Document Citation

Title	**Chaplin tribute**
Author(s)	Abel Green Roy Chartier Thomas Quinn Curtiss Sid. Wally. Dash.
Source	*Variety*
Date	1989 Aug 2
Type	other
Language	English
Pagination	67-70, 86
No. of Pages	5
Subjects	Chaplin, Charlie (1889-1977), Walworth, London, Great Britain
Film Subjects	The great dictator, Chaplin, Charlie, 1940 Modern times, Chaplin, Charlie, 1936 The circus, Chaplin, Charlie, 1928 City lights, Chaplin, Charlie, 1931 The gold rush, Chaplin, Charlie, 1925

Chaplin: In the limelight for three generations

By THOMAS QUINN CURTISS

Paris Charlie Chaplin was one of the most famous men in the world for three generations.

He rose to international renown with his early films during World War I and it was his image of the comic vagabond with battered dark derby, baggy pants, broken shoes, flat-footed walk as he imperiously twirled his bamboo cane and his breaktaking escapes from pursuing policemen that endeared him to millions everywhere.

He was as familiar to the soldiers in the Flanders mud as he was to monarchs. Tots and cranky old critics, Bushmen and Eskimos, highbrows and lowbrows delighted in his antics and felt for him in his moments of adversity.

He was an exacting diagnostician of public tastes and obeyed the dictum: never change a hit. The movies grew bigger, if not better, but he stuck to the formula that had brought him success.

A superb pantomimist, he distrusted the talkies and retained a sphinx-like silence even after Garbo's voice had been heard. His mute ''City Lights'' (1931) and ''Modern Times'' (1936) fetched his loyal fans and broke boxoffice records at the bottom of the Depression.

So why talk?

Why then did he eventually yield to the pressures of the talking film?

''When I began work on 'Modern Times,' I engaged some of the old-timers of the Mack Sennett troupe,'' he explained. ''They had been working in talkies for years and had lost the rhythm of the silent style. I had to retrain them to match the scenes I had in mind. Silent filmmaking had become a forgotten art.''

Why did he forsake the jaunty vagabond figure?

''Because an old tramp is not funny,'' he replied, though he impersonated an old music hall clown attempting a comeback in ''Limelight.''

If Chaplin ever gave a dull press conference, there is no record of it. There were rumors he had long avoided talkies because his voice was weak. He had a fine, clear voice, spoke well and clearly and always had something to say.

When he came to New York for the premiere of ''M. Verdoux'' he was under a dark cloud. Hollywood columnists suggested he was a danger to the nation and that he should be investigated by Congress.

He was tense, but prepared to reply to any question and handled himself beautifully. A man jumped up and shouted, ''Are you a Communist?''

''No, I'm not,'' he shot back. ''Next question.''

Welcome home?

In 1952 he had gone abroad to live permanently. The McCarthy witch-hunt was at its zenith and reports flew that he would be refused re-entry into the United States. In France he was an honored guest and he arrived in Paris for the preview of ''Limelight.''

''I have a special affection for the French,'' he began. ''Sometimes when I am shooting a bit of business in a film, my assistants tell me it won't do, that it will be over the heads of the public. I always answer, no, no, keep that in, the French will like it. It is a joy to be in a land where I am loved and not hated.''

In Paris again for the opening of his last film, ''The Countess Of Hong Kong,'' he received reporters and reviewers in the Hotel Crillon's grand ballroom overlooking the Place de la Concorde. The London notices had been unappreciative, but he reminded the assembled that the London critics had greeted ''The Gold Rush'' with objections that it was pretentious.

''Fancy that!'' he exclaimed, shaking his head sadly.

There was a request that he give his opinion of his new film.

In MY opinion

''Very well,'' he retorted. ''I find it a brilliant picture full of sparkling dialog and well directed. Miss Sophia Loren is splendid and Mr. Branelo (he was miffed at Marlon Brando's mumbling the lines he had written so that scenes had to be repeated again and again) carried his role quite satisfactorily. In other words, it is an excellent entertainment.''

He had his say and withdrew to the hall to await the elevator to take him to his room. A British reporter rushed after him begging for an exclusive interview.

''I'll come to see you in Vevey,'' urged the aggressive newsman.

''No, don't do that,'' replied Chaplin, stepping into the elevator. ''I never have anything to say when I am not selling something.''

His timing was as precise as though he were before the cameras as he waved a farewell.

Major Swiss production houses

Continued from page 66

tional Critics' Week at Cannes this year.

Thelma Film, Zurich. Production company of helmer Pierre-Alain Meier (''Ikaria''). Handled Swiss participation in Idrissa Quedraogo's ''Yaaba,'' a Swiss-Franco-Burkina Faso coprod.

Vega Film, Zurich. Founded by Ruth Waldburger after leaving Xanadu. Currently producing Betrand Theubet's ''Year Of 13 Moons,'' Jean-Luc Godard's ''New Wave'' and Markus Imboden's ''Bingo.'' Exploring intro into U.S. indie productions via New York-based Balthazar, part-owned by former Xanadu colleague Reinhart.

Videoladen, Zurich. Video collective which has advanced to produce some major pics, sprouting Dschoint Ventschr production company and Megaherz vid distrib en route. Recent items include Daniele Buetti and Danielle Giuliani's ''Lichtschlag,'' Christoph Schaub's ''Dreissig Jahre'' and Werner Schweizer's ''Dynamit Am Simplon.''

Euro hucksters cash in on Chaplin b'day centennial

Merchandisers affix The Tramp's image to bedsheets, keychains — even pipes

Paris Charlie Chaplin's 100th birthday anni is a boon to merchandising outfits in Europe, as everything from pipes to bedsheets bearing the image of the comic legend floods the market.

Ever in style, the Chaplin logo rates as high as Marilyn Monroe's on the hit parade of sought-after copyrights, says Jean-Michel Biard, president of V.I.P., a licensing firm with European rights to the Chaplin image.

Rights deals for Chaplin merchandise have leaped 45% for the centennial and the next two years show even greater promise, he adds.

V.I.P. has dealt out licenses for a range of objects, from the predictable — key chains, stationery and posters — to the unusual: a limited collection of Dunhill pipes specially carved for the occasion, video games and inflatable life buoys.

French not with it

''We don't allow cheap mass-produced items,'' explains Biard, who has struck most of his deals with clothing and textile retailers, including Britain's Marks And Spencer.

Britain, in fact, is said to be the biggest Chaplin enthusiast of all. Merchandising has taken off in a big way there, most likely because the British have staged a sophisticated exhibit on the life of Chaplin as well as a London showing of ''City Lights'' at the Dominion Theater where it was first screened.

France, on the other hand, lags behind in Chaplin-mania, ranking fourth in Europe, according to V.I.P. French take-offs of Chaplin are largely conventional posters, stationery and key chains.

Some of the more original creations are put out by publishing house Editions Zreik, which has exclusive rights in France to produce badges of Chaplin in various film poses.

More than 70% of its stock has already been purchased, says Serge Zreik, the firm's Lebanese-born owner.

''People appreciate Chaplin in classical poses. They want the traditional caricature. We can't really play around with his image very much,'' says Zreik.

Also a success are postcards of the original illustrated film posters. Zreik and his wife Florence own over a half-dozen printed in their 1986 hardcover of

Hollywood posters from the '20s, 30s and '40s.

While the Zreiks pay dearly for copyrights, most other publishers shrug off procedure and put out illegal reproductions.

''Pirates take up 80% of the market for photographs and posters of Chaplin,'' says Zreik.

The Chaplin family keeps a tight watch on the situation, frequently suing offenders.

''The Chaplin image is almost as well-protected as those of the Walt Disney characters,'' notes Florence Zreik.

V.I.P. hopes business will pick up even further with the completion next year of a cartoon series by U.S. company Nelvana and French moppet firm Ellipse. Biard admits, however, that fondness for Chaplin is very much an adult phenomenon.

Attenborough's Chaplin biopic

London The life story of Charlie Chaplin is to be told on the big screen by British director Richard Attenborough, renowned for such wide-canvas epics as ''Gandhi'' and ''Cry Freedom.''

Late last year Chaplin's widow Oona offered Attenborough the rights to his autobiography and to footage from his films. A lifelong admirer of the actor, Attenborough accepted gladly. He's commissioned a script treatment and plans to mount the project via his 3-pic $75-million deal with Universal. No start date or casting is firm yet.

Attenborough is full of admiration for the man he characterizes as ''a genius of the cinema.'' At age 11, he saw his first Chaplin film, ''The Gold Rush,'' and says it sparked his ambition to be an actor.

Swiss pics grab prizes

Cannes: Intl. Cinema Critics' Prize for best film in non-official sections — ''Yaaba'' (Switzerland-France-Burkina Faso). Annecy Animation Festival: Best Full-Length Film — ''Alice.'' Trento Festival of Mountaineering and Adventure: Special Jury Prize — ''Pestalozzi's Mountain.'' Houston Film Festival: 1st Prize (documentary section) — ''The World Is Yours.'' Montreal Intl. Festival of Art Films: Grand Prix — ''Der Neapelfries.'' Special Jury Prize — ''Die Siekende Arche.''

REPRISING CHAPLIN

The Gold Rush
(July 1, 1925)

Charlie Chaplin Production, written and directed by Charlie Chaplin. Associate director, Charles F. Reisnier. Photography by Roland H. Totheroh and Jack Wilson. At Grauman's Egyptian theater, Wilson. At Cal., for indefinite run beginning June 26, 1923. Running time: **120 MIN.**

The Lone Prospector .....Charlie Chaplin
Big Jim McKay .....Mack Swain
Black Larson .....Tom Murray
Jack Cameron .....Malcom Walte
The Girl, Georgia .....Georgia Hale
Hank Curtis .....Henry Bergman
Miners, dance hall girls and habitues, etc.

■ "The Gold Rush" is a distinct triumph for Charlie Chaplin from both the artistic and commercial standpoints, and is a picture certain to create a veritable riot at theater boxoffices. It is the greatest and most elaborate comedy ever filmed, and will stand for years as the biggest hit in its field, just as "The Birth Of A Nation" still withstands the many competitors in the dramatic class.

Billed as a dramatic comedy, the story carries more of a plot than has been the rule with the star's former offerings. There are spots where Charlie has developed dramatic situations bordering on tragedy, and these show the master hand and finesse of Chaplin's artistry. But taken on the whole, the public will accept "The Gold Rush" as an out and out comedy, and the greatest of all time. Innumerable gags and situations that score round after round of laughter are logically woven into the theme of the story. At no time is the plot lost to gain extra laughs that do not belong.

Alaska, with its dangers, hazards, sufferings and riches, forms the locale of the story. The opening shows an unending stream of prospectors negotiating the difficult Chilcoot Pass, and this is very beautiful in so far as scenery is concerned, but is tedious to an audience that has viewed similar scenes in the news weeklies and scenics many times before.

Charlie is presented as a tramp prospector in the wilds of Alaska, garbed in his old familiar derby, cane, baggy pants and shoes. He seeks refuge from a raging Arctic storm in the cabin of Black Larson, hunted outlaw, and is allowed to stay by the latter.

Big Jim McKay, a husky prospector, discovers a huge vein of gold on his claim, but the storm uproots his tent and blows him to the hut of Larson. The latter objects to McKay's intrusion, and a struggle ensues between the two for possession of a rifle. Chaplin scores here with business in trying to keep out of line with the barrel of the gun. McKay finally subdues Larson and elects to stay till the storm subsides. But the blizzard continues for many days, and provisions give out. The trio cut the cards to select one who must brave the elements to secure food. Larson gets the assignment, and sets forth, but down the trail encounters two officers of the law and kills them both. He picks up their provisions and equipment and continues on his way, making camp at McKay's claim and discovering the rich gold strike.

Meantime Charlie and McKay feel the pangs of hunger back in the cabin, and the tramp gets over a wow when he cooks and serves one of his shoes. The unusual meal rings the bell. Finally the two decide to leave, McKay to relocate his claim and Charlie heading for town. The tramp secures food and lodging at the cabin of Hank Curtis on the outskirts and Curtis leaves him to take care of the place during a prospecting trip.

McKay surprises Larson at the claim. In the battle ensuing, McKay is felled by a shovel, Larson dashing off down the trail. A thrilling and realistic spectacle is presented when the outlaw is engulfed in a mountain of snow and ice that breaks loose and crashes to the bottom of the canyon hundreds of feet below.

Charlie visits the dance hall and secretly admires Georgia, the favorite girl in the place. Jack Cameron, in love with the girl, heckles the tramp. Georgia selects Charlie to dance with her in preference to Cameron. On the dance floor Chaplin tops each succeeding gag with another even better.

A few days later a quartet of the dance hall girls headed by Georgia stumble on the cabin of Charlie. The girl decides to have some fun at his expense, and the quartet promise to be at the cabin for a New Year's Eve party, without thought of being serious. But the tramp makes elaborate preparations to entertain his dream girl. The sequence depicting the disappointment of Charlie in the cabin in the midst of his spread for the girl is undoubtedly one of the finest pieces of dramatic interpretation ever put on the screen.

McKay, stunned by the blow delivered by Larson, wanders back to town and is laughed at when he declares a mountain of gold was found, but he cannot relocate it unless he finds the cabin occupied by Larson. At the dance hall Georgia pens a note to Cameron declaring her love for him. Cameron laughs at it and passes the letter around the table. Seeing the lone tramp over in a corner he has the waiter deliver the note to Charlie. The latter is elated and dashes to find Georgia. McKay has entered the place and spies the tramp while standing at the bar. Cornering Charlie, he demands that the lone prospector accompany him to Larson's cabin, promising Charlie an equal share if the mine is found.

Arriving at the cabin the pair decide to stay until the following day and then search for the mine. During the night a heavy storm breaks, the cabin is dislodged and carried to the brink of a high cliff. The balancing cabin and the struggles of the pair to escape provide more than a reel of solid laughs that do not cease until the cabin crashes over the cliff with Charlie escaping at the last moment. McKay then discovers his lost claim within a few yards of the precipice.

The final scenes of Charlie and McKay journeying back to the States as multi-millionaires are unusual in that they show Chaplin out of his familiar attire. He is dressed in the height of fashion with evening dress and all the adornments. Seeing him this way will make the audiences like him more in the makeup that made him famous. On the boat the newly created millionaire discovers Georgia en route home in steerage, with a fadeout on the usual clutch.

Humor is the dominating force, with Chaplin reaching new heights as a comedian. Chaplin naturally carries practically the entire 10 reels of action and performs this task without difficulty. He transcends everything that has ever gone before in comedy production, and it will be a long time before any one displaces him as the genius of pantomime.

The sequence showing Chaplin and Swain in the see-sawing cabin on the edge of the precipice surpasses anything ever before screened and provides one reel of continuous roars and howls.

The Far North settings are adequate, although they show plainly they were of studio construction in most instances. In this case, however, Chaplin is the main attraction, and he comes back in his old familiar part that will make "The Gold Rush" a much-played and greatly enjoyed picture everywhere. —*Wally.*

City Lights
(SYNCHRONIZED)
(Feb. 11, 1931)

Charles Chaplin production. Released by United Artists. Written and directed by Chaplin and starring him. Orchestration by Arthur Johnston. Albert Newman, musical conductor. At Cohan, New York, on grind run, at $1 top, starting Feb. 7. Running time, **87 MIN.**

Blind Girl .....Virginia Cherrill
Her Grandmother .....Florence Lee
Eccentric Millionaire .....Harry Myers
His Butler .....Allan Garola
Prizefighter .....Hank Mann
Tramp .....Charlie Chaplin

■ Chaplin has another good picture. The three-year period since "The Circus" and sound will give "City Lights" a percentage of "novelty money," in that it contains no dialog. And it's Chaplin — which has come to mean an hysterical press. These factors ought to total heavy b.o. receipts, but the film isn't so strong that there isn't some doubt concerning its holdover power.

In turning out his pictures so infrequently Chaplin pays the penalty of being rated by the trade on the problematical strength of his product over a series of weeks in one house. His past record and popularity insure dynamic first week figures, even were the picture but fair. "City Lights" gives indication of being short winded and may tire fast after a bombastic initial seven days.

It's not Chaplin's best picture, because the comedian has sacrificed speed to pathos, and plenty of it. This is principally the reason for the picture running some 1,500 or more feet beyond any previous film released by him. But the British comic is still the consummate pantomimist, unquestionably one of the greatest the stage or screen has ever known.

Certain sequences in 'City Lights" are hilarious. Perhaps the high spot is a burlesque prize fight which in rehearsal time alone, must have taken weeks to shoot. Chaplin's feat is making this passage not only stand up but stand out behind recent features which have had some pretty funny ring fight stuff themselves.

What actually appears to be the only original piece of business is a cigar bit between Harry Myers and Chaplin at a table, and excellent. Otherwise the comedian is his usual tramp self going through an aquatic suicide attempt, also with Myers, and appearing for brief footage as a street cleaner to anticipated gags.

Probably the smartest thing is the manner in which the picture has been chopped off. All through Chaplin schemes how to procure money for a blind flower girl (Virginia Cherrill). Finally getting enough to pay off the girl's landlord and permit an operation, the continuity leaps to the girl, with her sight restored, running a flower shop. The comic, released from jail, shambles along the street. In front of the shop he becomes the brunt of bean-blowing newsboys. The girl is attracted to the window by the rumpus and Chaplin sees her. She comes outside to give him a flower and recognizes him through the touch of his hands in the exchange. And as Chaplin gazes at her worshipfully, while fearing what she'll think because of his threadbare and torn apparel, the picture ends.

Script is something of a fable in discovering the comic asleep in the lap of a statue when it is unveiled and then having him in and out of trouble through the means of a millionaire (Myers), whom Chaplin prevents from a drunken suicide, and who thereafter only recognizes the comic when drunk. A great piece of business is a twist to a butt snatching item which has Chaplin expelled from the millionaire's home, getting a whiff of a pedestrian's cigar and hopping into the parked roadster to follow the cigar owner, leap from the car, beat another poacher to the butt, and then climb back into the Rolls to drive away.

The lax memory of Myers, after giving Chaplin $1,000 and then sobered into forgetfullness by a thug's blackjack, is the means of getting the comedian to prison as also the background for him posing as of wealth to the blind girl.

Chaplin's pantomime remains superb and there is many a gem mixed up in the running. As previously, Chaplin mainly paints in broad strokes, with his most subtle maneuvering here being the sly turning of the sympathy away from the girl to himself as the picture draws to a close.

Comedian has given his latest a fast start by poking fun at talking pictures through simulating the voices of the speakers at the unveiling by musical instruments. He also takes credit for composing the score, which has as its theme Raquel Meller's "Violets."

Cast support is minor other than in Myers, who does exceptionally well in foiling the star. Miss Cherrill is very fair of face but demands upon her are not enough to permit rating other than expected. —*Sid.*

Modern Times
(Feb. 12, 1936)

United Artists release of Charles Chaplin production. Stars Chaplin. Features Paulette Goddard. Direction, story and music composed by Chaplin. Musical director, Alfred Newman; asst. directors, Carter DeHaven and Henry Bergman; cameraman, Rollie Totheroh and Ira Morgan. At Rivoli, N.Y., for grind run commencing Feb. 6, '36. $3.50 premiere. Running time: **85 MIN.**

A Tramp .....Charles Chaplin
A Gamin .....Paulette Goddard
A Cafe Proprietor .....Henry Bergman
A Mechanic .....Chester Conklin
The Burglars .....Stanley Sandford, Hank Mann, Louis Natheux
Prez. of a Steel Corp. .....Allen Garcia

■ Charlie Chaplin, in anything, is b.o., and in "Modern Times," his first self-starring production in five years, it's boxoffice with a capital B. The picture is grand fun and sound entertainment, though silent. It's the old Chaplin at his best, looking at his best — young, pathetic and a very funny guy. He remains the world's No. 1 pantomimist, and the greatest panto artist since the Frenchman Severin.

Whatever sociological meanings some will elect to read into "Modern Times," there's no denying that as a cinematic entertainment it's wholesomely funny. Every whimsy, every humorous turn, every comicality is born of a legitimate situation.

The pathos of a machine worker who suffers temporary derangement, as he tightens the bolts on a factory treadmill to a clocklike tempo, gives way to a series of similarly winning situations. In each the victim of circumstance meets temporary frustration, almost inevitably resulting in a ride in Black Maria. He makes this free hop to the hoosegow three or four times.

The merriment that was Chaplin's in "The Rink" is resurrected for some convulsive roller skating nonsense in a department store. The slapstick artistry of Chaplin as a bungling waiter, is revived in another sequence where he's, this time, the singing waiter. It's in this concluding episode that Chaplin breaks his silence with a silly doggerel to an old Spanish fandango tune titled "Titina." Incidentally, Chaplin here discloses a surprisingly good voice.

When finally achieving what promises to be a semblance of economic security the menace, in the form of the law, enters to arrest Paulette Goddard as a refugee va-

Turn to page 70

Chaplin reprised

Continued from page 68

grant. Their ultimate escape, in a brief chase scene, irises out on an open-road, hand-in-hand fade-out, another throwback to the old Chaplin technique.

"Modern Times" is as 100% a one-man picture as probably is possible. Produced, starring, authored, composed (special music) and directed by Chaplin, the pantomimist stands or falls by his two years' work as it unreels. Not only does he not falter but Chaplin perhaps scales new heights in maintaining a barrage of guffaws that is the more remarkable considering the advanced comedy efforts that have hit the screen since the advent of sound.

With Chaplin it's just sound and panto. Dialog is almost negligible, coming either through a recorded advertising sales spiel or through a televisor as the president of the steel company barks his orders to accelerate the gait of the machine shop. Chaplin, however, has mainly capitalized sound through the medium of his music. An excellently conceived musical setting, batoned by Alfred Newman, is well nigh as eloquent as language. When the music is inadequate Chaplin frankly recourses to plain titles.

Some of the titles are extraneous and the new school of film fans may even be startled, along with their elders, at this seeming crudity after being steeped in dialog so long. But every Chaplin feint and fall, gesture and gesticulation, movement and mummery sometimes speaks more eloquently than phraseology. If nothing else, the pantomimic novelty of the Chaplin school of comedy — let alone the artistry — should find favorable b.o. reaction.

His bunglings aren't slapstick-stilted in the crude sense. Each manifestation of boobery is the gesture of a hapless, pathetic little figure (in his world-famous baggy pants, skimpy coat, moustache and cane) who sets into motion an astounding series of complications.

The fun in a department store (when Chaplin almost miraculously inherits a night watchman's job) would formerly have served as enough meat for an entire twin-reeler. Here it's just a highlight along with the shipyard hokum; the grand clowning with Chester Conklin in the mill; the socko comedy sequence in the forepart with the automatic feeding machine which well nigh wilts the auditor with the barrage of laughs; the business with the "joy powder" planted by an imprisoned "snowbird;" the luxury in the jail as an accidental hero, etc.

Paulette Goddard, a winsome waif attired almost throughout in short, ragged dress and bare legs above the knees, is naturally introduced. She registers handily. Chaplin's old standbys, notably Henry Bergman (also Boniface of Henry's Hollywood restaurant, and an asst. director on this picture) along with Chester Conklin, Hank Mann and Allen Garcia, contribute nicely. —*Abel.*

The Great Dictator
(Oct. 16, 1940)

United Artists release of Charles Chaplin production. Stars Chaplin, features Paulette Goddard, Jack Oakie, Reginald Gardner, Henry Daniell, Billy Gilbert, Grace Hayle, Paul Weigel, Maurice Moscovich and Carter de Haven. Written and directed by Chaplin. Editor, Willard Nico; photography, Karl Struss and Roland Totheroh; music, Meredith Willson. Previewed at Astor, N.Y., special press screening, Oct. 14, '40; regular run at Astor and Capitol, N.Y., commencing Oct. 13, '40. Running time: **127 MIN.**

Hynkel,
Dictator of Tomania ....Charles Chaplin
Napaloni, Dictator of Bacteria ..Jack Oakie
Schulz .....Reginald Gardiner
Garbitsch .....Henry Daniell
Herring .....Billy Gilbert
Madame Napaloni .....Grace Hayle
Ambassador .....Carter de Haven
A Jewish Barber .....Charles Chaplin
Hannah .....Paulette Goddard
Mr. Jaeckel .....Maurice Moscovich
Mrs. Jaeckel .....Emma Dunn
Mr. Mann .....Bernard Gorcey
Mr. Agar .....Paul Weigel

■Charlie Chaplin has been away nearly five years, his last film, "Modern Times," having been released early in 1936. Since then dictators like Hitler and Mussolini have become objects of scorn among civilized peoples. Chaplin is among those who have nothing but utter contempt for them and their methods, and he makes no bones about it in his production of "The Great Dictator." He takes time out to make fun about it, but always there is a strong undertone of rebellion against the pernicious isms now troubling an entire world. The preachment is strong, notably in the six-minute speech at the finish, but also the comedy, which Chaplin has woven around the dictators, at whose expense he makes fun (partly with a sneer), is extremely entertaining.

Audience reaction can't help but be favorable, granting that Nazi sympathizers are not considered at all. Through the 127 minutes of the film it is virtually certain that the average customer will go out of the theatre with a feeling of having thoroughly enjoyed it. This is without regard to the portions of the film which dwell too strongly on persecution of Jews in Germany, the pathetic lot of the ghetto unfortunates, or the manner in which Chaplin burlesques the dictatorships.

For the reason that there is much good comedy in the picture and, to some extent, also because of the anti-Nazi note struck, the box-office potentialities are excellent. Among other things, a ready-made audience has been created for the Chaplin production. Its timeliness is a very important merchandising asset. Also, the picture has had much advance publicity and the curiosity aroused in its connection no doubt is second only to that which was built up for "Gone With The Wind."

Chaplin plays a dual role, that of a meek little Jewish barber in Tomania and the great little dictator of that country, billed as Hynkel. On the opening of the film, in 1918, the barber is a soldier who becomes a mental case and doesn't come to his senses until Hynkel is high in the driver's seat. He goes back to his barber shop and, in the sequences there, as well as in the ghetto in which his modest business is located, he talks in a timid voice. In the scenes where Hynkel figures, however, Chaplin is screaming in the frenzied Hitler fashion.

It's when he is playing the dictator that the comedian's voice raises the value of the comedy content of the picture to great heights. He does various bits as Hitler spouting at the mouth in which he engages in a lot of double talk in what amounts to a pig-Latin version of the German tongue, with grunts thrown in here and there, plus a classical "Democracy shtoonk." Chaplin is swell on the vocal horse-play with the German language. On various occasions as Hitler he also speaks English. In these instances he talks with force, as contrasted by the mousey, half-scared way he speaks as the poor barber.

Somewhat of a shock is the complete transformation of the barber when he delivers the speech at the finish, a fiery and impassioned plea for freedom and democracy. Looking like Hitler, he has been mistaken for the latter and, before a huge throng of Nazis in what can't be anything but Austria, he delivers the stirring oration. As a twist he gets a big hand, but the intent is not clear except to subtly suggest that the Nazi laddies are not in sympathy with the other Hitler they have known. This and a few feet of Paulette Goddard, who hears words of encouragement and inspiration off in the distance, as she rises to her feet from the cowardly Storm Trooper blows that had struck her down, wind up the film. It is a peculiar and somewhat disappointing climax with the picture ending on a serious rather than a comical note.

The sequence leading up to the speech, strong in comedy value, gives promise of something to arrive that doesn't. Having escaped from a concentration camp in an officer's clothes, the little barber is mistaken for Hitler, and is royally welcomed into Austria. His fears that he's going to be slapped down any minute and the baffling state of affairs in which he finds himself, together with his German pal who has also been in camp, make for rich comedy results.

The vast majority of the action is built around Hynkel and the Jewish barber. It shifts back and forth between the two, backgrounded by Hynkel lieutenants, Storm Troopers and people of the ghetto. Not so much is devoted to the dictator who is Napaloni (Mussolini). Jack Oakie plays the satirized Duce to the hilt and every minute with him is socko.

In making up the billing, Chaplin has displayed an unusually keen sense of humor. While Hynkel is the dictator of Tomania, Napaloni is the ruler of Bacteria. Tomania higher-ups include Garbitsch (Goebbels) and Herring (Goering). These are played effectively by Henry Daniell and Billy Gilbert. They figure fairly prominently in the fun Chaplin pokes at the dictators and also in the cases where he is taking pot shots at them, such as references to getting rid of the Jews, etc. A terrific twist from Chaplin is the decision of the Tomanians to also get rid of all the brunettes so that they may be a true "Aryan" race.

There are numerous little gags planted in sequences, both with Hynkel and with the barber — strictly Chaplinesque. In a couple instances laughs are drawn from pantomime that is Chaplin of the old school. The comedian veers a bit away from the getup that made him famous but in a few shots he is there with the baggy trousers, bamboo cane and all. As the dictator, he is a cocky, blustering little guy who depends on comedy from an entirely new direction as well as from his speech.

The romantic scenes with Miss Goddard are held down. Miss Goddard, photographing beautifully even if a peasant type and her face dirtied up somewhat, plays an oppressed Jewish laundress who flees to Austria and new hopes after her barbering boyfriend has been taken off to a concentration camp.

The technical aspects of the picture impress, particularly the music, serving as a background for the action. It was composed and directed by Meredith Willson.

—*Char.*

The Circus
(Jan. 11, 1928)

Charlie Chaplin production, written and directed by Mr. Chaplin, who is also its star. United Artists release. Assistant director, Harry Crocker; photography, Rollins H. Totheroh. Cameramen, Jack Wilson and Mark Mariatt. At Strand, New York, opening Jan. 6 for limited run. Running time, around **70 MIN.**

Circus Prop.-Ring Master ....Alan Garcia
Step-Daughter .....Merna Kennedy
Rex. Tight-Rope Walker ...Harry Crocker
Head Property Man .....Stanley Sanford
Assistant Property Man .....John Rand
Magician .....George Davis
Old Clown .....Henry Bergman
Pickpocket .....Steve Murphy
A Tramp .....Charlie Chaplin
Spectators, Clowns, Circus Performers, Policemen, Tent Men, etc.
Locale: Somewhere in the "Sticks."

■For the picture patrons, all of them, and for broad, laughable fun — Chaplin's best.

It's Charlie Chaplin's best fun maker for other reasons: because it is the best straightaway story he has employed for broad film making, and because here his fun stuff is nearly all entirely creative or original in the major point.

In clinging to a tale of logical sequence, without the expected interpolations or detached incidents, Chaplin's "Circus" for speed, gags and laughs has not been equalled on the sheet. But it's very broad, for Chaplin makes no attempt at subtlety in this one, with the probable reward that those who see it will see it again — at least.

One might say that much cutting was done to bring this picture to 70 minutes, but in that cutting they bunched the hits. It's zippo with the laughs often running on top of each other.

The outstanding example of this is toward the finale when Chaplin substitutes for the wire walker of the circus. Using a pulley wire at first for the impossible tricks in the air, Chaplin does some straight walking, but falls off, and clinging to the wire, climbs underhand to the bicycle for the ride for life thing to the performers' entrance, the same as the regular wire walker. But Chaplin misses the catch by the attendants in the entrance and keeps on at lightning speed, full tilt into a drug store across the street from the circus lot. Dazed and out on his feet, Chaplin walks to the curb and bows. For show people this bowing bit will be a terrific laugh. Lays may not pick it up as readily, but this entire sequence was a scream.

Again and throughout, Chaplin as a wandering tramp falling into the circus is blundering about, with each blunder more laughs. Through blundering he becomes the star clown and drawing card of the wagon show. Show people will again enjoy the circus' owner telling the other clowns to put on "The William Tell bit" and "The Barber Shop business" as a rehearsal, to test out the new clown aspirant, and each time Chaplin giving the bit another and funnier ending. Or the bit through which his blundering with the assistance of a pile of plates and a kicking mule made the tramp the new boss clown.

Being the superior pantomimist he always has been, this particular upbuilding of new clown business before your eyes is almost a revelation, or it will be to John Ringling and Jerry Mugivan, besides their 150 clowns.

Heretofore, and whether in the arty or the broad manner, Chaplin has been prone to adapt for his gags. That absence here is noted. It could be said that the pulley wire safety hooked into his back was adapted, but merely in the basic and never applied previously in this way. It's the single point of adaptation in the picture, other than a simple bit that Mr. Chaplin should order out, and that is the only place for critical comment.

A sick horse must have a pill. Chaplin is ordered by the boss hostler to blow a pill out of a tube down the animal's throat, with the hostlers holding its mouth open. As Chaplin starts to blow into the tube the pill rushes toward him and goes down his throat. Chaplin says the horse blew first. Very funny. Later the boss hostler comes around, wanting the pill back. He gives Chaplin a kick in the rear when Chaplin drops the pill from his mouth. This kicking bit is poor in every way and the oldest comedy trick of the small-time travesty magicians.

Pathos to a limited degree is stuck in through Chaplin attempting to protect the bareback riding daughter of the circus owner, the father brutally abusing the girl (Merna Kennedy, the only girl programmed). The tramp falls in love with her, but when the handsome new wire walker arrives the tramp is cold. That is why Chaplin took to practicing wire walking — to rival his rival.

As a matter of fact, Chaplin did

Turn to page 86

The Circus

Continued from page 70

practice wire walking, and only for this picture, doing it about three feet from the ground, as shown in the picture. Despite the pulley and another trick employed to keep in on the wire, Chaplin is an expert wire walker.

The finale is real Chaplinesque. Taking the wire walker to the girl and joining them the tramp declines an invitation to go into their wagon, but returns to the empty lot as the wagon circus starts for its next stand. Seated on the plate left within the ring he watches the circus depart, then trudges in the other direction, again the tramp, permitting his back and wiggly legs only to be seen for the curtain.

There's a lot of other stuff — ever so much. "The Circus" as a comic film is a corker.—*Dash.*

The little tramp lives on!

NELVANA

32 ATLANTIC AVE., TORONTO
ONTARIO, CANADA M6K 1X8
TEL.: (416) 588-5571
FAX: (416) 588-5588
TELEX: 06-22803

9000 SUNSET BLVD.
LOS ANGELES, U.S.A. 90069
TEL.: (213) 278-8466
FAX: (213) 278-4872

ELLIPSE PROGRAMME

15, square VERGENNES
75015 PARIS.

TEL. (1) 45 31 00 01
TELEX 20 3998 ELLIPSE
FAX. (1) 48 56 80 34