

The Museum of Modern Art

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

NO. 92
FOR RELEASE:
August 24, 1970

LOST FILMS by Gary Carey. 92 pages; 155 illustrations; paperbound \$4.95 (42s. UK). Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed in the United States and Canada by New York Graphic Society, Ltd.; in the United Kingdom by TABS, Ltd.; and internationally by Feffer & Simons, Inc.

Hundreds of films--including work by such great stars and directors as Greta Garbo, Lillian Gish, Lon Chaney, and Josef von Sternberg--have been lost through ignorance or indifference. Now in the new book LOST FILMS by Gary Carey, 30 such American motion pictures--all from the 1920s--have been documented through the use of a superb collection of stills from The Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive. The paperbound book, which will be published by The Museum of Modern Art on September 15, has 155 black and white illustrations and plot synopses and credits for each film.

The stills reproduced in this book are all that remain of these films, despite a thorough search in studio vaults, private collections, and repositories of the International Federation of Film Archives affiliates. Mr. Carey, admittedly a special pleader, says:

On the one hand, this book is unabashedly designed to point up some of the dilemmas of film preservation. On the other, it hopes to fill in some lacunae in film scholarship and in sheer film-going by presenting the remnants of these films: still photographs designed for publicity purposes and plot synopses culled from various publications of the period.

In his introduction, he points out that when the motion picture was invented, it seemed as though the performances and productions cherished by one generation could be preserved for others to enjoy in the future. Unfortunately, the film stock used until about 1950 proved to be highly combustible and as perishable as newsprint. Films such as those discussed in this book could and did disappear as the decades passed. Silent films seem to have suffered more than sound in this regard, partly because of the time element, but also because, as sound film arrived and conquered, it was believed that a commercial market would no longer exist for the old silent films.

(more)

Mr. Carey also points out in his introduction that the future of film preservation is far brighter than the past. The triple acetate or "safety" stock now used reportedly has a life-span of 400 years. Films which are presently on nitrate stock and therefore certain to disintegrate in time, can now be copied on acetate stock. Though copying is a costly and time-consuming process, he says, the studios are nonetheless showing more interest in their old films, having been influenced by increased commercial longevity of a film due to television, by the work of archivists, and by the clamor of the film-going public.

This book grew out of the exhibition STILLS FROM LOST FILMS which Mr. Carey prepared for the Museum in 1969. Long a pioneer in the field of film preservation, The Museum of Modern Art established its film archive in 1935. The American Film Institute has also been involved in preservation work and has deposited the results in the Library of Congress. The Museum and the Library of Congress, along with the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, are the only three film archives in this country active in saving films from disintegration.

The book varies somewhat from the Museum exhibition. One film was dropped for a gratifying reason: two weeks after the exhibition opened, it was learned that a print of Benjamin Christensen's film, "The Devil's Circus" (1926) did in fact still exist. Though that was the only film presumed lost to have been rediscovered to date, Mr. Carey remains optimistic: "It is quite possible that one or more of the films in this book may sometime turn up."

Among the lost films illustrated and described are "Divine Women" (1928, MGM) with Greta Garbo; "Mockery" (1927, MGM) and "London After Midnight" (1927, MGM), both with Lon Chaney; "The Enemy" (1927, MGM) with Lillian Gish; "The Show" (1927, MGM) with Lionel Barrymore; "The World's Applause" (1923, Paramount) with Bebe Daniels and Adolphe Menjou; "One Glorious Day" (1922, Paramount) with Will Rogers; "The Case of

(more)

Lena Smith" (1929, Paramount) directed by Josef von Sternberg; "The Tower of Lies" (1925, MGM) with Norma Shearer and Lon Chaney; and "Taxi! Taxi!" (1927, Universal) with Edward Everett Horton.

Mr. Carey was formerly editor of "The Seventh Art" magazine and was a member of the staff of the Department of Film of The Museum of Modern Art. He is presently a freelance writer on film. A second book by Mr. Carey, CUKOR AND CO., will be published by the Museum later in the year.

Review copies and additional information available from Diana Goldin, Coordinator of Press Services, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019. (212) 956-7297, 7501.