

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 5
FOR RELEASE JANUARY 14

EARLY FILMS TO BE REVIVED AT MUSEUM

"The Virginian," Cecil B. DeMille's 1914 classic, from the novel by Owen Wister, with Dustin Farnum who played in the stage version, will be shown as part of a series of eleven early films to be presented from January 14 through January 25, at The Museum of Modern Art.

The Jesse Lasky production of "The Virginian" will be introduced by James Card, Curator of the George Eastman House Motion Picture Study Collection in Rochester, which is providing the films on the Museum program. At the eight o'clock, January 14 performance, Mr. Card will introduce the film and address himself to the controversy over the direction of "The Virginian," one of the early silent feature films. The fact that Cecil B. DeMille directed has been in dispute over the years.

On the same program with "The Virginian," another vintage film will be shown, Tod Browning's "The Unknown" starring Lon Chaney. Made in 1927, it was an original story by the director, called "Alonzo, the Armless." According to The New York Times Film Reviews, a recently published compilation of the paper's film criticism, "the role ought to have satisfied Mr. Chaney's penchant for freakish characterizations for here he not only has to go about for hours with his arms strapped to his body, but when he rests behind bolted doors, one perceives that he has on his left hand a double thumb." Joan Crawford plays the female lead in the film, about which Roy Edwards writes in Sight and Sound, the characters and special effects add up to a "thorough display of grotesqueries."

Other notable films that are part of this film preservation program are "Cimarron," starring Richard Dix and made in 1931 from Edna Ferber's popular novel; "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," filmed the following year with Fredric March in the dual role of the Robert Louis Stevenson story; and "The Old Dark House," one of the early horror films, directed by James Whale, also in 1932, from a J.B. Priestly story. It stars Boris

Karloff, Melvyn Douglas, Charles Laughton and Raymond Massey. Boris Karloff had attributed his later success in "Frankenstein" to this James Whale film.

Besides these films the program includes: "Moran of the Lady Letty," "S.O.S. Iceberg," "Devil's Circus," "Riptide," "Wine of Youth," and "Madame X."

The famous stage star Pauline Frederick stars in "Madame X," called by "Motion Picture News," "one of the notable film events of the season." The year was 1920, and for the past two decades this was the most famous and popular play. Pauline Frederick had starred in it on the stage, but at the time of the film version-- it is not known if this was the first--one critic already called the story "sugar-coated."

The theatre also provided King Vidor with his subject for "Wine of Youth," starring Eleanor Boardman, ZaSu Pitts and William Haines. From the play by Rachel Crothers, "Mary the Third," it focused on the activities of the young of the Twenties, including "a number of scenes depicting the shaking up and drinking of cocktails and their resultant effect on those who partake of them."

Rudolph Valentino stars in "Moran of the Lady Letty." Following his popular "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and "The Sheik," this melodrama of the sea was made in 1922 from a story by Frank Norris who wrote "McTeague," on which Erich von Stroheim's "Greed" was based. Here Rudolph Valentino, reports the New York Times, as the hero, of course, "is not so well suited to the sea. He fits better into the romantic and melodramatic excesses of the story." The Times also notes the picture "is soaked in salt...and there are more old sailing vessels in it than one would think were left afloat." Of further interest is the cast: two extras are George O'Brien and William Boyd.

Though more notable for her politics in later years, Leni Riefenstahl starred in "S.O.S. Iceberg" in 1933, opposite Rod La Rocque. The picture tells of an exploring expedition and was made in Greenland with "impressive scenes of gigantic icebergs," though it was said "nature outshines the players and the story."

(more)

Director Edmund Goulding provided a star-studded cast for "Riptide," an original story by the director, starring Norma Shearer, Robert Montgomery, Herbert Marshall, Mr. Patrick Campbell, Skeets Gallagher, Ralph Forbes, Lilyan Tashman and George K. Arthur. As for Mr. Goulding, wrote Mordaunt Hall, critic of the Times, "it is another instance of his being a better director than an author."

Rouben Mamoulian is responsible for the talking version of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and he was cited for his "shadow work, visual symbolism and bold sound montage (and) effective use of the subjective" in An Illustrated History of the Horror Film by Carlos Clarens, who called the picture "the best of the many adaptations of Stevenson's story."

In a tribute to James Whale in Sight and Sound, Roy Edwards writes that the director concocted "an eerie house with a chinese-box series of horrors...it all adds up to as thorough a display of grotesqueries as that which Tchelitchew put on canvas during his Phenomena period."

Of the eleven films, six are silent and will be accompanied with piano by William Perry. The schedule follows:

Thursday, January 14 (2:00, 5:30, 8:00)

THE VIRGINIAN (1914), directed by Cecil B. DeMille. ca. 60 min. Silent.

THE UNKNOWN (1927), directed by Tod Browning. With Lon Chaney, Joan Crawford. ca. 70 min. Silent.

Friday, January 15 (2:00, 5:30)

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1932), directed by Rouben Mamoulian. With Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins. 98 min.

Saturday, January 16 (3:00, 5:30)

THE OLD DARK HOUSE (1932), directed by James Whale. With Boris Karloff, Raymond Massey, Melvyn Douglas, Charles Laughton. 70 min.

Sunday, January 17 (2:00, 5:30)

CIMARRON (1931), directed by Wesley Ruggles. With Richard Dix, Irene Dunne. 124 min.

Monday, January 18 (1:30)

THE OLD DARK HOUSE (see Saturday, January 16)

Wednesday, January 20 (2:00, 5:30)

MORAN OF THE LADY LETTY (1922), directed by William Marshall. With Rudolph Valentino, Dorothy Dalton. ca. 70 min. Silent.

(more)

Thursday, January 21

2:00, 5:30

S.O.S. ICEBERG (1931), directed by Tay Gernett. With Rod La Rocque, Leni Reifenstahl.
77 min.

8:00

DEVIL'S CIRCUS (1926), directed by Benjamin Christensen. With Norma Shearer, Ben
Reynolds. ca. 70 min. Silent.

Friday, January 22 (2:00, 5:30)

RIPTIDE (1934), directed by Edmund Goulding. With Norma Shearer, Robert Montgomery,
Herbert Marshall. 92 min.

Saturday, January 23 (3:00, 5:30)

WINE OF YOUTH (1924), directed by King Vidor. With Eleanor Boardman, James Morrison.
ca. 70 min. Silent.

Sunday, January 24 (2:00, 5:30)

MADAME X (1920), directed by Frank Lloyd. With Pauline Frederick. ca. 70 min. Silent.

Monday, January 25 (1:30)

DEVIL'S CIRCUS (see Thursday, January 21)

Additional information available from Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator and Mark
Segal, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art,
11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296.