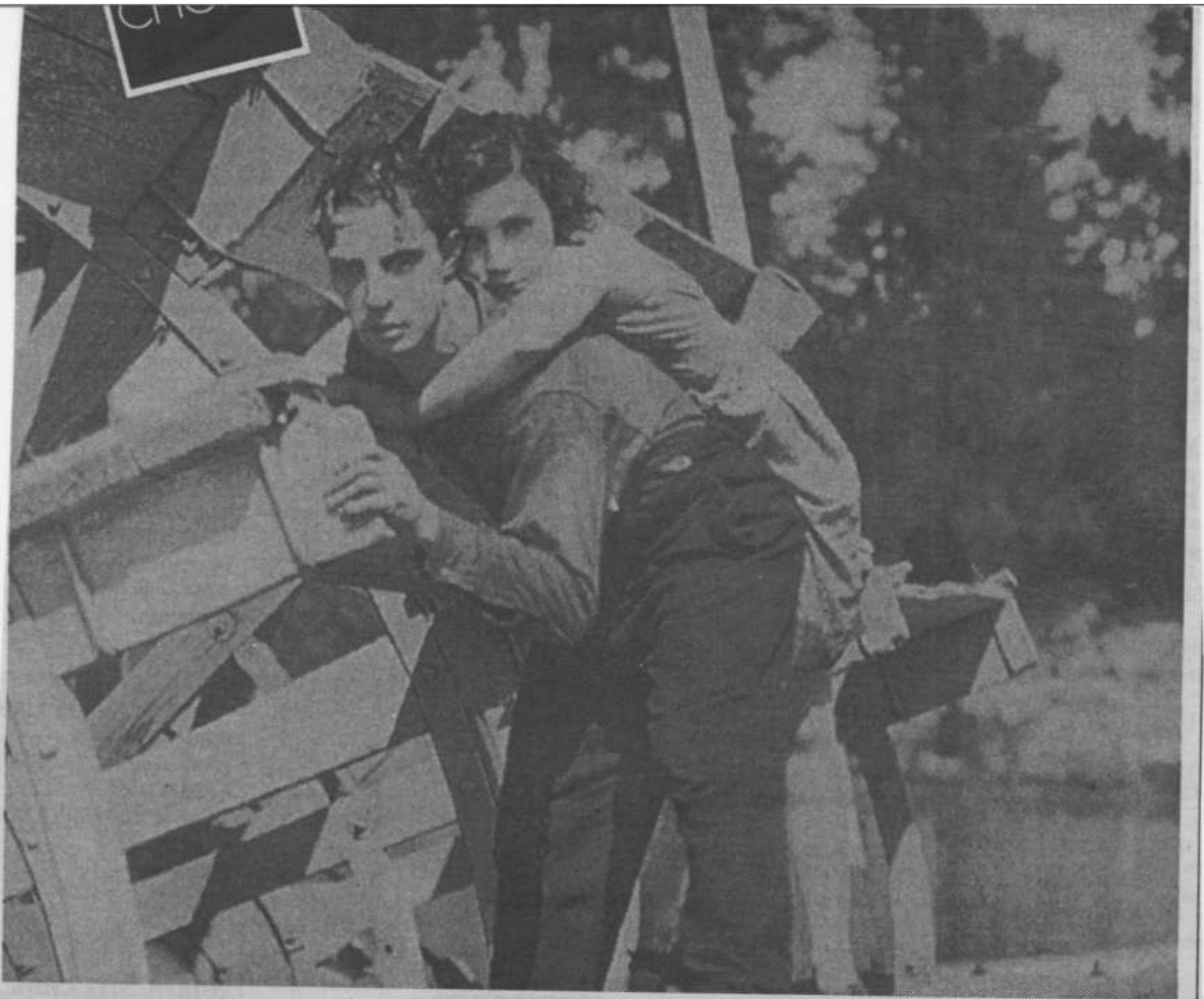


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Steamboat Bill Jr.

CHICAGO READER, July 23, 2004 p. 14

Buster Keaton was never one of Hollywood's biggest stars; even in his heyday he was eclipsed by Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, and his two greatest films, *The General* and *Steamboat Bill Jr.*, both tanked at the box office. But the restoration of his silent classics for a series of video boxes in the mid-90s has spurred an explosion of interest in his work, and for the second year in a row the Silent Film Society of Chicago has chosen his work to open its annual summer festival. Keaton biographer Tom Dardis has aptly described *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928, 71 min.) as "a *Tempest*-like review of many of Buster's favorite themes," with its rich streak of small-town Americana, its maritime setting, and its conflict

between a dandyish young man (Keaton) and his hulking father (Ernest Torrence), the captain of a dilapidated Mississippi riverboat. This series of Friday night programs, screened at the beautiful Gateway Theater with live musical accompaniment, continues with F.W. Murnau's vampire classic *Nosferatu* (July 30), John Ford's epic western *The Iron Horse* (August 6), Clara Bow in the flapper comedy *It* (August 13), Colleen Moore in the World War I romance *Lilac Time* (August 20), and Rudolph Valentino in *Blood and Sand* (August 27). For tonight's screening, Dennis Scott provides pipe-organ accompaniment, and the West End Jazz Band will also perform. Copernicus Center.

—J.R. Jones