

Document Citation

Title	A dog's life
Author(s)	Andrew Sarris Andrew Sarris
Source	<i>Village Voice</i>
Date	1987 Mar 31
Type	review
Language	English English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	A dog's life, Chaplin, Charlie, 1918

SUNDAY

Charles Chaplin's **A DOG'S LIFE** (1918), from his scenario, with Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Sidney Chaplin, and Henry Bergman, is one of the great laugh riots of all time. Chaplin was ready for a leap to long-form comedies, and he led with *The Tramp* and his purest encapsulation of surviving moment by moment in a ghetto cosmos. Charley's testing ground consists of little more than an open-air bedroom in a fenced lot, a couple of streets with food vendors, an employment office, and a dance saloon. His nemeses are cops, crooks, and the owners of anything, and his allies are a dance hall naïf (Purviance) and an awesomely talented mutt called Scraps. The little white dog's tender, devious alliance with Chaplin became a direct prototype for *The Kid*, the other great apotheosis of *The Tramp* in this expansive, creative period when

VV 3/31/87
by Andrew Sarris
and Tom Allen

Chaplin's craft was spiritually transfigured into art. In this first totally controlled feature to go more than a half hour, one can almost feel the avid experimentation in prolonging and topping gags and modulating tender moods in the intervals. The balletic timing of the petty triumphs and gallant frustrations is especially breathtaking, and for decade after decade has been quite capable of inciting an audience into titters of recognition that build relentlessly into gales of approving laughter. *A Dog's Life* should be appreciated as a crucial growing stage for the archetypal Tramp from such seedbeds as *Easy Street* to the full fruition of *City Lights*. (Co-features: *Easy Street*, *The Cure*, *The Idle Class*, and *City Lights*; beginning a major retrospective of Chaplin, Keaton, and Woody Allen) **Regency: through Tuesday; the short features program begins at 1:35, 4:50, 8:05**