

THE SILENT TREATMENT

ALL THE NEWS FIT TO HEAR • VOLUME 08 • NUMBER 03 • MAY/JUNE 2014

HOMeward BOUND: LOST SILENTS RETURN TO CHINA, BRITAIN



"CAVE OF THE SILKEN WEB" PRESERVED

The silent 1927 film *The Cave of the Silken Web* is believed to have been the first film adaptation of the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West* which was published in the 16th century during the Ming Dynasty. As one of the four great novels of Chinese classic literature, these stories are familiar to most Chinese people and are the source material for many of China's recent blockbuster hits.

The original film was thought to be lost until a copy was discovered in Norway's national library in 2011. When 9,000 old films were catalogued in 2011, the archivists found a damaged nitrocellulose copy of *Pan si dong*, as it was originally titled. It was the first Chinese film screened in Norway (in 1929) with title cards in both languages. It is believed to be the only print in existence.

Norway restored the print and made a copy, then returned the origi-

nal to the Chinese Film Archive. Tina Anckarman, a film archivist at the National Library of Norway, mentioned the fact that the original had title cards in both languages. "The translator took quite a few liberties and added his own comments in brackets when it suited him. This gives the film a comical twist," she said. "There are also sequences where the Chinese text is upside down or inverted." Anckarman hand carried the film to Beijing along with National



Cave of the Silken Web

Librarian Roger Joesevold.

The film tells the story of a pilgrim monk who is sent by his emperor to locate sacred Buddhist texts. He is captured in the Cave of the Seven Spiders who want to eat his flesh because they believe it will make them immortal. The monk is eventually saved by his disciple, who later becomes the Monkey King. (Full article <http://filmrise.com/the-cave-of-the-silken-web-1927-silent-film-long-thought-to-have-been-lost-returned-to-china>)

BFI MOST WANTED "LOVE, LIFE, LAUGHTER" HEADS HOME

THE HAGUE (AFP). One of Britain's "most-wanted" lost films from the 1920s has turned up in a collection of old canisters rescued from a rural Dutch cinema.

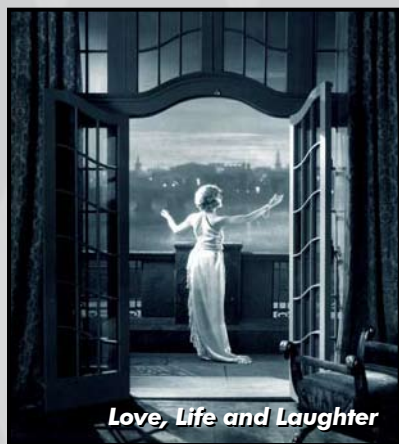


Love, Life and Laughter

"The long-lost British masterpiece called *Love, Life and Laughter* (1923) featuring actress Betty Balfour was discovered in the EYE's filmmuseum collection," spokesman Marnix van Wijk said. Shot by famed director George Pearson, the film

was listed as “missing” by the British Film Institute and featured on a list of 75 movies the BFI said “was not in our vaults” but “which we would love to find.”

The silent classic features a youthful Balfour, by far the most popular British screen actress of the time, playing the role of “Tip-Toes,” who dreams of dance-hall fame and befriends a young aspiring writer played by Harry Jonas. The pair agree to meet each other in two years to see if their dreams came true.



This particular copy was shown in a cinema in Hattem near the central Dutch city of Zwolle between 1929-32, the EYE said. The cinema closed down and the canisters were in storage at a local television station. In 2012 a Dutch journalist brought them to the EYE in the Dutch capital. “It took a while for us to open the canisters to see what’s inside,” Van Wijk told AFP. “One of our people watched the film and saw the title. He went online and realised that this was a really exceptional discovery.”

“We are in consultation with the BFI over how it will be restored and when the public will be able to enjoy the movie once again,” Van Wijk said. (Full Article <https://au.news.yahoo.com/entertainment/a/22339484/lost-1920s-british-movie-classic-found-in-amsterdam/>)

THE GREAT WAR A Cinematic Legacy

NEW YORK, NY. Presented by the Museum of Modern Art Film Department, this exhibition marks the 100th anniversary of the day World War I began in earnest, at a time when cinema, still in its infancy, offered an especially effective means of recording events. The movies have provided a great wealth of related material over the past century, far more than this series can encompass.

This retrospective—which comprises some 50 programs—has been broken down into “sub-genres”: pre-war activities; espionage; the battlefields in the trenches, in the air, and on and beneath the sea; actualités; and the various homefronts before, during, and after the conflict.

Beginning on August 4th, the early section of the program is predominately drawn from the early years, either during the war or in the succeeding decades. And although many of these films are familiar, there are also some rare gems.



Silent film highlights for the month of August include *The False Faces* (1919) with Henry B. Walthall and Lon Chaney on August 5th and 6th, *The Better 'Ole* (1926) with Syd Chaplin and Doris Hill (also on the

5th and 6th), *Shifting Sands* (1918) with Gloria Swanson and Joe King on August 7th and 8th, and *The Mysterious Lady* (1928) with Greta Garbo and Conrad Nagel on August 8th and 10th. (Complete film schedule can be found at www.moma.org/visit/calendar/films/1490)

NELL SHIPMAN: Girl From God's Country

By Sabina Dana Plasse (excerpted)



IDAHO. Writer, photographer, television producer, and filmmaker Karen Day has traveled the world uncovering and discovering subject matters and events. Her latest documentary film project involves Nell Shipman, silent film actress and Idaho woman extraordinaire. **Nell Shipman: Girl From God's Country**, has become a personal journey for her and tells a fascinating, gem-state story that few people know about.

Shipman's story has been lost to history for nearly a century. The successful 20-year old gave up a lucrative Hollywood studio contract and moved to the remote Idaho wilderness in 1920 with abused animal actors, her 10-year old son, and her doomed lover-director to make action-adventure films on her own terms. Shipman's time in the remote and harsh wilderness of Priest Lake in northern Idaho is where she wrote, directed and starred in 25 silent films,

while sharing billing with her bears, wolves and sled dogs. She performed her own death-defying stunts while shooting on-location films including *Back to God's Country*, *The Girl from God's Country* and *The Grubstake*.

According to Day, Shipman was the first of her kind—a female, independent filmmaker, who refuted Hollywood's mistreatment of animals and refused the assured trappings of a studio contract with Samuel Goldfish (soon to be Goldwyn). Her storylines of self-reliant women overcoming physical challenges in the wilderness and often rescuing the male lead shattered the predictable cinematic formulas of large studio productions.



Nell Shipman

Day discovered nine of Shipman's restored films and 20 boxes of personal papers in the Boise State University archives in 2013, and quickly decided this was an important story to tell. A generation of female silent film pioneers like Shipman, Alice Guy-Blache and African-American Tesse Sounders disappeared from public knowledge by 1929.

Day's film has been in production for a year in partnership with Boise State University and Idaho Public Television, and is slated for completion in September 2014. (Full Article: <http://theketchumkeystone.org/2014/04/18/silent-film-star-nell-shipman-receives-a-voice-in-idaho/>)

SILENT SPOTLIGHT

Texas Guinan: Speakeasy Mistress & Film Star

By Trav S.D. (excerpted article)

Most famous for presiding over a string of prohibition-era speakeasies, in her day Texas Guinan was also a star in films, the musical stage, and vaudeville.

She was born Mary Louise Cecilia "Mamie" Guinan on her parents' ranch in Waco, Texas in 1884. Her parents sprang for music lessons, but as a young girl, she was equally at home absorbing the skills of the ranch hands: roping, breaking horses, and shooting from a mount. She acquired her nickname at age 14 when she performed at a "Frontier Days" celebration. She studied singing at Chicago's American Conservatory of Music for two years on a scholarship, then went back to Waco for a time, trying her hand acting in dramatic companies and working the rodeos.

After an unsuccessful marriage to newspaper artist John J. Moynihan, she came to New York, where in 1906, she was cast in a play called *The Snow Man*. In 1908 she broke into vaudeville with an act called *The Gibson Girl*, where she applied her well-trained voice to the popular songs of the day while perched on a swing, high above the stage.



While touring in a production of *The Gay Musician*, she accidentally shot herself. She made the most of the incipient press surrounding the event, declaring "Nothing—not even a bullet—can stop Texas Guinan!"



Texas Guinan

In 1917, she broke into Westerns, and over the next several years film audiences could catch her in pictures with titles such as: *The Wildcat*, *Get-away Kate*, *The Gun Woman*, *The Hellcat*, *The Dangerous Little Devil*, and *Little Miss Deputy*. In the wake of Chaplin's *A Woman of Paris*, which set the bar higher for realistic acting, Guinan's melodramatic style gradually became obsolete.

Based on a performance she gave at a party at the Beaux Arts Hotel, she was hired to sing and be Mistress of Ceremonies at the El Fay Club, a New York speakeasy. Her salty tongue and saucy attitude put her in good stead in the drunken and riotous environment of prohibition era nightclubs. She typically sat on a tall stool in the middle of the floor, rattling a New Year's Eve noisemaker, blowing on a police whistle, and greeting patrons with the salutation which made her famous: "Hello, Sucker!" Her other popular catchphrase would follow the performance of some singer or chorus girl as she took her bow, "Let's give the little lady a great big

hand!" Guinan was like a burlesque comic, making ribald cracks and encouraging the audience to mayhem, and was closely identified with the spirit of the jazz age.

Of course, along with speakeasies came raids. Guinan worked at a succession of clubs, including her own "Texas Guinan Club," each of which were busted and permanently padlocked. She was so closely identified with this ritual that she headlined a Shubert revue **Padlocks of 1927**, which surprisingly, flopped. In 1929, she played a character based on herself in the early Vitaphone talkie **Queen of the Nightclubs**.

When prohibition ended, she came back to vaudeville and attempted a tour of England and France, but was refused entry into both countries because of her reputation as a criminal. Upon her return to the U.S., she played the event for all it was worth, calling her new show **Too Hot for Paris**. She was touring the Western circuits in 1933 when she collapsed backstage after a show, and died hours later of amoebic dysentery. (Full article: <http://travsd.wordpress.com/2010/01/12/stars-of-vaudeville-104-texas-guinan/>)

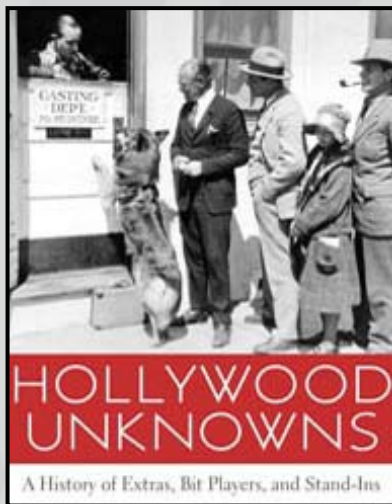
TST BOOKCORNER

Hollywood Unknowns: A History of Extras, Bit Players, and Stand-Ins

By Anthony Slide

Extras, bit players, and stand-ins have been a part of the film industry almost from its conception. Their stories are told in **Hollywood Unknowns**, a history devoted to extras from the silent era to the present.

Hollywood Unknowns discusses the relationship of the extra to the star, the lowly position in which extras were held, the poor working conditions and wages, and the sexual



exploitation of many of the hard-working women striving for a place in Hollywood society. Though mainly anonymous, many are identified by name and receive equal billing with the stars as chapters document the lives and work of extras from the 1890s to 1950s.

Through personal interviews, oral histories, and the use of newly available archival material, Anthony Slide reveals the story of the men, women, and even animals that completed the scenes on the silver screen. (www.upress.state.ms.us)

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

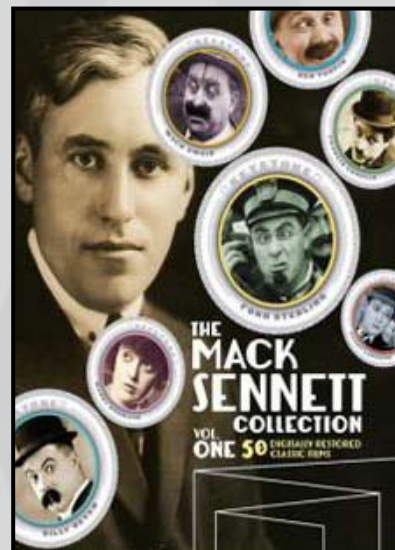
The Mack Sennett Collection - Volume 1

The Keystone Film Company, under the guidance of pioneering producer and director Mack Sennett, was the birthplace of classic American slapstick comedy. This historic studio was at one time home to a staggering number of silent screen luminaries including Charlie Chaplin, Mabel Normand, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, Harold Lloyd, Gloria Swanson, Wallace Beery, Harry Langdon, Charley Chase, and countless others.

Now, for the first time, thanks

to Flicker Alley, CineMuseum, and Keystone Films, over 100 of the best surviving Sennett comedies have been gathered from around the world, fully restored, and digitally remastered in HD. **The Mack Sennett Collection, Vol. 1** features the 50 of these films presented on a 3-disc Blu-ray set.

These new editions have been painstakingly reconstructed by CineMuseum and Keystone Films using original 35mm nitrate, archival negatives, preservation materials, and sometimes the lone known surviving film print, from the collections of the Library of Congress, the Museum of Modern Art, A.M.P.A.S., Blackhawk Films®, Lobster Films, the Richard M. Roberts Collection, Gierucki Studios, and dozens of privately held archives. (www.flickeralley.com)



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