# Document Citation

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Chaplin in the limelight</th>
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A woman of Paris, Chaplin, Charlie, 1923
Modern times, Chaplin, Charlie, 1936
The circus, Chaplin, Charlie, 1928
A king in New York, Chaplin, Charlie, 1957
Monsieur Verdoux, Chaplin, Charlie, 1947
The great dictator, Chaplin, Charlie, 1940
Limelight, Chaplin, Charlie, 1952
“Charles Chaplin is arguably the single most important artist produced by the cinema, certainly its most extraordinary performer and probably still its most universal icon.”
— Andrew Sarris

“The first acknowledged artistic genius of the cinema. . . . Before Chaplin, no one had demonstrated that physical comedy could be simultaneously hilariously funny, emotionally passionate, and pointedly intellectual.”
— Gerald Mast

The enduring iconic status of Charlie Chaplin’s alter ego, the Little Tramp, attests to his unique role in the history of cinema and world culture. (Given Chaplin’s rejection of technology’s promises, it is ironic that the image of the Little Tramp was revived in the early eighties by IBM, who cited its use as an example of the reason for the company’s personal computer sales during that decade.) The story of Chaplin’s meteoric rise from rags to riches is almost as legendary as his artistic legacy, and his origins remain highly relevant to his work, often characterized by a Luddite-like disdain for the modern world’s reliance on mechanical innovations (hilariously lampooned in MODERN TIMES [1936]) and a near-Dickensian compassion for the poor, as seen in classic early works such as A DOG’S LIFE (1918) and THE KID (1921).

Born in London at the end of the nineteenth century, Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin (1889 - 1977) was given over to the care of the state as a young boy and suffered the consequences of financial ruin brought about by his mother’s mental illness and the untimely death of his alcoholic father. Critics have often pointed out that the urban squallor so meticulously captured in, for example, THE KID, is distinctly Victorian in flavour, based on doubt in Chaplin’s memories of his harsh London upbringing. One of the earliest Chaplin biographers, Theodore Huff, noted that the Little Tramp’s celebrated garb was less reminiscent of the everyman hobo than “the fallen aristocrat at grips with poverty.” Thus Chaplin’s attitude to the depiction of wealth and class is highly personal as well as paradoxical, in light of the colossal fortune he rapidly amassed following his arrival in Los Angeles in 1912.

Initially recruited by Mack Sennett to replace leading Keystone comedian Ford Sterling, Chaplin quickly went on to become a prodigious and beloved screen persona and, eventually, to direct every film in which he appeared — and two in which he didn’t: the critical darling A WOMAN OF PARIS (1923), notwithstanding a brief and heavily disguised cameo, and A COUNTLESS FROM HONG KONG (1915), his last. With each subsequent move to a new studio, Chaplin received exponential increases in salary, refining his Little Tramp character in every film. While the work he did for Essanay immediately following his Keystone period contained many gags that were essentially test runs for his later features at United Artists, the production company he co-founded with Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and D.W. Griffith in 1919, it was in the First National films made between 1918 and 1922 that, according to Andrew Sarris, “one finds the first signs of the spiritual expansion of a craft into an art, of skit-tish farce into comic narrative.”

Never satisfied with the limitations of simple slapstick or farce, Chaplin determined to contribute to the art of cinema quite early on in his career. Despite criticism that the fullest possibilities of the medium were lost on him — detractors observed a reliance on performance mannerisms and a spatial sense rooted in his music hall pedigree — one finds evidence to the contrary throughout his oeuvre, beginning with THE KID, which employs a startling montage that links the difficult predicament of a young mother with that of Christ. And perhaps there is no better testament to Chaplin’s skill as a director than A WOMAN OF PARIS, whose intricately realized set pieces and naturalistic performances still seem remarkable, more than eighty years later. An influential succès d’estime, WOMAN was a lost legend until its re-release in 1978; its commercial failure so wounded Chaplin that he confiscated it for five decades. In his subsequent films THE GOLD RUSH (1925), THE CIRCUS (1928), and CITY LIGHTS (1931), Chaplin pushed the boundaries of genre, creating a potent hybrid of pathos and comedy that proved to be a popular juggernaut with audiences throughout the world.

Whether one considers Chaplin an author or not, there’s little doubt that most of his work offers both thematic and psychological complexity in addition to liberal doses of social commentary. MONSIEUR VERDOUX is the best example of this. (Richard Roud called it “one of the great films, and equal to anything Keaton ever did. . . . VERDOUX remains a masterpiece and a film unlike anything before or since.”) Chaplin’s daring in playing as ambiguous and radical a figure as Verdox is only matched by his decision to release the film a day after his appearance before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee; with his political views and moral character under attack, it was a gesture of some defiance to portray a self-serving, cold-blooded woman killer who, nevertheless, manages to convincingly expose the hypocrisy of bourgeois ideology. Though Chaplin’s image was tarnished alternately by stormy divorces, Hollywood gossip, and the US government’s Communist witch hunt, he was still probably the only star who could have safely tackled the more controversial subject matter and roles of his career. In his uproarious parody of fascism, THE GREAT DICTATOR (1940), he played an obvious caricature of Adolf Hitler, while A KING IN NEW YORK (1957), a defiant raspberry to the United States made right after he was exiled from America, has been hailed by Chaplin authority Jeffrey Vance as “unique in cinema. . . . the only contemporary direct attack on the rampant political hysteria of McCarthyism.”

Chaplin arguably reached the pinnacle of fame with the release of THE GOLD RUSH little more than a decade after commencing his life-long career in cinema, a contribution he self-reflexively pondered in the moving LIMELIGHT (1952). However, MODERN TIMES, an essentially silent film made eight years after the emergence of sound cinema, is considered by many fans and cinephiles alike to be the true summit and embodiment of his art — a timeless synthesis of visual ingenuity, social critique, and, above all, the Little Tramp’s inimitable comedic dexterity.

— George Katsiounakis

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ALL 35MM PRINTS!

RICHARD SCHICKEL IN PERSON!
CHARLIE: THE LIFE AND ART
OF CHARLES CHAPLIN
Director: Richard Schickel
USA 2003 122 minutes

"CHARLIE is a serious, often illuminating, and unavoidably entertaining account of the creature (Robert) Downey calls 'the most endearing superhero you might ever want to watch' (J. Hoberman, The Village Voice). A must for both Chaplin fans and film lovers, this definitive portrait of the artist contains a wealth of insightful material and interviews, including a glimpse of Chaplin's very first screen appearance as the prototypical Little Tramp, rare archival footage, and home movies depicting the screen legend in the twilight of his years in Switzerland. Narrated by Sidney Pollack, CHARLIE: THE LIFE AND ART OF CHARLES CHAPLIN focuses on discussion and dissection of the films by a broad cross-section of filmmakers, actors, and critics, among whom are Andrew Sarris, David Robinson, Jeffrey Vance, Johnny Depp, Martin Scorsese, and Woody Allen. "Includes wonderfully thorough analyses of Chaplin's techniques as a comedian and a director... an elegant and erudite reminder of Chaplin's importance" (A. O. Scott, The New York Times).

Celebrated film critic/historian and director Richard Schickel will present this screening.

Sunday, October 17 1:00 p.m.

THE KID
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1921 60 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Jackie Coogan...

A key entry in the Chaplin canon, THE KID is "one of his best... and remains universally beloved by film critics and audiences alike" (Jeffrey Vance, Chaplin: Genius of the Cinema). Chaplin biographers consider the story of an abandoned orphan (soon-to-be child star Jackie Coogan) who is taken in by the Little Tramp to be one of his most personal. The urban squalor depicted in the film was no doubt rooted in Chaplin's memories of his poor London upbringing, where he spent several years in the care of the state. Chaplin's integration of slapstick and drama was a first for a feature-length production, and he subsequently adapted this winning hybrid throughout much of his career. Chaplin's biggest success before THE GOLD RUSH, THE KID contains some of Chaplin's finest physical comedy, including an unforgettable dream sequence in which Chaplin finds himself in heaven.

followed by

THE PILGRIM
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1923 59 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance...

"One of the most polished and charming of the films of Chaplin's middle period" (David Robinson, Chaplin: His Life and Art), THE PILGRIM was Chaplin's last First National project, after which he directed A WOMAN OF PARIS, his first feature for the recently-founded United Artists company. The eponymous pilgrim is Chaplin, an escaped convict who is mistaken for a minister dispatched to rescue a town from its sinful ways. Featuring Chaplin doing a brilliant pantomime of the David and Goliat story, THE PILGRIM is an outstanding example of Chaplin's comic craft, offering a light-hearted and lightning-paced satire of parochial values and religion.

Films presented with live piano accompaniment by William O'Meara.

Friday, October 29 6:30 p.m.

THE GOLD RUSH
Director: Charlie Chaplin
USA 1925 72 minutes

"Still convincingly funny and the hand-dance with rolls is still a fragment of genius" (Dilys Powell, The Gold Rush was, ironically, inspired by the saga of the Donner party, mid-nineteenth century pioneers forced to resort to cannibalism. Created in a decade known for its heady materialism, the story of the loveable Little Tramp's gold-seeking foray into the Yukon territory may be seen as a metaphor for America's insatiable lust for wealth and luxury gone awry. Chaplin said of THE GOLD RUSH that it was the film for which he most wanted to be remembered, and indeed it contains countless classic scenes, among them Chaplin making a delectable meal out of his boiled shoes and trousers and Chaplin being imagined as a plump chicken by his starvation cabin mate. "THE GOLD RUSH is arguably his greatest and most ambitious silent film... However, the greatness of THE GOLD RUSH does not rest solely on its comedy sequences but on the fact that they are integrated so perfectly into a character-driven narrative" (Jeffrey Vance, Chaplin: Genius of the Cinema).

Presented with live piano accompaniment by William O'Meara.

Saturday, October 30 2:00 p.m.
(screening as part of the Saturday Movie Matinees series; please see page 2)
A WOMAN OF PARIS
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1923 85 minutes
Cast: Edna Purviance, Adolphe Menjou

In 1920, Sergei Eisenstein called A WOMAN OF PARIS "perhaps the most remarkable cinematographic production of the past epoch of cinematography." (It is admired by many filmmakers, including Martin Scorsese, who has said that it is a purely modern work.) Chaplin's first film for United Artists, WOMAN is remarkably understated in its complex depiction of human behaviour. Chaplin's inspiration for this story, about a French provincial girl who becomes a Parisian kept woman, after meeting with Peggy Hopkins Joyce, the notorious Hollywood gold digger. Recalling the ingenuity of Ernst Lubitsch in its subtle approach to revealing character dynamics, the film impressed critics of the day with its innovation and willingness to push the boundaries of moral propriety. "Established Chaplin's reputation as one of the finest directors of the silent-film era and an artist beyond his talents as an actor. . . . So influential was the film that its techniques were widely and quickly assimilated by other filmmakers." (Jeffrey Vance, Chaplin Genius of the Cinema).

Presented with live piano accompaniment by William O'Meara.

Monday, November 1 6:30 p.m.

EARLY CHAPLIN!

A DOG'S LIFE
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1918 40 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance

Filled with brilliantly choreographed and executed comic-strains, A DOG'S LIFE also represents a significant evolution in Chaplin's art. Through this film he sought to elevate his work to an increasingly sophisticated level, employing a more authentic mise en scene and engaging serious themes such as hunger and poverty. Chaplin constructs hilarious parallels between the beleaguered lives of his already hugely popular screen persona and a lovable, scruffy mutt.

Followed by:

SHOULDER ARMS
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1918 66 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance

Chaplin's second project for First National has Charlie as a bumbling soldier on the German front who manages to bring about the Kaiser's capture. Many thought this idea of an encounter between the Little Tramp and Kaiser Wilhelm too controversial for a World War I audience, but Chaplin forged ahead regardless. SHOULDER ARMS went on to become a massive hit and set the bar for three-reel comedies.

Followed by:

THE IDLE CLASS
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1921 32 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance

"One of his funniest short comedies," according to Chaplin author-ity Jeffrey Vance, THE IDLE CLASS features Chaplin in dual roles as a tramp and as the rich husband of the lonely woman who has captured the tramp's heart. Chaplin biographies have noted that these two characters – one sympathetic, one harsh and insensitive – represented the poles of his personality.

All films in this program presented with live piano accompaniment by William O'Meara.

Monday, November 1 8:15 p.m.

MODERN TIMES
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1936 87 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Paulette Goddard

"The mechanical feeding sequence in MODERN TIMES is probably the funniest episode in the history of cinema" (Andrew Sarris). A classic that seems both eternally funny and newly apposite. MODERN TIMES was designed as a farewell to Chaplin's Little Tramp character, and offers one legendary set piece after another: Charlie serving as a guinea pig for an experiment with a feeding machine that runs amok, getting so carried away with his screw-up that his arm falls off; Charlie's final scene in the movie theater, with his eyes narrowed as he watches the silent film of himself. ("Never mind the famous finale, with its walk into the sunset with the "gamme" Paulette Goddard.) Its sometimes savage satire of dehumanizing technology and class exploitation makes MODERN TIMES no less light-headed and light-hearted than the funniest of Chaplin's films.

Saturday, November 6 4:00 p.m.

THE CIRCUS
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1928 72 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Maroa Kennedy

Chockablock with perfectly executed gags, THE CIRCUS is one of Chaplin's funniest and least-known films, though it garnered Chaplin a special prize at the inaugural Academy Awards in 1929. While Chaplin weathered acrimonious divorce proceedings with Lita Grey, the film suffered a disaster-plagued production and was subject to intense pressure to match the phenomenal success of THE GOLD RUSH. In his own autobiography, Chaplin briefly alludes to the film only once, an indication of the extent to which he was affected by the process. THE CIRCUS was the Little Tramp unwittingly become a star performer in a failing circus while falling in love with the cruel ringmaster's daughter. Among its most acclaimed sequences is a climactic comic spectacle: Chaplin crossing a tightrope besiegued by baring monkeys. The closing image of the Little Tramp on the road with a spring in his step is consummate Chaplin iconography. "Chaplin manages to work a miracle, exploiting the various circus activities to richly comic effect." (Time Out Film Guide).

Presented with live piano accompaniment by William O'Meara.

Saturday, November 13 2:00 p.m.

(crowning as part of the Saturday Movie Matinee series; please see page 19)
EARLY CHAPLIN!

SUNNYSIDE
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1919 29 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance

Chaplin plays a beleaguered hotel handyman in this lambasting of rural life, described by Georges Sadoul as "a perfect alliance of lyrical fantasy and realistic social criticism." His third film for First National, SUNNYSIDE is another key stepping stone in characterization that ultimately led to the iconic Little Tramp of THE KID and the United Artists films.

followed by

A DAY'S PLEASURE
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1919 25 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance

Unseen for many years, A DAY'S PLEASURE is a throwback to Chaplin's earlier work. Charlie takes his wife and two sons on a disaster-prone boat excursion, wrestling with an intransigent car, angry drivers, and a fierce traffic cop along the way. Features a famous stunt in which Charlie, feet stuck in tar, leans forward at an impossible angle.

followed by

PAY DAY
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1922 52 minutes
Cast: Charles Chaplin, Hilda Allen

Chaplin's last two-reeler is also his funniest and most flawless, containing some ingenious gags. Charlie plays an expert bricklayer whose shrewish, roller-pin-wielding wife confiscates his earnings every pay day, though this doesn't prevent him from going on a bender with his fellow workers.

All films in this programme presented with live piano accompaniment by William O'Meara.

Monday, November 15 6:30 p.m.

THE GREAT DICTATOR
Director: Charles Chaplin • USA 1940 127 minutes • Cast: Charles Chaplin, Paulette Goddard

"THE GREAT DICTATOR remains an unparalleled phenomenon, an odd symbolic incident in the history of the twentieth century." (David Robinson). Chaplin's deep concerns over the rise of Fascism in Europe fueled his desire to direct this story of a Jewish barber with amnesia who is mistaken for the iron-fisted ruler of Tomania. Adenoid Hynkel (both characters are played by Chaplin). DICTATOR's merciless spoof of the Nazi regime - Hynkel's ministers are named "Heering" and "Garbisch" - made it the most topical of Chaplin's movies (it is also filled with specific historical references and documentary newsreel footage). The film of Chaplin's final trip to fully employ dialogue, THE GREAT DICTATOR was nominated for five Academy Awards, and features a hilarious and famous sequence: Hynkel's egomaniacal ballet with a featherweight globe. Part satire, part drama, and part ideological weapon, THE GREAT DICTATOR is "Chaplin's brilliant and heartfelt plea for world peace in an era of rising fascism and mass annihilation." (James Monaco)

Wednesday, November 17 8:45 p.m.

MONSIEUR VERDOUX
Director: Charles Chaplin • USA 1947 123 minutes • Cast: Charles Chaplin, Marlene Dietrich

"The result is pure Chaplin; and his genius alone has perfected the astonishing central portrait, among the few which, owing nothing to stage or fiction, belong entirely to the cinema." (D. W. Griffith). Chaplin believed this film, his biggest commercial failure, to be "the cleverest and most brilliant of my career," indeed it now seems an overlooked masterpiece. Alternating between slapstick, drama, and farce, MONSIEUR VERDOUX levels a convincing critique of the man-hating woman who uses her looks and sex appeal to get ahead in the world. The result is a hilarious, satirical take on the upper class that is both funny and poignant. With its mix of slapstick and parody, MONSIEUR VERDOUX is a complex figure: part devoted family man, part. PARTULA VACUETTER, part intellectual who coolly finds parallels between his actions and the inhuman logic which underpins the machinery of war and economy. "Chaplin's most startling, most riveting movie." (Time Out Film Guide).

Saturday, November 20 6:30 p.m.
LIMELIGHT
Director: Charles Chaplin
USA 1952 143 minutes
Co-star: Claire Bloom

"A masterpiece. Few cinema artists have delved into their own lives and emotions with such ruthlessnes and with such moving results." (Time Out Film Guide). Chaplin's soul-searching summation of his life as an icon, LIMELIGHT is the self-reflexive story of a music-hall clown in the autumn of his career who can no longer make audiences laugh. His efforts to help a struggling ballerina revive his own sense of confidence and he manages a short-lived comeback. Chaplin wrote and produced LIMELIGHT in addition to composing its Oscar-winning score, and his unbridled passion for the stage comes through in the film's lively mise en scène and sure direction. Its elegiac tone is made more poignant by the knowledge that this swan song story of a passing way of life is Chaplin's most autobiographical. An underrated later work, LIMELIGHT also boasts the memorable, one-and-only on-screen partnering of Chaplin and fellow former silent comedian giant, Buster Keaton.

Tuesday, November 23 8:00 p.m.

A KING IN NEW YORK
Director: Charles Chaplin
UK 1957 104 minutes
Co-star: Claire Bloom, Dow Adams

"Hugely funny, and healthily vulgar, and it is always extremely moving. It is a lying work. It is one of a kind" (Vernon Castle, The New York Times). A KING IN NEW YORK was the first film Chaplin directed while exiled from the US as a result of the FBI's investigation of his political views. Perhaps this explains the range of its attack on American life and culture, from wide-screen cinema to television to nuclear proliferation and advertising. (In one shrieking hilarious scene, Chaplin unknowingly engages in conversation with an actress reciting ad copy) Dethroned King Shadow (Chaplin) comes to America in the hopes of creating an empire that employs nuclear power peacefully. He discovers that his fortune has been stolen and becomes a target of the House Un-American Activities Committee because of his association with a young radical boy genius (played by Chaplin's son, Michael). "In the fullest sense of the phrase, A KING IN NEW YORK is 'free cinema', in which anything, within the limits of censorship, can happen." (Kenneth Tynan).

Thursday, November 25 8:45 p.m.