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Murnau's Sunrise with Lambchop

USA 1927, 95 min. at 24 frames per second

Silent with live musical accompaniment by Lambchop.

SFZ FF, APR. 17, 2003

DIR F.W. Murnau **PROD** William Fox **SCR** Carl Mayer **CAM** Charles Rosher, P. 52
Karl Struss **ED** Harold Schuster **CAST** George O'Brien, Janet Gaynor,
Margaret Livingston

Released at the height of silent cinema's artistic sophistication, yet right before *The Jazz Singer* heralded the dawn of the sound era, *Sunrise* is still recognized as one of the greatest films ever made. F.W. Murnau's first American film takes a trite if classic situation—a big-city seductress ruins the marriage of an aw-shucks peasant couple—and launches it towards the realm of fable and pure visual poetry (especially when seen in a gorgeous archival print from New York's Museum of Modern Art). And to add a layer of aural poetry to the proceedings, Nashville's Lambchop brings its unclassifiable hybrid of country, soul, jazz and noise to a film as brilliantly unique as it is. Forging a bridge between country and the avant-garde, Lambchop draws on nearly every strain of contemporary music, their ever-evolving roster—boasting from three to 13 members—fashioning a baroque, bizarre beauty from guitars to xylophones, drums to bongos, clarinets to paint cans. Murnau's command of his medium, moving freely through double exposures, expressive lighting, distorted sets and his legendarily fluid tracking shots—giving us access to symbolism, psychology and a genuine involvement with the characters—forged its own distinct bridge between German Expressionism and Hollywood melodrama. In another world, perhaps Murnau and Lambchop would have teamed up themselves.



F.W. Murnau (b. Bielefeld, Germany, 1888) Selected Filmography: *Tabu* (1931), *Faust* (1926), *Tartuffe* (1925), *The Last Laugh* (1924), *Nosferatu* (1922)

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