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Limelight, Chaplin, Charlie, 1952

CHAPLIN

CHANDLER



The Feature Films of Charles Spencer Chaplin



At long last, **rbc films** has the unique opportunity of offering the feature film masterworks of Charles Chaplin for non-theatrical exhibition. The ten programs highlighted in this catalog are available for booking as a complete series September 1, 1973. It is certainly a rare opportunity for programmers to present a comprehensive series on this comic genius that will surely entertain and enlighten audiences who have not had the pleasure of viewing these classic films.

All prints are of excellent quality and musical scores have been added by Chaplin to THE CHAPLIN REVIEW, THE KID, THE IDLE CLASS, PAY DAY, THE CIRCUS, and THE GOLD RUSH. In fact, THE GOLD RUSH has been re-edited to remove the title cards, and a special commentary added by Chaplin. Advertising, publicity materials, and trailers will be available for each film.

For most audiences this will be a once in a lifetime chance to view the works of Charles Chaplin, whose humor, pathos and humanism could make an audience laugh and cry within a single scene.





Charles Spencer Chaplin came to films at the age of twenty-four. It was 1914 and Mack Sennett's famous comedy factory became interested in the little Englishman who had made a number of highly successful American tours in Fred Karno's British music hall company. Chaplin left Karno (his replacement, interestingly enough, was Stan Laurel) to take his chances with the movies.

The Sennett Keystone studios were to provide Chaplin with a unique training ground in this still new form of entertainment. He learned his lessons well, and before long he had begun to write and direct his own short Keystone comedies. Charlie Chaplin had also become the most famous screen personality in the world.

With fame came wealth (a special novelty for this product of the London slums) and the independence to make his films precisely as he saw fit — and the way Chaplin saw fit was exactly the way audiences seemed to want them. For decades the familiar figure of the little tramp remained the best-known and best-loved of screen characters.

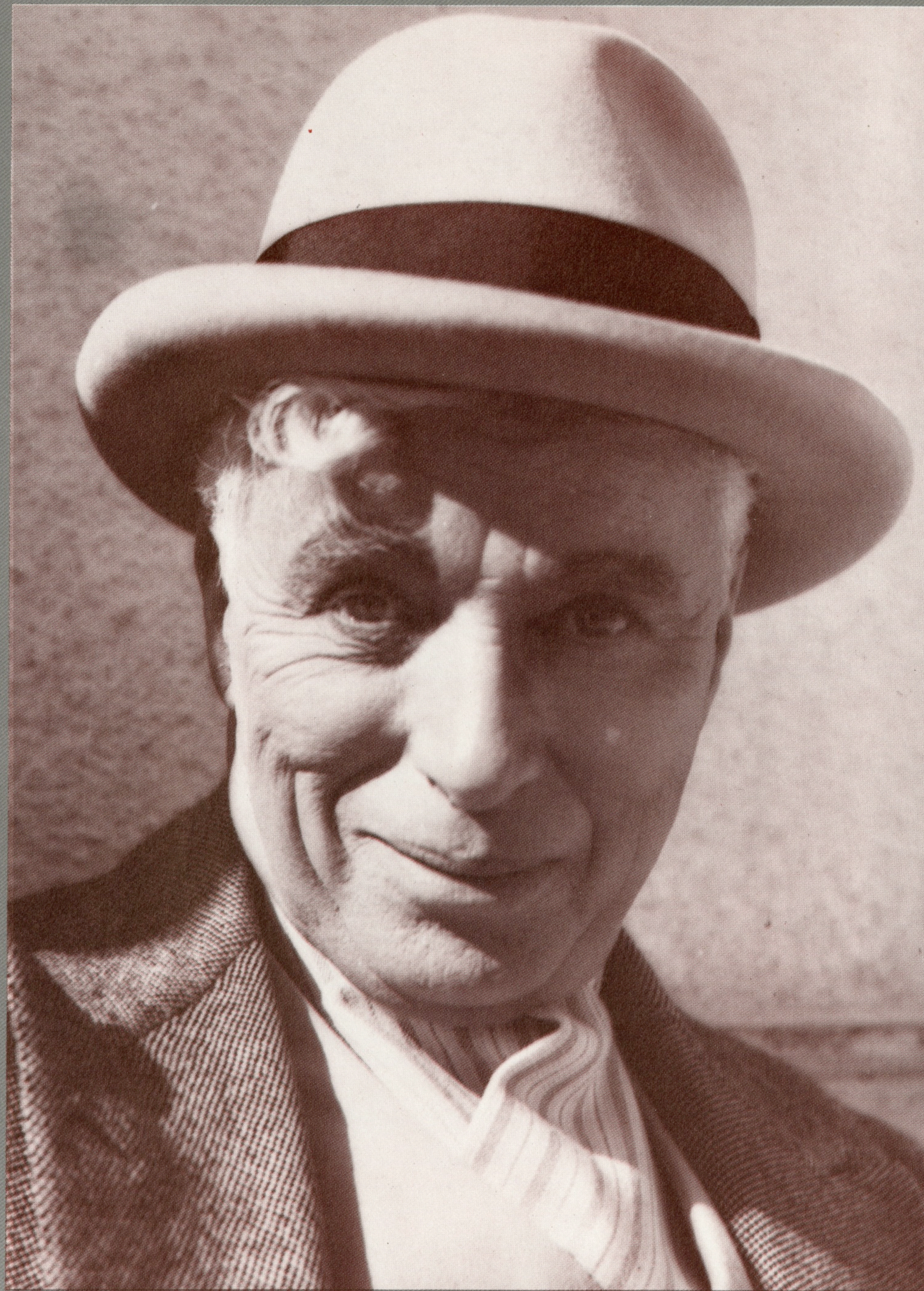
Later in his career Chaplin was to create a gallery of new and memorable personalities: the devastating caricature Adenoid Hynkel of THE GREAT DICTATOR, the captivatingly charming but coldly murderous Henri Verdoux, the defeated yet hopeful ex-clown Calvero of LIMELIGHT, and the resourceful King Shahdov of A KING IN NEW YORK. Any one of these would well serve to establish their creator as one of the greatest of film actors.

In recent years while Chaplin's name has become no less known, the very basis of that fame has become strangely remote. There are any number of reasons for this. The films have, until now, been frustratingly unavailable. Those very early shorts which are occasionally run on television — usually at the wrong projection speeds and often brutally cut up — give little indication of the scope of Chaplin's talent. And so a whole generation has grown up seeing only a highly distorted view of Chaplin or not having seen him at all.

The hysterical vilification which developed against Chaplin during the height (or, more properly, depth) of the McCarthy period served to deflect attention away from the man's achievements and onto the man himself. Chaplin the comic and artist was superseded by Chaplin the figure of controversy.

Recently a reaction to this has been growing in the form of manic myth-making. Chaplin is now being canonized in certain noisy quarters as some sort of untouchable. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — a body whose membership never saw fit to vote Chaplin an Oscar until 1972, and that for the scoring of a film made twenty years earlier! — built their entire 1971 awards ceremony around a special Oscar voted to Chaplin by the Academy's Board of Governors.

Lost in all this silliness are the films themselves: those amazingly inventive, uproariously funny and sometimes deeply moving movies. Thirty and forty years after they were made they are still as entertaining as ever. Altogether it is probably the most remarkable body of work ever produced on film.



THE CHAPLIN REVIEW

A Dog's Life

1918

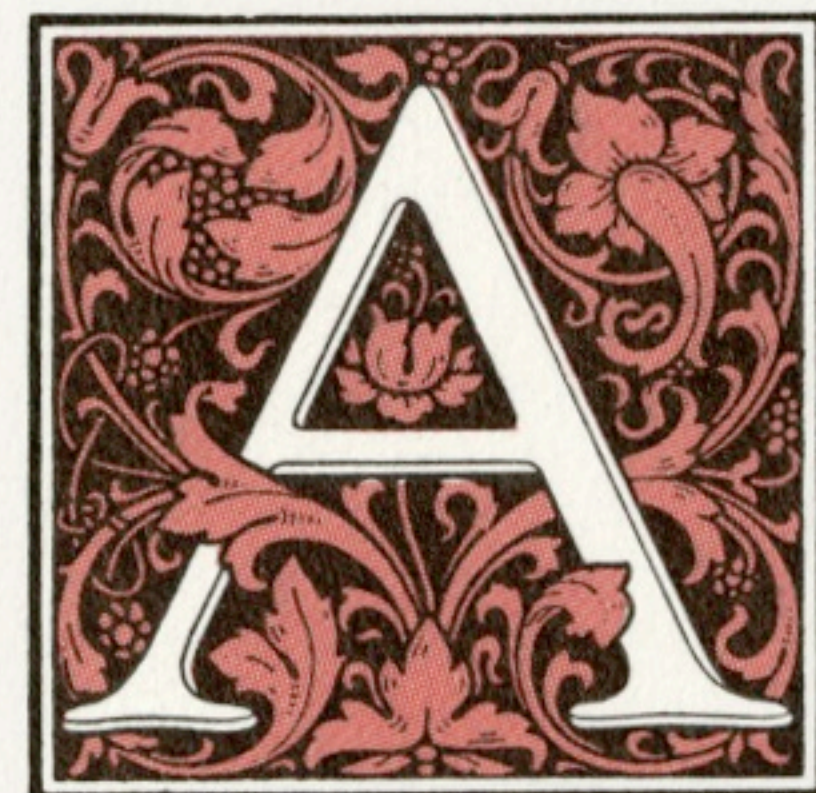
Shoulder Arms

1918

The Pilgrim

1923

Written and Directed by Charles Chaplin First National 119 minutes



DOG'S LIFE, a short story about a tramp, his dog, and the girl he tries to court, provides a perfect introduction to the comedy of Charles Chaplin. Here is the famous Charlie character, seedy in appearance yet fastidious in demeanor; the whole world against him yet ever the dreamer and dauntless optimist. It's also a very funny movie.

SHOULDER ARMS, generally considered the first significant Chaplin classic, was produced during World War I and released shortly before the armistice. The idea of a comedy about war and soldiering was considered a daring risk at the time but audiences — including the allied soldiers to whom it was shown in the trenches — loved it. SHOULDER ARMS is the original of the whole genre of service comedies which continues by way of CATCH-22 and M.A.S.H. Charlie is a new and hopelessly awkward recruit who, by the way of an elaborate dream sequence, manages to single-handedly capture the entire top command of the German army. His retort when asked how he did it: "I surrounded them."

THE PILGRIM was Chaplin's first wholehearted venture into the realm of satire. The subject is small-town America, its Puritan mores and accompanying hypocrisy. Charlie, an escaped convict, exchanges his prison uniform for the robes of a minister. His arrival in a nearby town is met with a local reception committee for an expected new pastor. Trapped, the fugitive has little choice but to play out the facade, which he does to an extent no genuine minister could hope to match. Certainly no one could pantomime the story of David and Goliath as it is done here. Chaplin's portrayal of a bogus minister managed to upset a few people at the time — THE PILGRIM bears the rather odd distinction of having been banned by the State of Pennsylvania.

Preceding this trio of gems is a short prologue in which Chaplin playfully discusses the period of the films' production. A musical score added by Chaplin in 1958 accompanies the Review.

A Dog's Life. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. With Charlie Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Tom Wilson, Sydney Chaplin.
Shoulder Arms. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. With Charlie Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Sydney Chaplin, Henry Bergman.
The Pilgrim. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. With Charlie Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Mack Swain, Kitty Bradburry.



THE KID *and* THE IDLE CLASS

1921 Written and Directed by Charles Chaplin
First National 60 minutes

1921 Written and Directed by Charles Chaplin
First National 30 minutes



Chaplin had attempted films of feature length on at least two occasions in the 'teens. One, *LIFE* (1915), was left unfinished, and the other, *SHOULDER ARMS* (1918), was shortened by Chaplin prior to its release. With *THE KID* he finally made the transition to the longer form. The change proved an unqualified success.

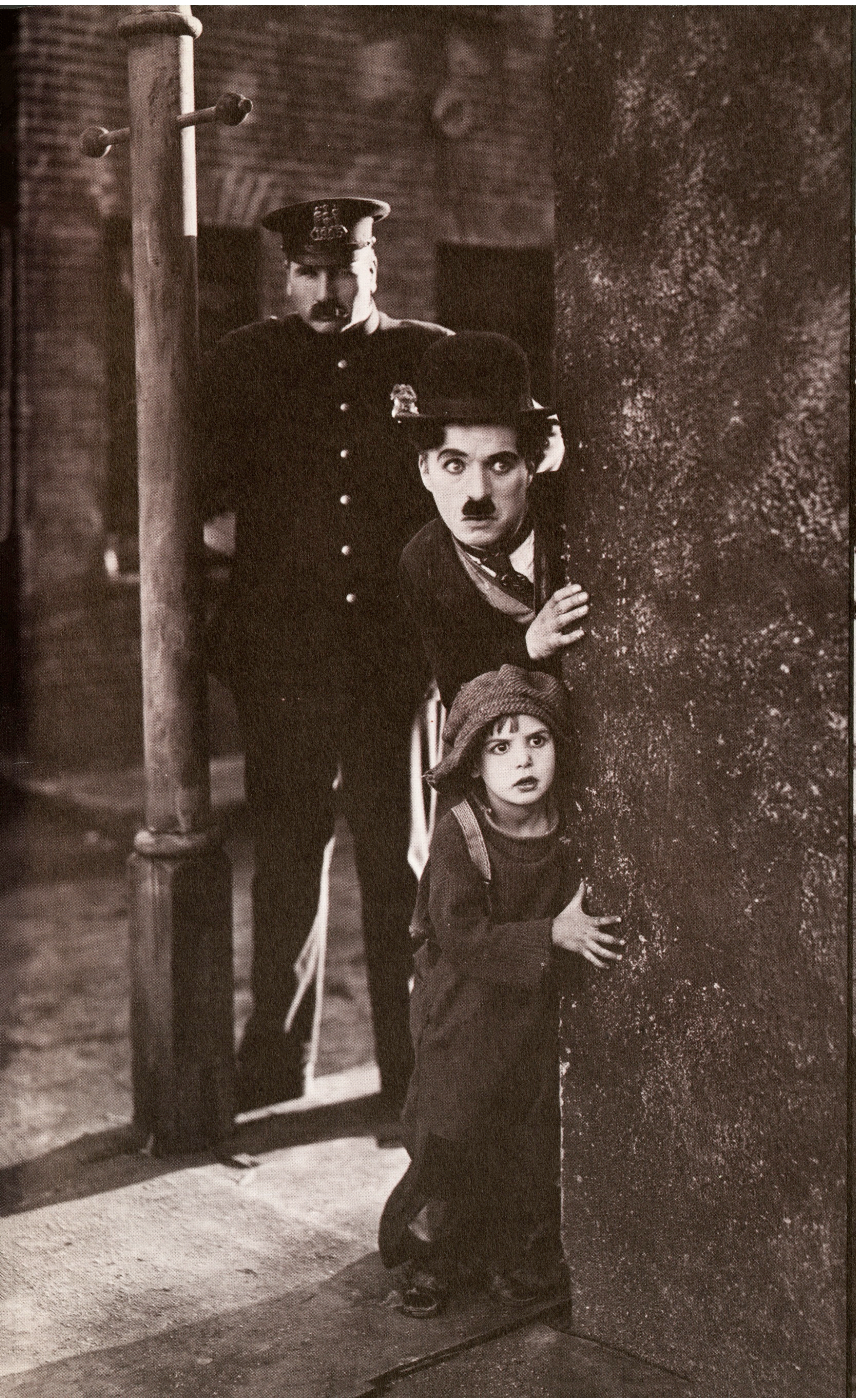
Of even greater significance is that rather than being a comedy per se, *THE KID* is essentially a dramatic story told *with* comedy. In the alley of a big city slum the tramp comes across an abandoned infant and, unwittingly at first, becomes the child's foster father. By the time the kid is five Charlie has become a proud parent and his "son" a necessary component in the tramp's slightly larcenous method of earning a living. (The kid breaks the windows of local residents moments before Charlie happens along to offer his services as a glazier.) The attempts of a social service agency to rescue the child from his sordid surroundings and the desperate efforts of Charlie and the kid to thwart this scheme provide the story's drama.

The hilarious comedy running all through *THE KID* is underlined by the poignancy of the dramatic conflict. This combination of the funny and the sad, only fleetingly found in Chaplin's previous films, was to become uniquely associated with his later work.

The performance Chaplin elicited from Jackie Coogan in the title role served for years as the standard against which all subsequent child actors were judged. It is still nothing less than a revelation.

THE IDLE CLASS, an uninhibited lampoon of the country club set features Chaplin in a dual role: the familiar tramp and a wealthy alcoholic fop. The club's costume ball turns into a maze of mistaken identities.

The Kid. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Jackie Coogan, Edna Purviance, Chuck Reisner, Lita Grey.
The Idle Class. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Mack Swain.



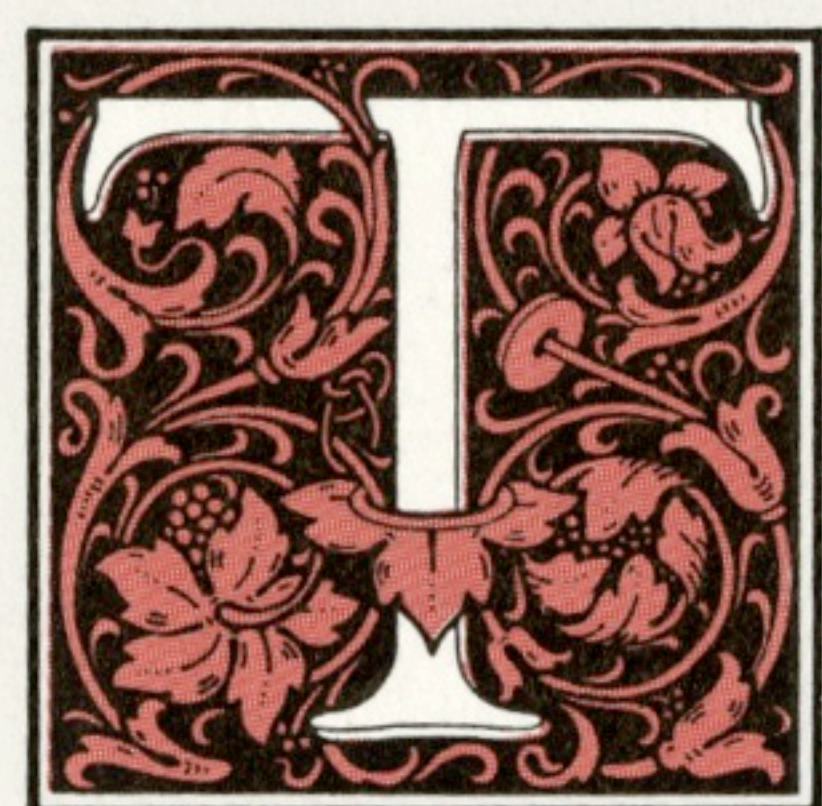
THE GOLD RUSH



PAY DAY

1925 **Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin**
United Artists 72 minutes

1922 **Written and Directed by Charles Chaplin**
First National 20 minutes



THE GOLD RUSH easily rates as one of the most nearly-perfect motion pictures ever made. There are other Chaplin films with more laughs and others that are more moving, but the blending of comedy, drama and excitement to be found in THE GOLD RUSH is unique.

From the impressive opening scene of an endless stream of hopeful prospectors trudging through the snow-piled Chilkoot Pass, this story of the turn-of-the-century Klondike gold rush takes on a near-epic scale. Into it all wanders a lone prospector to do battle with a crazed but gentle giant (Mack Swain.) He falls in love with a dance hall girl (Georgia Hale) who sees him all too clearly as the ludicrous figure he is, and barely escapes from a cabin blown off its foundation to a precarious balance on the edge of a precipice. This last sequence remains one of the most terrifying and screamingly funny ever staged. The depiction of manic gold fever and of the instant cities which sprang up to simultaneously feed it and feed off it is remarkably convincing. (From the standpoint of what used to be called "production value" this is easily the most sophisticated of the Chaplin films.)

In 1942 Chaplin re-issued THE GOLD RUSH to an exact reprise of the acclaim with which it had been greeted seventeen years earlier. For the occasion he added an original score and replaced the printed narrative and dialogue titles with his own spoken narration. This revision greatly benefitted the pacing of the film, and it is this version which is being offered exclusively by rbc films.

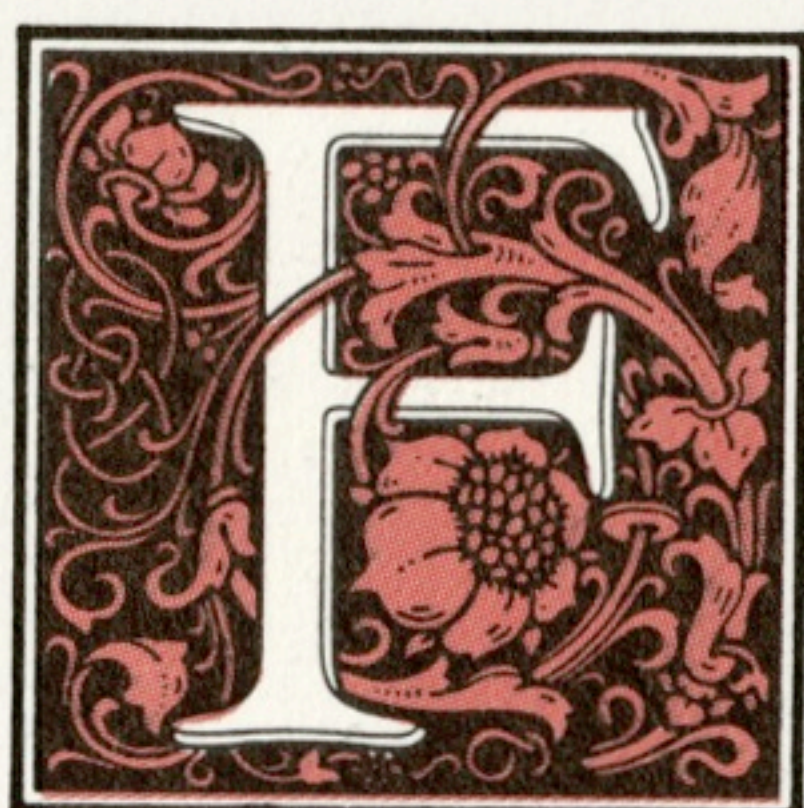
PAY DAY — In what was to be the last of the Chaplin two-reel comedies, Charlie is a construction worker contending with an unsympathetic boss and a domineering wife.

The Gold Rush. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh and Jack Wilson. Score and commentary (added in 1942) by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Georgia Hale, Mack Swain, Tom Murray.
Pay Day. Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Phyllis Allen, Mack Swain, Edna Purviance, Sydney Chaplin.



THE CIRCUS

1928 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin United Artists 72 minutes



ollowing the unprecedented acclaim and popularity of the THE GOLD RUSH considerable speculation developed over what Chaplin would do next. As is always the case in a situation of this kind, there is an inner pressure to consciously try and top the previous achievement. Chaplin wisely resisted the temptation and instead produced THE CIRCUS a modest and charming little jewel of a film.

As the title indicates, the story is set within the confines of a small traveling circus. While wandering through the midway Charlie is mistaken for a pickpocket. In his efforts to elude the police, he sneaks into the main tent and manages to make a shambles of the show. The fury of the circus' owner is short-lived as the patrons, thinking it was all planned, applaud Charlie as the hit of the show. Hired as a clown, he becomes a part of the circus and falls hopelessly in love with the owner's stepdaughter, an attractive equestrienne (Merna Kennedy.) The lover of her life, however, is the show's handsome young aerialist. Charlie, attempting to prove that he is the equal of his rival, volunteers to do the tightrope act in the regular performer's absence. The result is both breath-taking and hilarious as he is joined on the high-wire by an entourage of escaped monkeys. The ploy fails, and as the circus prepares to move on, Charlie turns down the offer of regular employment to go his separate way.

This unpretentious story, much closer in style and spirit to the older Chaplin-Mutual comedies than to its immediate predecessors, is told with simple grace and rich humor.

Preceded by a short subject.

Photographed by Rollie Totheroh. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Merna Kennedy, Allan Garcia, Harry Crocker.



CITY LIGHTS

1931 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin United Artists 81 minutes



CITY LIGHTS is one of the most melancholy and most beautiful of Chaplin's films, a distinction it shares with the much later LIMELIGHT.

Although the silent film was a thing of the past when CITY LIGHTS went into production in 1930, Chaplin continued to reject dialog for this and his next film, MODERN TIMES, preferring to continue silent screen pantomime. The wisdom of this decision has never been challenged, for spoken conversation in a movie as expressive as CITY LIGHTS could only be regarded as an unwelcome intrusion.

The story revolves around the little tramp's love for a blind girl (Virginia Cherrill) whom he finds selling flowers on a street corner. He permits her to think of him as being quite wealthy and indeed he gets to sample the good life when befriended by a millionaire drunkard who is extravagantly generous when drinking but when sober can not recognize, much less remember his new friend. Vowing to obtain enough money to pay for an expensive eye operation for the girl, Charlie embarks on a number of ventures in pursuit of this goal. Eventually, by sheer accident, he succeeds.

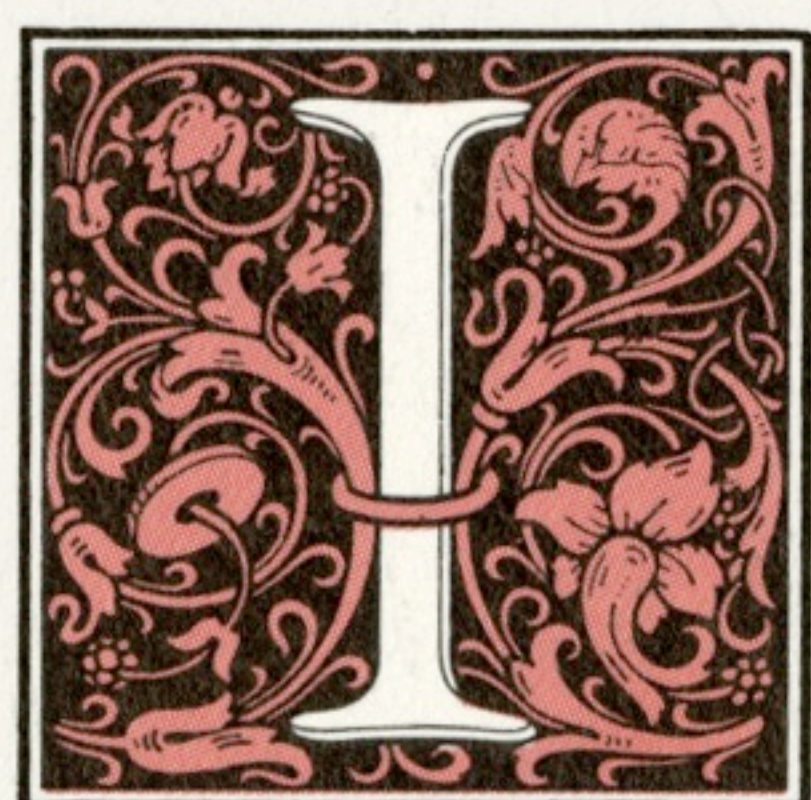
This kind of a story could so easily have been permitted to sink to the level of mawkish sentimentality, but Chaplin, knowing exactly when to introduce uproarious laughter into the tale, manages to skillfully avoid the trap. The climax of CITY LIGHTS, when the girl, having regained her sight, discovers the true state of her benefactor, remains one of the most moving and sublime moments in film history.

Photographed by Rollie Totheroh, Gordon Pollock, and Mark Marklatt. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Virginia Cherrill, Harry Myers, Jean Harlow (as an extra).



MODERN TIMES

1936 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin United Artists 89 minutes



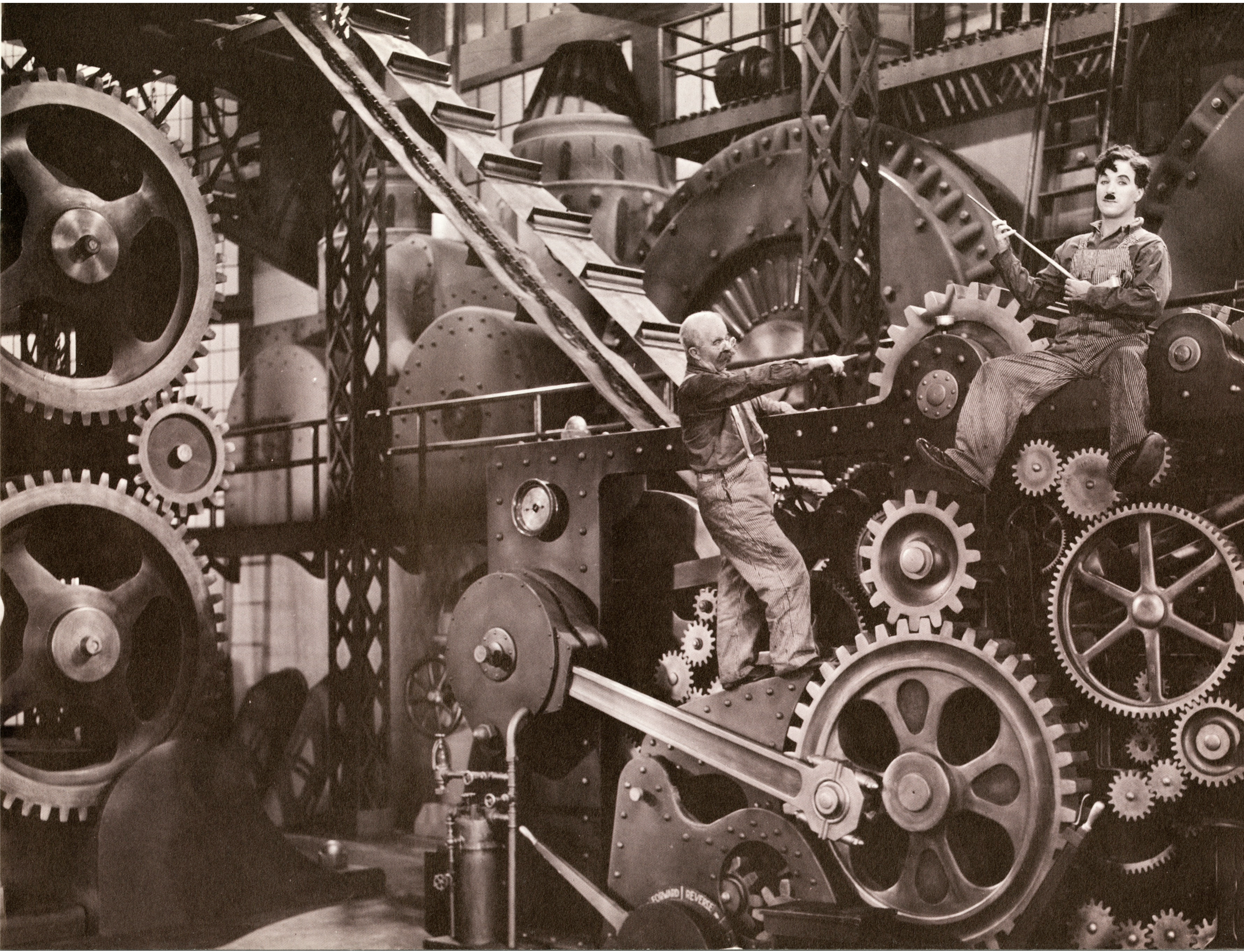
In the more than thirty-five years since its original release, MODERN TIMES has become possibly the most popular of the Chaplin films. Although firmly rooted in the Depression period of the mid-thirties, this devastating satire on the effects of mass production on the lives of factory workers has taken on the aura of a timeless classic. It remains the definitive film on the subject.

Actually, MODERN TIMES is concerned with a good deal more than assembly lines. Some criticism has been made regarding the film's alleged lack of thematic unity, since we are presented with a half hour of Charlie in the factory, then Charlie in jail, Charlie as a night watchman, as a singing waiter, and so on. To this point of view, the effect is one of several sequences which, brilliant as most of them are, fail to add up to a unified whole. What is overlooked by such criticism is that the very matter of day-to-day survival, always a strong underlying current in Chaplin's work, becomes in

MODERN TIMES the central concern, and indeed the very theme of the film. This was not only singularly appropriate for the America of 1936, but no doubt also contributes much to the film's remarkable universality.

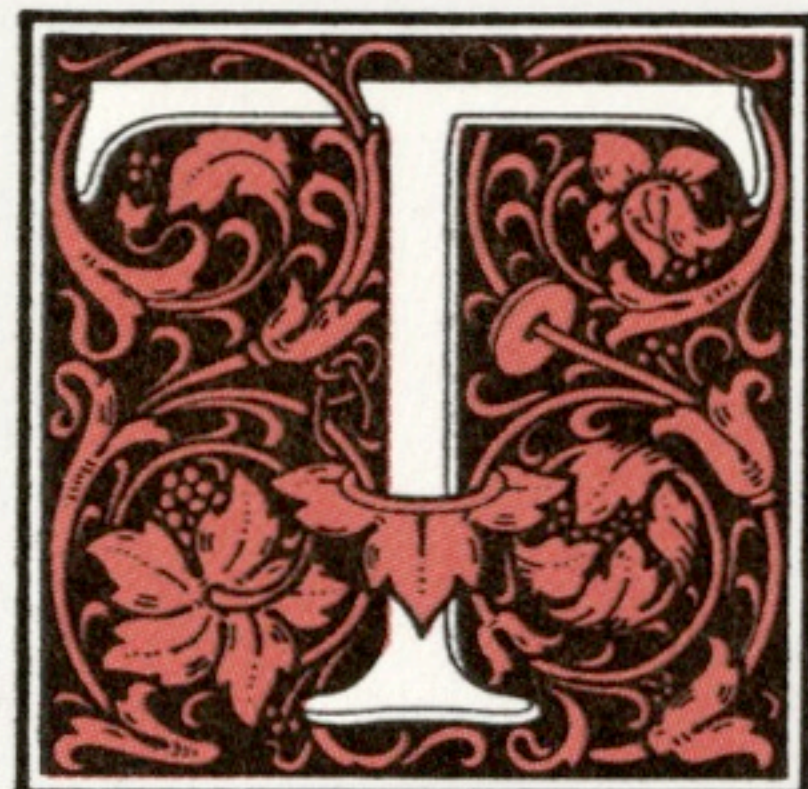
A large part of its continuing popularity stems from the fact that MODERN TIMES is one of the funniest of the Chaplin features. Sequences such as Charlie's battle with the assembly line feeding machine and the jail house scene in which he inadvertently sniffs a nose full of cocaine, can bring back laughter by the very memory of them.

Photographed by Rollie Totheroh and Ira Morgan. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Henry Bergman, Chester Conklin.



THE GREAT DICTATOR

1940 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin United Artists 128 minutes



THE GREAT DICTATOR marked a departure for Chaplin in a number of ways. Most notably, it is his first dialog film and, rather than try and add a voice to the by now universally recognized figure of the little tramp, Chaplin wisely chose to modify him into what is essentially a new character. More correctly, there are two Chaplin characters here: the modest, unassuming proprietor of a small barber shop in the Jewish ghetto of Tomania, and that country's maniacal dictator, Adenoid Hynkel.

The barber spends two decades in a mental hospital suffering from amnesia induced by a World War I battle injury. He then returns to his Jewish neighborhood oblivious to the changes that have occurred in his country since the dictator Hynkel has come to power. The battle he and his neighbors wage to outwit the marauding storm troopers provides the basis for one half of the film. Paralleling this, is the depiction of Hynkel and his advisors as they plot to double cross rival dictator Benzino Napoloni of Bacteria (a priceless burlesquing of il Duce by Jack Oakie).

Through a complicated set of circumstances, Hynkel and the barber become mistaken for one another by Hynkel's troops. Forced into an impersonation of Hynkel at a mass rally celebrating Tomania's successful invasion of Austerlich, the barber steps even further out of character and becomes Charles Chaplin. His impassioned speech on the evils of militarism, delivered directly to the audience, created an instant sensation and Chaplin was asked twice to repeat it on network radio broadcasts.

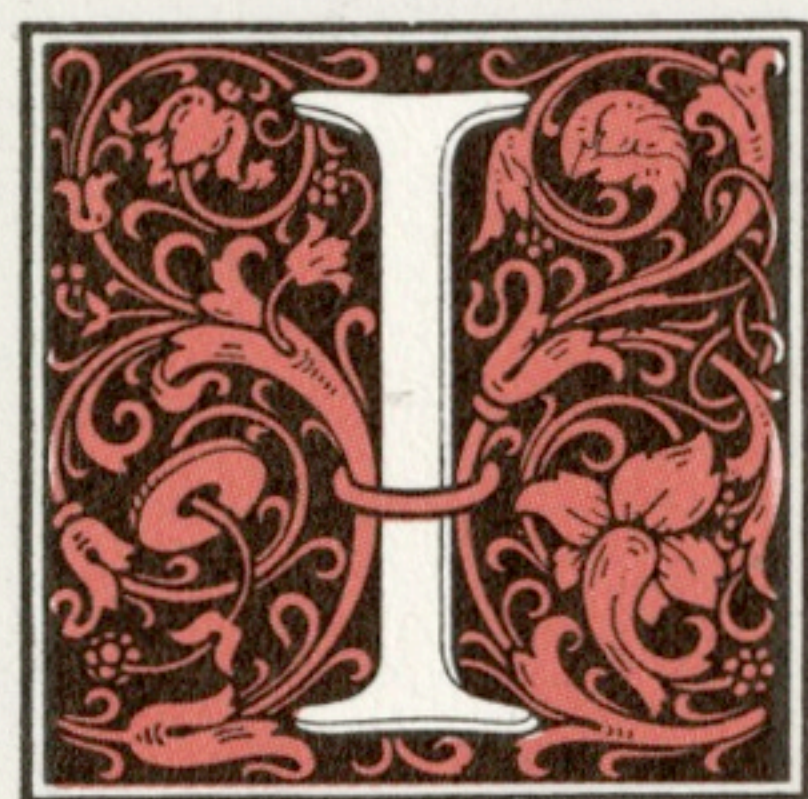
Although originally banned in a number of countries (and not just the obvious ones), THE GREAT DICTATOR proved to be one of the most popular of the Chaplin features. It is unlikely that anyone having once seen it could subsequently view newsreel footage of Adolph Hitler in any but a much altered context.

Photographed by Rollie Totheroh and Karl Struss. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charles Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Jack Oakie, Reginald Gardiner, Maurice Moscovitch, Billy Gilbert.



Monsieur Verdoux

1947 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin United Artists 123 minutes



n MONSIEUR VERDOUX Chaplin completely abandons all vestiges of the tramp character and, doing a complete turnabout, emerges as a modern Bluebeard. Dapper, silver-haired Parisian Henri Verdoux, having become unemployable during the French economic depression of the twenties, turns to supporting his invalid wife and young son by the singular method of marrying an assortment of wealthy and usually empty-headed women, and then murdering them for their money.

1947 audiences recoiled in horror at these goings-on, providing Chaplin with his only popular failure. He withdrew the film from circulation and in ensuing years it became something of a legend. Finally re-released in New York in 1964, MONSIEUR VERDOUX became a tremendous success; one of the few *genuine* examples of a movie being ahead of its time.

On the occasion of that rediscovery Bosley Crowther, writing in the *New York Times*, remarked, "The engagement now permits all those people, who did not get to see it seventeen years ago and all those who have been hearing about it as one of the great Chaplin films through all these years, to see for themselves what a superior sardonic comedy it is — and also to estimate how unjust was the bitter discrimination against it.

"For MONSIEUR VERDOUX is an engrossingly wry and paradoxical film, screamingly funny in places, sentimental in others, sometimes slow and devoted to an unusually serious and sobering argument. That is that the individual murderer — 'the small businessman in murder' as the protagonist says — is regarded as a criminal, but the big businessman, the munitions manufacturers and the professional soldiers who contribute to murder on a mass scale are given great honors and monetary rewards."

Photographed by Rollie Totheroh, Curt Courant and Wallice Chewing. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charles Chaplin, Martha Raye, Isobel Elsom, Irving Bacon, William Frawley.



LIMELIGHT

1952 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin United Artists 145 minutes



hen LIMELIGHT was originally released in 1952, the anti-Chaplin hysteria was at its apex. Theatres showing the film were picketed by super-patriotic groups and the threat of similar disturbances caused other theatres to cancel bookings. All of this was directed not at the film, which is without the slightest hint of political implications, but rather at Chaplin. (Such were the perils of being a non-conformist during that period.) Chaplin was forced to withdraw the film from distribution and few have had the opportunity to see it until now.

At the time LIMELIGHT was widely rumored to have been planned by Chaplin as his final film. Whether this was Chaplin's intention at the time or not is still open to conjecture. However, LIMELIGHT most certainly does have the tone and quality of a final statement.

The setting is the London of 1914. Chaplin plays Calvero, an elderly music hall comic, great star now come upon bad times and the conviction that he no longer possesses the ability to move audiences to laughter. He saves a young ballet dancer (beautifully played by Claire Bloom in her first important role) from suicide, rekindles her will to live, and guides her to prominence as a prima-ballerina. In the final scenes once-great Calvero learns, by way of an uproarious stage routine with Buster Keaton, that he is far from the failure he had become to believe. Nevertheless, his time is past and it is the ballerina's turn at fame and stardom. (As she dances onto the stage Calvero, his heart failing after the strenuous effort of the routine, watches her lovingly for a moment and then peacefully expires.)

This delicate, somewhat melancholy and intensely-moving depiction of age giving way to youth provides the perfect closing film for any Chaplin series.

Photographed by Karl Struss. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charles Chaplin, Claire Bloom, Sydney Chaplin, Nigel Bruce, Buster Keaton.



A King in New York

1957 Written, Produced and Directed by Charles Chaplin Archway 105 minutes



KING IN NEW YORK was Chaplin's first film made outside the United States and apart from his usual production associates. The film reflects Chaplin's own understandable displeasure with the turn of events that had made him a virtual exile from his adopted home. Yet it is far from the virulent attack upon the United States reported in the national press at the time of its release abroad. It is instead a gentle satire on a society gone temporarily insane.

Chaplin plays the deposed king of a European mini-monarchy who comes to the United States in hope of making a new life. He is without funds but the American fascination with titled royalty soon leads to a round of dinners with the upper crust and eventually to a lucrative contract performing in television commercials. A chance encounter with a young boy (played by Michael Chaplin) whose Marxist parents are in trouble with a Congressional investigating committee results in the light of suspicion being cast upon the king. The ensuing Congressional hearing is climaxed by a thorough dousing of the committee by a fire hose wielded, quite innocently, by the royal witness. Eventually King Shahdov is absolved of political sin but, having had enough of the madness of mid-fifties America, he decides to return to Europe.

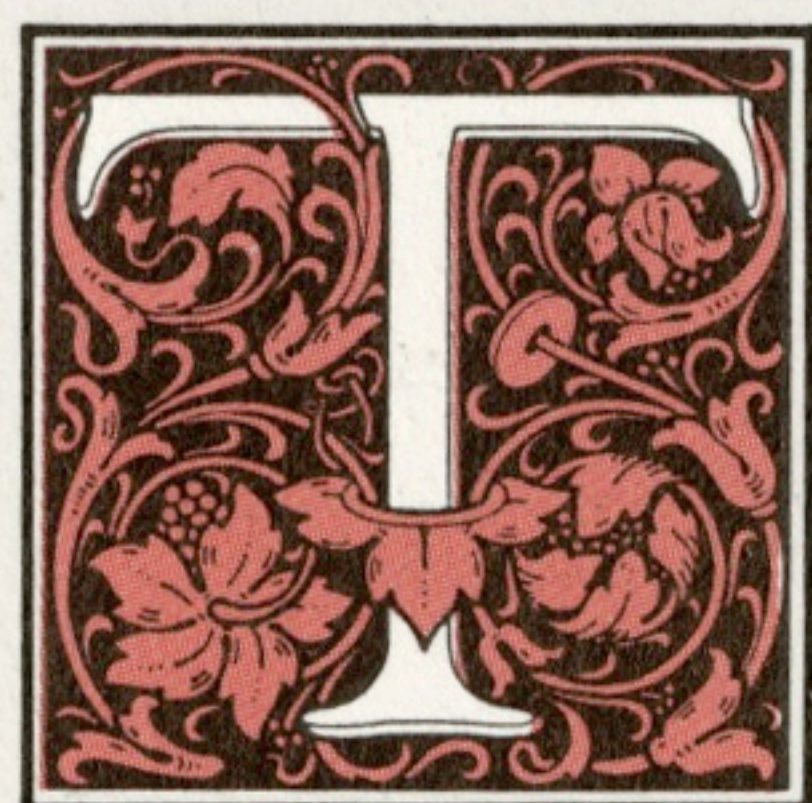
Within the framework Chaplin pokes fun at a whole variety of targets including McCarthyism, dogma-spouting Marxists, fifties rock & roll, and even wide-screen movies.

Photographed by Georges Perinal. Score by Charles Chaplin. With Charles Chaplin, Dawn Addams, Oliver Johnston, Michael Chaplin, Maxine Audley.



The Life Work of Charles Chaplin

1973 A Documentary in preparation by filmmakers Peter Bogdanovich and Bert Schneider 90 minutes

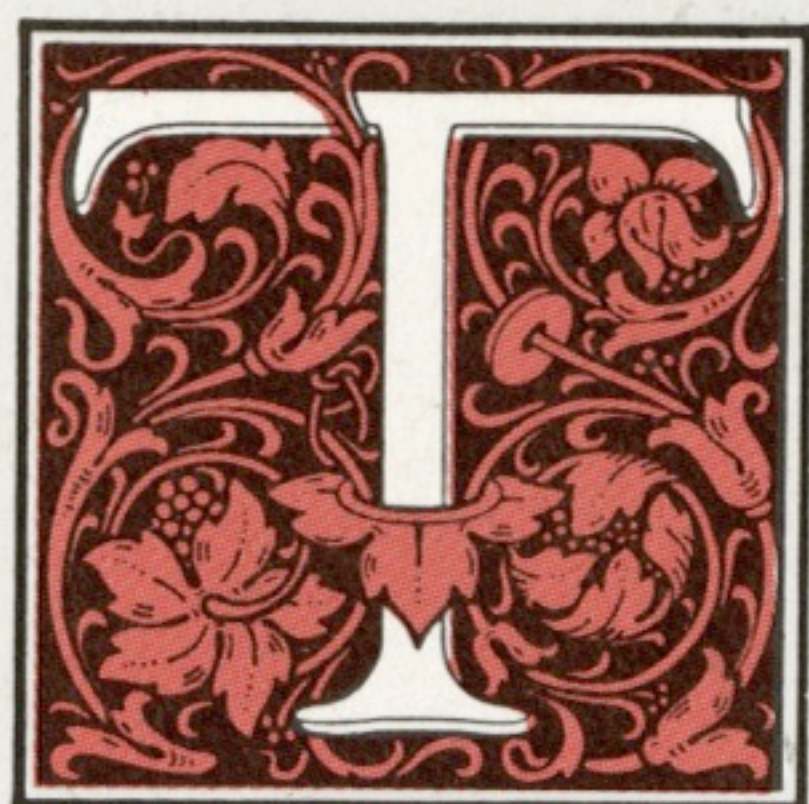


he Charlie Chaplin story is the most fabulous rags to riches story of the twentieth century. Chaplin rose from the direst poverty to fantastic success by means of an artistic talent which achieved the proportions of genius. He became a public figure loved by more people than perhaps any other man in recent history, and yet his personal life generated a stormy controversy which culminated in one of the most despicable political attacks of the century. Through his later years, living in self-exile, Chaplin has enjoyed a life of serene domesticity, and he returned triumphantly at the age of 83 to New York and Hollywood to receive long overdue accolades.

Although The Chaplin Documentary is still in its relatively early stages at press time, the project has already involved such creative talents as Peter Bogdanovich and Bert Schneider. The film will encompass not only Chaplin's personal life, but a wide variety of clips from his films. This film promises to be a very special addition to the Chaplin series.



SELECTED SHORT SUBJECTS



he early Chaplin shorts are available from various other distributors, with usually rather poor print quality. However, our collection has been newly scored by the Goed Nieuw Orkest in Holland, and the prints are closer to the original negatives than those previously seen in this country.

From Keystone (1914):
LAUGHING GAS
THE ROUNDERS

From Essanay (1915):
THE BANK
BY THE SEA
THE CHAMPION
HIS NEW JOB
IN THE PARK
THE JITNEY ELOPEMENT
A NIGHT IN THE SHOW
A NIGHT OUT
POLICE
SHANGHAIED
THE TRAMP
TRIPLE TROUBLE
A WOMAN
WORK

From Mutual (1916-1917):
THE ADVENTURER
BEHIND THE SCREEN
THE COUNT
THE CURE
EASY STREET
THE FIREMAN
THE FLOORWALKER
THE IMMIGRANT
ONE A.M.
THE PAWNSHOP
THE RINK
THE VAGABOND



THE PAWNSHOP



THE TRAMP



HIS NEW JOB

Millions of words have been published on the Chaplin films.
The most concise and thoughtful may well have come
from the late **James Agee** in his famous article on silent film comedy
which appeared in a 1949 issue of *Life* magazine:

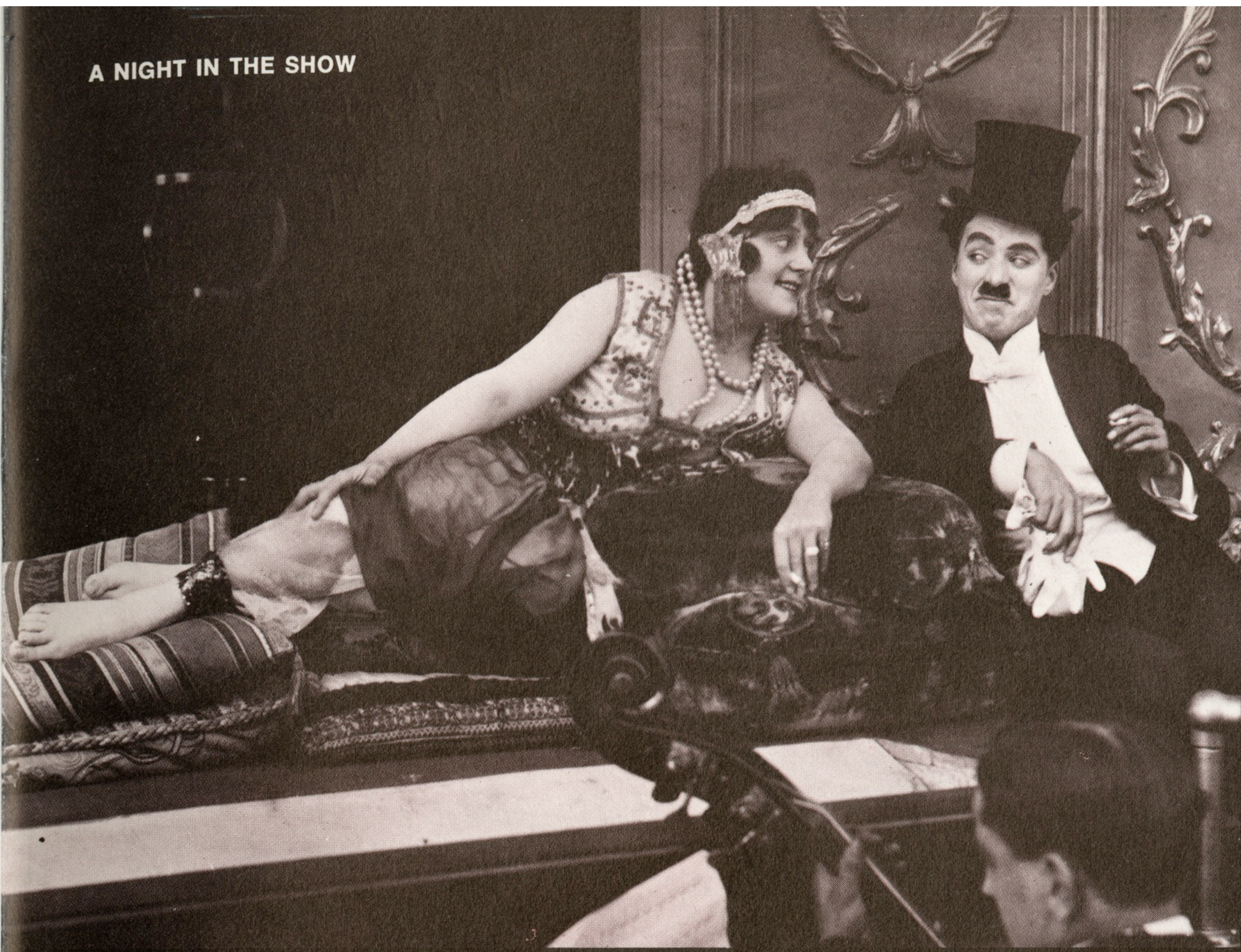


f all comedians he (Chaplin) worked most deeply and most shrewdly within a realization of what a human being is, and is up against. The Tramp is as centrally representative of humanity, as many sided and as mysterious as Hamlet, and it seems unlikely that any dancer or actor can ever have excelled him in eloquence, variety or poignancy of motion . . .

"Before Chaplin came to pictures people were content with a couple of gags per comedy; he got some kind of laugh every second. The minute he began to work he set standards — and continually forced them higher. Anyone who saw Chaplin eating a boiled shoe like brook trout in THE GOLD RUSH, or embarrassed by a swallowed whistle in CITY LIGHTS, has seen perfection. Most of the time, however, Chaplin got his laughter less from the gags, or from milking them in any ordinary sense, than through his genius for what may be called inflection — the perfect, changeable shading of his physical and emotional attitudes toward a gag . . .

"The finest pantomime, the deepest emotion, the richest and most poignant poetry were in Chaplin's work. He could probably pantomime Bryce's The American Commonwealth without ever blurring a syllable and make it paralyzingly funny into the bargain . . ."

A NIGHT IN THE SHOW



THE CURE



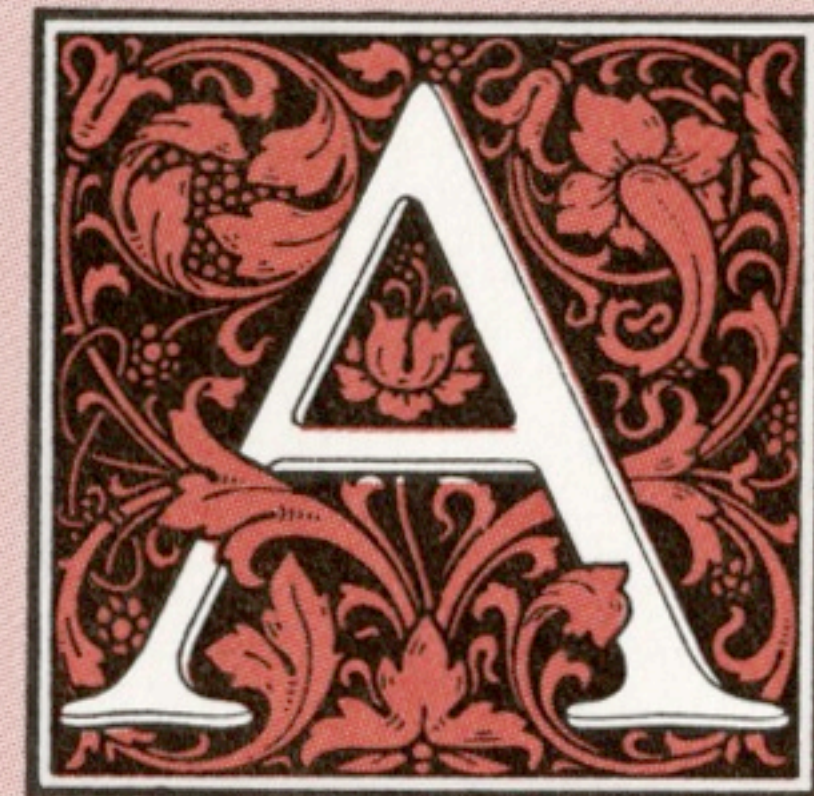
WORK



IN THE PARK



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**CHRONOLOGICAL
FILMOGRAPHY
(1914-1957)**

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THE MUTUAL COMEDIES (1916-17) pg. 30
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