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REVIVALS IN FOCUS

A CRITICAL GUIDE BY ANDREW SARRIS

WEDNESDAY

Charles Chaplin's **THE CIRCUS** (1928), from his screenplay, with Chaplin, Allan Garcia, Merna Kennedy, and Betty Morrissey, complements *Lime-light* as Chaplin's most expressive outlook on his art, its mystery, and its misery. He goes so far as to expropriate the abstract circle of the circus ring as a metaphor of his lonely professional existence, ending in a tight frame of himself and his self-pity. The image was redolent of the pressure imposed on America's premier clown during a decade when the increasing popularity of Keaton and Lloyd and Laurel and Hardy were impinging on the Tramp's preserve. Nonetheless, Chaplin's universal little man again shows a genius for engaging the audience's attentive sympathy, and while the film lacks the flow and cohesion of his greatest works, its set pieces rank with the funniest and most felicitous of any of his effects. Always, there is the ineffable expressiveness of Chaplin's face as the centerpiece of the action, from which the mise-en-scène never wanders far in its seamless unfolding of cause and effect, con-

Sarris / Allen
straint and escape, conception and execution. A musical score composed by Chaplin has been added to this relatively least known of his silent feature-length comedies. (Co-features: four Chaplin shorts—*Sunnyside*, *A Day's Pleasure*, *Pay n* and *The Pilgrim*—also —