



SILENT CINEMA

A Woman of Paris

A Woman of Paris

Director: Charles Chaplin

Production Companies:

Charles Chaplin Corporation, United Artists

Producer: Charles Chaplin

Business Manager: Alfred Reeves

Production Assistant: Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast

Assistant Director: A. Edward Sutherland

Editorial Direction: Monta Bell

Screenplay: Charles Chaplin

Directors of Photography: Roland Totheroh,
Jack Wilson

Editor: Monta Bell

Art Director: Arthur Stibolt

Music (Re-release): Charles Chaplin *

Music Associate (Re-release): Eric James *

Music Conductor/Orchestrations (Re-release):

Eric Rogers *

Technical Director: Jean de Limur

Cast:

Edna Purviance (*Marie Saint-Clair*)

Adolphe Menjou (*Pierre Revel*)

Carl Miller (*Jean Millet*)

Lydia Knott (*Jean's mother*)

Charles French (*Jean's father*)

Clarence Geldert (*Marie's stepfather*)

Betty Morrissey (*Fifi*)

Malvina Polo (*Paulette, Marie's friend*)

Nellie Bly Baker (*masseuse*)

Harry Northup (*boy*)

Henry Bergman (*maître d'hôtel*)

Karl Gutman (*orchestra conductor*)

Charles Chaplin (*station porter*) *

USA 1923

89 mins

Digital 4K (Restoration)

With a recorded score conducted by Timothy Brock
and performed by Orchestra Città Aperta

* Uncredited

Restored in 2022 by Cineteca di Bologna and Roy
Export Company S.A.S. at L'Immagine Ritrovata
laboratory in the framework of the Chaplin Project.

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The screening on Sunday 17 December will be introduced by Mark Fuller,
Michael Powell expert.

Michael Powell interviewed by Kevin Brownlow on 'A Woman of Paris'

I heard second-hand about the effect that the film had on you to begin with.

Oh well, in 1921, I was 16, and I was determined to go into films, because I had read *The Picturegoer* about making films. It was the first number of *The Picturegoer*, a friend of mine at school had brought it into the house, so I started reading articles about actually shooting films, you know, making films. Something clicked and I said 'This is for me', and from then on, I was completely dedicated. But then, I went on in a romantic way like you do at school, and then afterwards, when the family shoved me in a bank, saying 'You're crazy to want to go in the film business, go in a bank first, and learn order.' So, a friend of the family got me a job in a bank at Ringwood, a little market town in the New Forest. Meanwhile I was collecting everything I could find about films, but in a romantic sort of way, and I looked on films the way people did then, as a wonderful new plaything, but not serious. So then, by the time of *A Woman of Paris*, two or three years later, it must have been 1923 or 4, I knew quite a lot about films, but only in a very superficial way – the way the ordinary public thinks about them.

And then I saw that Chaplin had made a film in which he wasn't appearing, and had directed, called *A Woman of Paris* and it appeared at, I think at the Boscombe Hippodrome, or the Boscombe Cinema anyway, near Bournemouth, which was about ten miles away. So after the bank shut, I cycled in and went to see it, and I was absolutely knocked out by it, because suddenly the whole medium grew up. Before my eyes. Nobody had ever really done any realistic films at all before, it was all make-believe, you know, and emotions were make-believe as well as the people. Except for European films, which were mostly big romances, or something like the German *Nibelungen*, things like that, that was different. But in English-speaking, that is to say English-titled cinema, it was all completely fustian and make-believe, and playing, and all that sort of thing.

Suddenly, here was a grown-up film, with people behaving as they do in life, and scenes treated with an enormous sophistication. Like the sequence I always remembered all my life, the sequence where Menjou comes into the flat, and she's furious with him and with life and everything, and throws her pearl necklace out of the window, and he roars with laughter! You know, I was thrilled, to think that somebody could make a film in which she throws her necklace out of the window and he just roars with laughter! And she runs downstairs, and runs after the tramp who picks it up, and then runs away, and then goes back and gives him five dollars, and then comes back again, and I remembered so clearly her coming back in, and he's roaring with laughter on the sofa, and she just says 'Idiot!'. I remembered this one-word title.

This has stayed with me the whole of my life – suddenly, to suddenly see such an intelligent, and yet innocent sophistication, because there were many things about the film which were really, in a way, innocent. But the film is a progenitor, obviously of *Monsieur Verdoux* later on, but it's a much more grown-up film than *Verdoux*. But to think that this man who had all the power in the world, and who was this clown, really, could suddenly turn round and make a film that

CINEMA UNBOUND: THE CREATIVE WORLDS OF POWELL + PRESSBURGER

The Small Back Room

Fri 1 Dec 18:10 (+ intro); Sun 10 Dec 18:30;

Sat 16 Dec 20:45; Fri 22 Dec 18:20;

Wed 27 Dec 20:30; Sat 30 Dec 15:00

Oh... Rosalinda!!

Sat 2 Dec 11:45; Wed 13 Dec 20:45

Lazybones + Her Last Affaire

Sat 2 Dec 15:20; Wed 20 Dec 17:50

The Love Test + Something Always Happens

Sun 3 Dec 15:30; Tue 19 Dec 20:20

Wanted for Murder + intro by Simon McCallum,

BFI curator

Mon 4 Dec 20:40

Projecting the Archive: The End of the River +

intro by film scholar Dr Kulraj Phullar

Tue 5 Dec 18:20

The Phantom Light

Wed 6 Dec 20:30; Sun 17 Dec 12:30

Peeping Tom

Thu 7 Dec 20:45 (+ intro by Kiri Bloom Walden,

author of *Peeping Tom Devil's Advocates*); Sat 9

Dec 15:00 (+ Doesn't Exist magazine launch and

panel discussion hosted by Victor Fraga); Fri 15

Dec 20:50; Mon 18 Dec 20:45; Thu 21 Dec 18:00;

Sat 23 Dec 18:00; Fri 29 Dec 18:15

The Red Shoes

From Fri 8 Dec

The Red Shoes in the Spotlight

Fri 8 Dec 18:00

Bluebeard's Castle (Herzog Blaubarts Burg)

Fri 8 Dec 20:40; Fri 15 Dec 18:10 (+ intro by writer

Lillian Crawford); Sat 23 Dec 13:30

Crown v. Stevens + Behind the Mask (aka The

Man Behind the Mask)

Sat 9 Dec 12:40; Sat 23 Dec 15:00

The Tales of Hoffmann

Sat 9 Dec 17:30; Tue 12 Dec 20:20 (+ intro by

Andrew Moor, Manchester Metropolitan University);

Sat 16 Dec 14:45; Sat 30 Dec 17:30

Honeymoon (Luna de miel)

Sun 10 Dec 13:25; Thu 28 Dec 20:40

Queering Powell + Pressburger

Tue 12 Dec 18:00

Experimenta: Michelle Williams Gamaker and

Powell + Pressburger + Michelle Williams

Gamaker in conversation with Dr Kulraj Phullar

Wed 13 Dec 18:05

They're a Weird Mob

Sat 16 Dec 17:45; Fri 29 Dec 20:40

Espionage: Never Turn Your Back on a Friend /

A Free Agent + intro

Sun 17 Dec 15:15

Library Talk: The Glass Pearls

Tue 19 Dec 19:30 BFI Reuben Library

Age of Consent

Fri 22 Dec 20:45; Wed 27 Dec 18:15

A Matter of Life and Death

Sat 23 Dec 15:00 BFI IMAX

Black Narcissus

Sat 30 Dec 14:30 BFI IMAX

he wasn't in, with this lovely woman, Edna Purviance, and how good she was ... but this particular sequence, with the pearl necklace and with Menjou, the treatment of a man and a woman in a relationship like this, this sequence stayed with me always. I was eighteen. Eighteen years old.

But it's the actual approach to realism which still the cinema doesn't know very much about. Real realism. It was that that staggered me. Now I was a very intelligent little boy, and sophisticated from the point of view of reading, and hoped one day to be a writer. I read everything at that age, but still I was only eighteen and the cinema did seem to me – had seemed to me up 'til then – something quite different. Suddenly, it grew up and I grew up. And it's directly responsible for my own rather over-serious attitude to making films.

But it didn't work with the audiences, did it? I mean it didn't make money to any great degree.

I don't know, well, I don't think so... it wasn't only that he wanted to make a sophisticated film as a director, was it? It was also in a way, repaying his debt to Edna Purviance, to this wonderful woman who had been all through these pictures with him, the slapsticks, as well as The Kid. He loved her and admired her, and as you know, she was on his payroll 'til her dying day, which is so moving I think.

And yet the style was picked up by all those other directors.

Yes, like Monta Bell, and Lubitsch of course, *The Marriage Circle*.

What were your first reactions, when you sat down in the theatre the other day, and saw it again after fifty-something years?

First reactions, you mean as the picture unwound? What I didn't expect was this sort of feeling of a deliberate control, from the very opening shot. He opens with a long shot of a little village in France, and dissolves into a medium shot, and dissolves into a close shot of a window, and in the window is this girl looking out. You then see her from in the room, outside. The boy who loves her comes, and she's locked in by her father, and so she escapes out of the window with the boy, and they go for a walk, and when she comes back, she's locked out. It was the very deliberate and completely authoritative way that he set up the film, set up the story, that he didn't hurry at all, that he didn't try out a lot of useless atmosphere. He just told the story very well, very clearly, and very simply.

I think the way to explain to the public *A Woman of Paris* is that it really was a romance, it was a romance of Chaplin with this marvellous woman Edna Purviance. And this was his gift to her, of a great starring role, in a realistic drama. Unfortunately for him, he chose a drama that was a bit too realistic, a bit too tragic, but I'm sure if we could get this thread across to the public, it would interest them enormously.

I didn't know it had been withdrawn. But you couldn't possibly be surprised, because Chaplin at that time was the biggest box-office name in the world. I mean the *whole* world. And the last thing the world expected from him is a realistic drama with his name on, which he isn't in.

Michael Powell interviewed by Kevin Brownlow, London 1977 (transcript edited by Mark Fuller)

With thanks to powell-pressburger.org