

Document Citation

Title	The masterworks of D.W. Griffith
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Kino International Corporation</i>
Date	
Type	distributor materials
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	6
Subjects	Griffith, D. W. (1875-1948), LaGrange, Kentucky, United States
Film Subjects	A corner in wheat, Griffith, D. W., 1909 Judith of Bethulia, Griffith, D. W., 1913 The birth of a nation, Griffith, D. W., 1915 Way down east, Griffith, D. W., 1920 Home, sweet home, Griffith, D. W., 1914 Broken blossoms, Griffith, D. W., 1919 Intolerance, Griffith, D. W., 1916 The musketeers of Pig Alley, Griffith, D. W., 1912

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THE MASTERWORKS OF **D.W. GRIFFITH**

As you've never seen them before!



A SEVEN VOLUME SET

Newly mastered for the Kino On Video Collector's Edition series
BIOGRAPH SHORTS, Volumes 1 & 2 JUDITH OF BETHULIA/HOME SWEET HOME
INTOLERANCE BROKEN BLOSSOMS WAY DOWN EAST
and an all-new deluxe edition of THE BIRTH OF A NATION

THE MASTERWORKS OF D.W. GRIFFITH

The Biograph Shorts Period

Prior to David Wark Griffith's arrival on the scene of world cinema, the fledgling medium was roughly divided into three ill-defined factions: those who used motion pictures to record glimpses of the real world with "scenics" and "actualities;" those, like Georges Melies, who used it as a device to create elaborate illusions; and those who used it in an attempt to rival the drama of the legitimate stage.

The cinema had negative connotations and was widely perceived as a cheap entertainment for the lower classes. In fact, when Griffith became a screen actor, he did so under the assumed name of Lawrence Griffith. It was with great trepidation and little confidence that he accepted his first assignment as director. But once he began to realize the untapped potential of cinema, he fully embraced the medium, prolifically turning out more than one hundred films in a single year, the superior quality of which boosted Biograph to the industrial forefront.

By combining the narrative form of the melodramatic stage with the natural locations of the "scenics," then violating the early laws of cinema by using camera tricks -- such as shooting a scene from multiple camera positions, inserting closeups and fadeouts, and crosscutting between action in two locales -- Griffith reformulated the design of cinematic language, a design that is still in effect today.

In these early years at Biograph (the most significant films of which are collected in two special anthology cassettes: CORNER IN WHEAT and THE MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY), Griffith secured the assistance of a talented cameraman (G.W. "Billy" Bitzer) and assembled a dynamic cast of actors of diverse backgrounds to serve as his stock company, and to aide in his cinematic experimentation during his six years at Biograph. During this time, Griffith shook from his own mind and

(continued)



CORNER IN WHEAT & Selected Biograph Shorts

1909-1913 118 minutes B&W 24.95
Orchestral Score recorded in digital stereo
Featuring: Mary Pickford, Lillian and Dorothy Gish
Florence Lawrence and Marion Leonard

The eight cinematic milestones collected in this special tape trace Griffith's rapid, unparalleled development as a filmmaker during his five year stint at Biograph. In addition to the title short, featured works are THOSE AWFUL HATS, THE SEALED ROOM, THE UNCHANGING SEA, HIS TRUST, THE NEW YORK HAT, AN UNSEEN ENEMY and THE MOTHERING HEART. Not only do these films demonstrate Griffith's pioneering of the technique of parallel editing, they also offer an excellent sampling of the actresses that became Biograph's top stars.



THE MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY

& Selected Biograph Shorts

1912-1913 117 minutes B&W 24.95
Orchestral Score recorded in digital stereo
Featuring: Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Blanche Sweet

These seven films, produced and directed by D.W. Griffith in 1912 and 1913, demonstrate the ways the filmmaker elevated the one-reel picture to the pinnacle of artistic accomplishment. Titles included are THE BURGLAR'S DILEMMA, THE SUNBEAM, THE PAINTED LADY, ONE IS BUSINESS THE OTHER CRIME, DEATH'S MARATHON, THE BATTLE AT ELDERBUSH GULCH and the title short. One surprising facet of these films is the consistently bleak outlook expressed, from an era remembered for its whimsical attitudes and happy endings.



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THE MASTERWORKS OF D.W. GRIFFITH

"LIKE WRITING HISTORY WITH LIGHTNING!"

-- President Woodrow Wilson

The Birth of a Nation

A D E L U X E E D I T I O N

More than 75 years after its initial release, **THE BIRTH OF A NATION** remains one of the most controversial films ever made. It is a landmark achievement in film history which continues to fascinate and enrage audiences. It is the epic story of two families, one northern and one southern, during and after the Civil War. D.W. Griffith's masterful direction combines brilliant battle scenes and tender romance with a vicious portrayal of African Americans (played by whites in blackface). It was the greatest feature-length blockbuster yet to be pro-

duced in the United States and the first to be shown in the White House. After seeing it, President Woodrow Wilson remarked that it was "like writing history with lightning!"

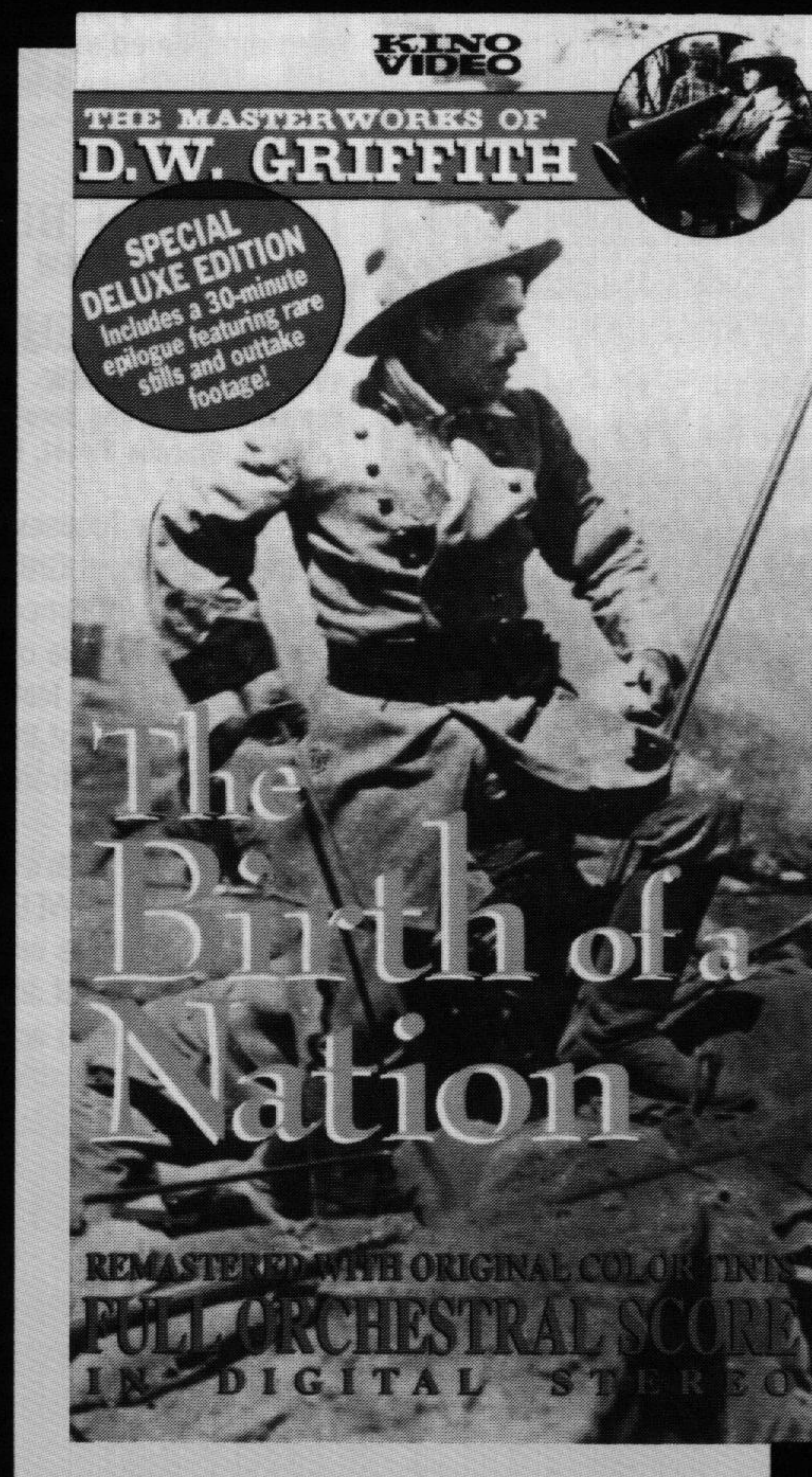
have the film banned, or at least the most gruesome scenes censored. The film also inspired African Americans to move into filmmaking as a way to offer alternative images and stories. Oscar Micheaux's *Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920), about a black prospector who defies the Klan that seeks to appropriate his land, was only one of many direct responses to **THE BIRTH OF A NATION**.

Stung by the numerous efforts to censor the film, Griffith went on to make another historical epic as a reply to, and indictment of, his critics -- one even bigger and more expensive -- **INTOLERANCE** (1916). The latter film failed at the box office, but the two Griffith features defined a style of cinema that profoundly influenced at least two generations of filmmakers both at home and abroad -- including Erich von Stroheim, Abel Gance, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, to name only a few. For many reasons, positive as well as negative, **THE BIRTH OF A NATION** was recently added to the National Film Registry's list of cultural landmarks.

This Deluxe Kino On Video Edition of **THE BIRTH OF A NATION** boasts a completely new orchestral soundtrack, based on the original score. Color tints have been added according to Griffith's instructions.

SPECIAL FEATURE!

KINO ON VIDEO's deluxe edition of **BIRTH** includes a new 30-minute film, **MAKING THE BIRTH OF A NATION**. Featured in this insightful investigation into one of the most important films in the history of cinema are rare stills, documents and never-before-seen outtake footage, compiled by film historians Russell Merritt and David Shepard.



THE BIRTH OF A NATION

1915 187 minutes Color tinted Double cassette 39.95

Directed by D.W. Griffith

Scenario: Griffith, Thomas Dixon and Frank Woods

Based on Dixon's novel and play *The Clansman*

and on Dixon's novel *The Leopard's Spots*

Photographed by G.W. "Billy" Bitzer and Karl Brown

Edited by James Edward Smith

Featuring Henry B. Walthall, Mae Marsh

Miriam Cooper, Lillian Gish

New orchestral score arranged and

conducted by Eric Beheim

Based on the original 1930 score by Joseph Carl Breil

Epoch Producing Company

• and •

MAKING THE BIRTH OF A NATION

1992 30 minutes Color/B&W

Written by Russell Merritt

Produced for video by David Shepard

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THE MASTERWORKS OF D.W. GRIFFITH

Poetry on Film



BROKEN BLOSSOMS

1919 90 minutes Color tinted Orchestral Score
Featuring: Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess,
and Donald Crisp 24.95

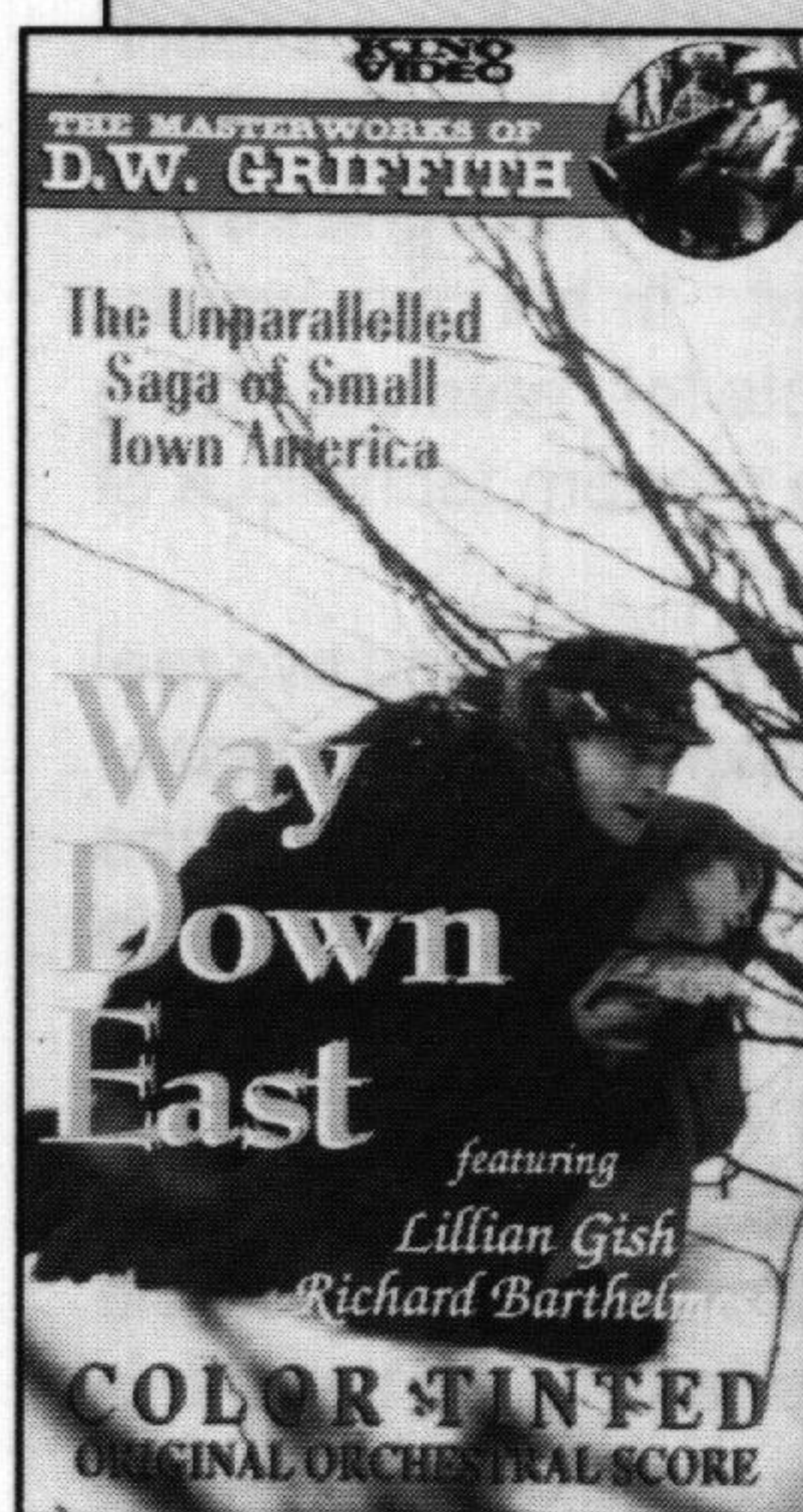
Griffith's cinematic eloquence reached its peak in this tender yet tragic tale of love and suffering in the seedy Limehouse district of London.

In this, the most heart-rending performance of her career, Lillian Gish plays a fifteen-year-old street urchin who longs to escape her miserable existence. Emotionally scarred by the torment and neglect of her abusive father (Crisp), the girl collapses outside the shop of the lonely Chinese missionary (Barthelmess). As he tenderly nurtures her back to health, an unspoken romance flowers between them, awakening in each of them feelings of love they thought themselves forever denied.

In some ways *BROKEN BLOSSOMS* is Griffith's response to critics of *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* -- an effort to clear himself of charges of racism. However, cinematic convention forbade physical interaction between the two races. With this in mind, Griffith took what might have been a bold interracial romance and self-consciously transformed it into high art. By focusing more on emotion than action, he created a form of cinematic poetry that engages the viewer through minute gestures and changes of expression, meticulously choreographed and gracefully assembled.

For this KINO ON VIDEO edition, a new master has been struck from a tinted archival print. The score is the 1919 by Louis Gottschalk, performed by a full orchestra.

VIDEO edition, a new master from a tinted archival print, original one composed in 1919 by Louis Gottschalk, performed by a full orchestra.



WAY DOWN EAST

1920 149 minutes Color tinted Orchestral Score 24.95
Featuring: Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess

Griffith billed *WAY DOWN EAST* as "A Simple Story Of Plain People," but this modest summation fails to convey the scale and significance of one of the director's most ambitious works. At the time, it was the most expensive challenge Griffith had ever undertaken, and it proved to be, next to *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*, his most successful.

Lillian Gish stars as Anna Moore, a poor New England girl who moves in with her wealthy cousins. There, she falls under the gaze of the cavalier Lennox Sanderson (Lowell Sherman), who wants Anna so badly that he stages a mock wedding and convinces her they're married just to have his way with her. But when she becomes pregnant, Sanderson is quick to abandon her. In the small town of Bartlett, Anna finds temporary solace from her woes and falls in love with a wealthy, yet humble, squire (Richard Barthelmess). However, she cannot escape her scandalous past and is once more thrust into emotional torment.

Griffith provided engaging bits of small-town Americana to balance the film, acting as comic relief from the dramatization of Anna's intense despair, which reaches its climax -- in a sequence that has become screen legend -- in a winter's storm on a floe of ice, moving unstopably toward certain death.

For this KINO ON VIDEO edition, a tinted print has been remastered at the authentic projection speed. The original score by Louis Silvers, performed by a full orchestra and recorded in 1928, accompanies the film.



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BROKEN BLOSSOMS

THE MASTERWORKS OF D.W. GRIFFITH

the minds of the world, the stigma that had long been associated with the medium. With such films as *THE BATTLE AT ELDERBUSH GULCH*, cinema was no longer recognized just as a cheap entertainment, but as an art. In his own words, Griffith claimed to have been responsible for "revolutionizing Motion Picture drama and founding the modern technique of the art."

By 1913 Griffith had begun to tire of one and two reel shorts and yearned to take on greater challenges. The first of these was *JUDITH OF BETHULIA*, his last film under the aegis of Biograph. The significance of *JUDITH* lies not just in its increased length (four reels), scale or expense, but in that Griffith sought to present it as a piece of drama that would appeal just as strongly to the highbrow audience as to the low. It was conceived as a faithful adaptation of a respectable literary work and great emphasis was laid upon the film's historical and religious accuracy. This approach proved so effective that Griffith relied heavily upon it in future years, in the historical epics such as *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* and *INTOLERANCE*.

When Biograph refused to allow Griffith the creative liberty he desired, he signed a contract with Mutual, taking with him the cast that had appeared in the dozens of groundbreaking shorts in virtual anonymity, but whose personalities would now be promoted as selling points, quickly to become household names with the continued success of the director's works.

Being free of Biograph enabled Griffith to undertake the challenge of a superproduction, intended to become "the greatest picture ever made." With the financial help of Mutual partner Harry Aitken, Griffith purchased the rights to Thomas E. Dixon's novel *THE CLANSMAN*, an inflammatory tale of the Civil War and Reconstruction Eras in the South, built upon the nation's paranoid fears of the newly-liberated slaves. While its racist underpinnings were integral in generating suspense and whipping the audience into a frenzy, they have since become the film's greatest weakness, an embarrassing element in an otherwise estimable work.

In spite of this substantial socio-political shortcoming, *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*, as the film came to be called, is nevertheless a film of the highest technical and artistic merit, a vital milestone in the development of the medium, an emotionally complex drama that is required viewing for anyone interested in the evolution of cinematic art.

The Civil War battle scenes were unparalleled in scale, yet they were more than expensive crowd scenes designed to awe the spectator. Through carefully worded titles, images of the casualties and the intricately woven plot of heroes, homecomings and victims, Griffith endowed the sweeping action with deep emotional impact. It is this dramatic quality that differentiates Griffith's work from the Italian epics that were then invading America, as well as a host of domestic imitators.

While the unprecedented acclaim for *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*'s artistic innovations (and the popular response

as well) were pleasing to Griffith, who had gambled an extraordinary amount of money -- both his own and that of numerous investors -- he was less content with the outcry against the film's unfair depiction of the African-American.

Unable to eloquently respond to these critics in interviews and pamphlets, Griffith decided to speak in his strongest voice, through another film, one that would not only demonstrate his humanitarian feelings, but would also outdo the artistic innovations of its immediate predecessor.

It began as a film entitled *THE MOTHER AND THE LAW*, a social conscience picture about industrial unrest in a modern urban environment. But this scenario seemed inadequate in conveying the message Griffith sought to convey, so he exploded the humanist themes and spread them out into four separate narratives set in different stages of civilization: modern day America, Renaissance France, Old Testament Babylon and the Crucifixion. Griffith's project rapidly grew from a political potboiler to "an epic sermon, a mighty purge for hypocrisy through the ages."

Again he stressed the plot's historical accuracy, lofty literary origins and actions on a scale that had never before been approached. While deftly maintaining the emotional value of the individual, he placed the stories in lavishly detailed settings, the most phenomenal of which was the palace of Belshazzar, an immense structure of gigantic statues, ornate columns, swarming with hundreds of costumed soldiers and dancing maidens, so huge that it had to be photographed from a hot-air balloon for all its spectacle to be captured.

The only problem with *INTOLERANCE* was that its design was too radical for audiences of 1916. In spite of a tide of critical praise, it was years before the innovations and accomplishments it presented were widely recognized.

After *INTOLERANCE* Griffith was forced to step away from such magnanimous undertakings, until he could recoup the investments he and others had made in the radical project. He instead focused his attention on dramas of a considerably smaller scale. Griffith proved himself to be just as capable of presenting stories of intense emotional power and humanist ideals without the oversized battle scenes and sets that had been integral to the epics. In the late teens, Griffith moved into a new stage of artistic development in which he handled delicate themes (such as interracial romance in *BROKEN BLOSSOMS* and an illicit love affair in *WAY DOWN EAST*) by relying on subtlety in titling, editing and composition. Much of the success of these films is due largely to the fully-realized performances of Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess who, under Griffith's rigid guidance, downplayed the theatrical histrionics typical of the early silent cinema, and offered more realistic depictions of human emotion and suffering.

The release of *The Masterworks of D.W. Griffith* marks Kino on Video's commitment to the preservation and presentation of classic cinema. In the coming months, Kino will continue this endeavor with the release of other important films from the art of cinema in its formative years.

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THE MASTERWORKS OF D.W. GRIFFITH

The Biblical Epics

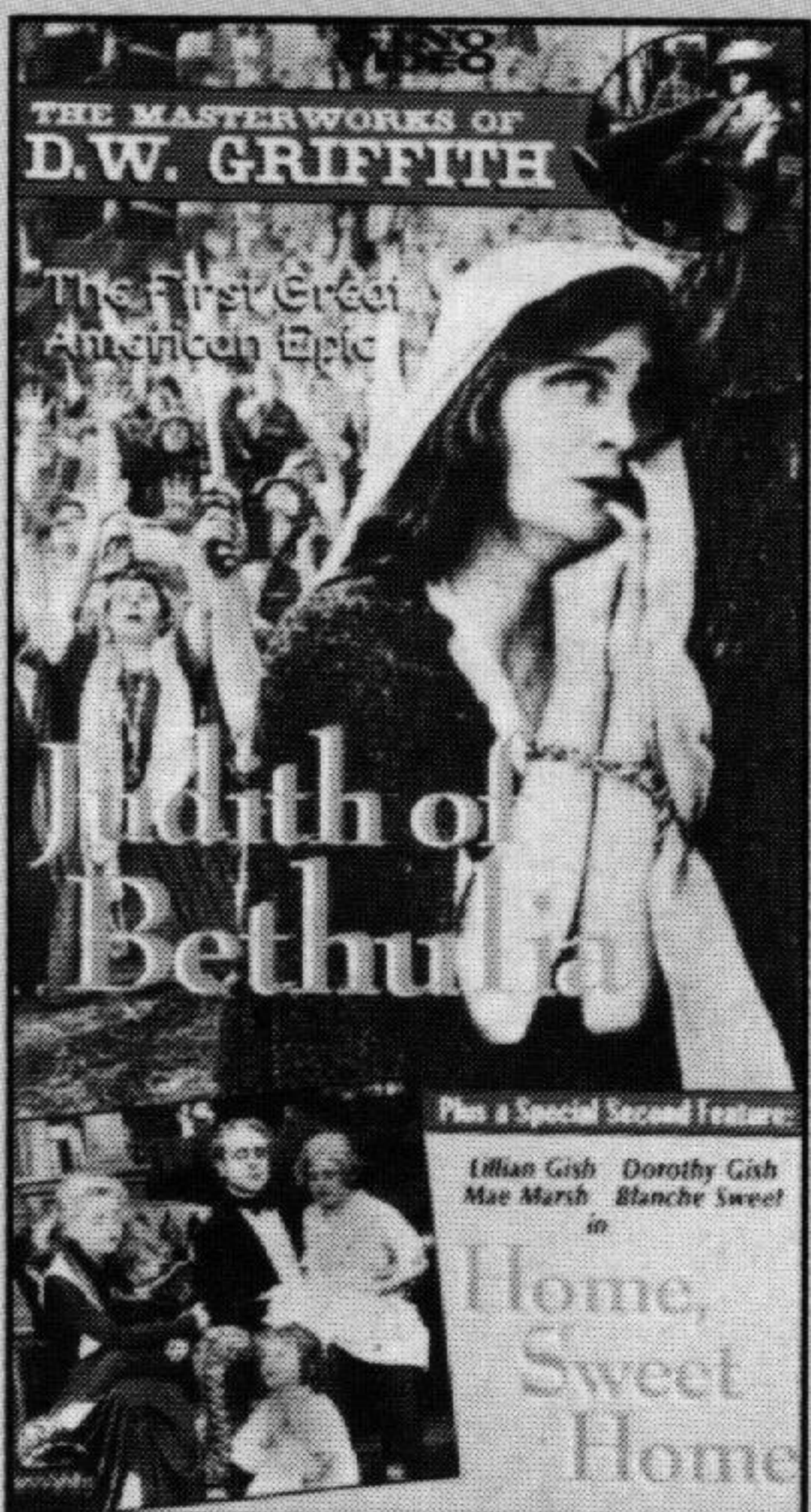


INTOLERANCE

1916 177 minutes Color Tinted Double Cassette Piano Score
Featuring Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Robert Herron, Miriam Cooper
Constance Talmadge, Eugene Pallette, Erich von Stroheim 29.95

Far ahead of his time, Griffith created a spectacle which audiences of the day had difficulty accepting, but which has since become a classic of world cinema. Four separate stories are interwoven: the fall of Babylon, the death of Christ, the massacre of the Huguenots and a modern drama -- all cross-cut and building with enormous energy to a thrilling chase and finale.

This specially packaged double cassette edition of INTOLERANCE has been remastered using variable speed projection and color tints to match the original release prints, making it the best version available anywhere.



JUDITH OF BETHULIA

1913 63 minutes B&W Organ Score

HOME, SWEET HOME

1914 55 minutes B&W Piano Score
Featuring Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Mae Marsh, Blanche Sweet, Henry B. Walthall 24.95

This volume focuses on one of the most significant, but rarely explored, stages in Griffith's career: his entry into the feature film. Strongly influenced by Italian epics, he sought to create a cinematic spectacle of his own, and did so with JUDITH OF BETHULIA, his first feature-length motion picture. The story involves the plight of the fortified village of Bethulia, who defend themselves from the attacking armies of Captain Holofernes.

Another of Griffith's early experiments in the feature film was HOME, SWEET HOME, in which he combined four mini-narratives end-to-end, to pay homage to the life and music of John Howard Payne, featuring a cast of four young actresses who would come to rank among the greatest stars of the silent screen.



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