

The American movie business started as peepshows and grew into a near-mythical art form that used an

exciting new technology to create drama, laughter and adventure literally bigger than life. Here is the whole story—the glamour and the sweat, the collaborations and the conflicts, the careers that skyrocketed and the dreams that crashed—in the biggest production ever from TCM, the world's prestige source for films and film history.

This multi-part documentary contains seven enthralling hours of movie clips, rare footage, interviews and keen insight from Hollywood insiders. Film historians trace moviemaking from its humble beginnings through the Golden Age to the New Hollywood of the '60s. It's a saga as exciting as any that ever appeared on the silver screen.



The set is divided into 7 episodes on 3 discs and includes a 40-page booklet with vintage photographs. (www.wbshop.com)

THE BIRTH OF A NATION:
Deluxe 3-Disc Edition

Almost a century after its release, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) remains one of the most controversial films ever made—a landmark achievement that continues to fascinate and enrage



audiences. It is the epic story of two families, one northern and one southern, during and after the Civil War.

D. W. Griffith's masterful direction combines brilliant battle scenes and tender romance with a vicious portrayal of African Americans. It was the greatest feature-length blockbuster yet to be produced in the United States, and the first to be shown in the White House. After seeing the film, President Woodrow Wilson declared it was "like writing history with lightning!"

In cities and states across the country, the film energized the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which tried to have the film banned, or at least the most gruesome scenes censored. The film also inspired African Americans to move into filmmaking as a way to offer alternative images and stories.

This Deluxe 3-Disc Edition includes seven Civil War shorts directed by D.W. Griffith, archival documents pertaining to the censorship battles over the film's 1922 re-release titled "New York vs. The Birth of a Nation" and excerpts of souvenir program books. (www.kino.com)

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