

## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## BILLY FITZER REASSEMBLES FAMOUS OLD BIOGRAPH CAMERA

## FOR GRIFFITH EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

For weeks Billy Bitzer, cameraman extraordinary for D. W. Griffith, has been at the Museum of Modern Art reassembling the old Biograph camera that took the first motion pictures of Mary Pickford, Lionel Barrymore, the Gish sisters and many others of the screen's most famous faces. The camera will be on display in the exhibition of D. W. Griffith: American Film Master, which the Museum will open to the public Wednesday, November 13.

The exhibition will be in two parts. One part, shown in a series of galleries on the second floor of the Museum, will consist of stills, posters, scripts, programs, original documents and other items tracing Mr. Griffith's long and colorful career as stage actor, playwright, motion picture actor and, finally, great motion picture director. The other part of the exhibition will be a cycle of Griffith films from 1907 to 1924 arranged in a series of ten programs (twenty-two films) to be shown in rotation daily at 4 P.M. and Sundays at 2 and 4 P.M. in the Museum's auditorium throughout the period of the exhibition, which will extend through Sunday, January 5, 1941.

The program series will start with a film, Rescued from an Eagle's Nest, made in 1907 by the Edison Company and directed by Edwin S. Porter with D. W. Griffith acting the chief role. The second film, At the Crossroads of Life, was made in 1908 by Biograph and directed by Wallace McCutcheon with D. W. Griffith and Marion Leonard in the leading roles. The other twenty films of the series were all directed by Griffith himself and presented frequently for the first time, such famous people of the screen as Arthur Johnson, the screen's original romantic hero; Florence Lawrence, for years called "the Biograph Girl"; Mary Pickford, known first as the girl

with the curls and then as America's Sweetheart; Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Lionel Barrymore, Mae Marsh, Blanche Sweet, James Kirkwood, Henry B. Walthall, Robert Harron, Harry Carey, Donald Crisp, Constance Talmadge, Eugene Pallette, Eric von Stroheim, Louis Wolheim, Monte Blue, Neil Hamilton, Carol Dempster, Bessie Love, Seena Owen, Alma Rubens, Mildred Harris, Jewel Carmen, Colleen Moore.

It would take many pages to list all the noted screen actors and actresses whose initial bow to movie audiences was made through the lens of Billy Bitzer's camera and under Griffith's directorial guidance. Bitzer's motion picture career began in 1896 when he became an electrician in the Biograph Company. By the time Griffith joined the company as a director in 1908 Bitzer had served as property man, scenic designer and director before settling down to his long career as ace cameraman.

Bitzer says of those days: "The cameraman was the whole works at that time, responsible for about everything except the immediate handling of the actors. It was his say not only as to whether the light was bright enough but make-up, angles, rapidity of gestures, etc., besides having enough camera troubles of his own. ...I agreed to help Griffith in every way. He needed a canvas covering for a gypsy wagon. I would get that, in fact all the props. Also I offered to condense the script and lay out the opportunities it had so that he would be able to understand it.... He was very grateful for this and some other tips I gave him. All through the following sixteen years that I was at his side he was not above taking advice, yes, even asking for suggestions or ideas. He always said to me, 'Four eyes are better than two.'"

In addition to reassembling the old Biograph camera Mr. Bitzer reconstructed an early Biograph projector so that Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, could inspect the early Griffith negatives and make selections from them. Many of these landmarks of the movies will have their first screening in two or three decades when the Museum shows them to the public in the Griffith Cycle.

After the Griffith exhibition closes at the Museum the Cycle

will be circulated throughout the country. The order of the programs as given at the Museum will be as follows:

(All except first two films directed by Griffith)

1. EARLY FILMS: GRIFFITH AS ACTOR AND DIRECTOR

Nov. 12,13,23;      RESCUED FROM AN EAGLE'S NEST, 1907,  
Dec. 3,13,23;      directed by Edwin S. Porter with  
Jan. 3      D. W. Griffith (Edison Co.)

AT THE CROSSROADS OF LIFE, 1908, directed  
by Wallace McCutcheon, with D. W. Griffith  
and Marion Leonard (Biograph)

EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1909, directed by D. W.  
Griffith with Linda Arvidson and Herbert  
Yost (Biograph)

A DRUNKARD'S REFORMATION, 1909, with  
Linda Arvidson and Arthur Johnson  
(Biograph)

RESURRECTION, 1909, with Arthur Johnson  
and Florence Lawrence (Biograph)

THE LONELY VILLA, 1909, with Mary Pickford,  
Marion Leonard, James Kirkwood (Biograph)

2. GRIFFITH EVOLVES SCREEN SYNTAX

Nov. 14,24;      1776, or THE HESSIAN RENEGADES, 1909,  
Dec. 4,14,24;      with Linda Arvidson, Mary Pickford  
Jan. 4

A CORNER IN WHEAT, 1909, with Henry B.  
Walthall, Mack Sennett, James Kirkwood

THE UNCHANGING SEA, 1910, with Linda  
Arvidson and Arthur Johnson

THE LONEDALE OPERATOR, 1911, with Blanche  
Sweet, Wilfred Lucas

ENOCH ARDEN, 1911, with Florence LaBadie,  
Robert Harron, Jeanie MacPherson

THE MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY, 1912, with  
Lillian Gish, Lionel Barrymore, Harry  
Carey, Robert Harron

3. THE RISE OF THE FEATURE FILM

Nov. 15,25;      THE NEW YORK HAT, 1912, with Mary Pickford  
Dec. 5,15,26;      and Lionel Barrymore  
Jan. 5

JUDITH OF BETHULIA, 1913, with Blanche Sweet,  
Henry B. Walthall, Mae Marsh, Lillian Gish

HOME SWEET HOME, 1914, with Henry B.  
Walthall, Lillian and Dorothy Gish,  
Jack Pickford, Mae Marsh

4. Nov. 16,26;      THE BIRTH OF A NATION, 1915, with Lillian  
Dec. 6,16,27      Gish, Henry B. Walthall, Mae Marsh

- 176
5. Nov. 17,27;  
Dec. 7,17,28  
INTOLERANCE, 1916. Produced by the Wark Producing Corp.; photographed by G. W. Bitzer and Karl Brown; with Lillian Gish, Constance Talmadge, Robert Harron, Eugene Pallette, Erich von Stroheim (D. W. Griffith)
  6. Nov. 18,28;  
Dec. 8,18,29  
HEARTS OF THE WORLD, 1918. Produced by Comstock-World; photographed by G. W. Bitzer; with Lillian Gish, Robert Harron, Dorothy Gish, Erich von Stroheim (D. W. Griffith)
  7. Nov. 19,29;  
Dec. 9,19,30  
BROKEN BLOSSOMS, 1919, with Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess
  8. Nov. 20,30;  
Dec. 10,20,31  
WAY DOWN EAST, 1920, with Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess, Lowell Sherman
  9. Nov. 21  
Dec. 1,11,21  
Jan. 1  
ORPHANS OF THE STORM, 1922. Produced by D. W. Griffith, Inc.; with Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Joseph Schildkraut, Louis Wolheim
  10. Nov. 22  
Dec. 2,12,22  
Jan. 2  
ISN'T LIFE WONDERFUL, 1924. Produced by D. W. Griffith, Inc.; with Neil Hamilton and Carol Dempster (D. W. Griffith)