

The Main Feature



Season 36 - Issue 15 screening 28.4.16



The printing of the notes by Repropoint is undertaken free of charge



15 Poole Road
Woking
Tel: 01483 596280

She Done Him Wrong USA

released 27 January 1933

66 minutes

Directed by Lowell Sherman with James Dugan (assistant)
Screenplay by Harvey F. Thew and John Bright
Based on Diamond Lil – 1928 play by Mae West
Edited by Alexander Hall

Produced by William LeBaron
Cinematography Charles Lang
Music by John Leipold (uncredited)

Starring Mae West; Cary Grant; Owen Moore; Gilbert Roland; Noah Berry Snr

Mae West is one of those truly iconic classic Hollywood stars and yet how many of us have actually seen any of her movies?

This was West's 2nd movie and first starring screen role. It was adapted from her Broadway show *Diamond Lil*. The Motion Picture Production Code had declared the play banned from the screen and repeatedly demanded changes to remove associations with or elements from the play, including suggested titles with the word "diamond". The adaptation was finally allowed under the condition that the play not be referred to in publicity or advertising.

Published in March 1930, the code (popularly known as the Hays Code after its creator Will H. Hays) was the first attempt at introducing film censorship in the US through laying down a series of guidelines to film producers.

The Code was a list they called the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls", based on items that were challenged by local censor boards. This list consisted of eleven subjects best avoided and twenty-six to be handled very carefully.



However the code was ridiculed by many in Hollywood, and tonight's film skated very close to the edge of the code in many ways. A simple scene where a guy is cleaning up horse dung – such unclean activities was frowned upon under the code. Produced at the tail end of Prohibition, this also film gets away with showing a great deal of beer (which photographed almost pornographically) and even has a drunk cop on the job. People are trading porno cards around – apparently these were very collectible. It is also clear that the bar owner is involved in prostitution and most likely white slavery.

Then there's the painting with a judiciously positioned hat!

West plays Lady Lou, a saloon singer in the Bowery section of Manhattan in the 1890's. As usual she strings along nearly every man in the cast, sings a few suggestive songs, and double entendre's her way through the dialogue.

One of her first lines is in reply to a woman and her son she meets on the street. The woman tells her son to always speak nicely to a fine lady. Mae replies, "one of the finest women who ever walked the streets." Later she tells Cary Grant "Why don't you come up some time and see me?" This became her most famous line, in fact it was so good that she used it again in her very next movie, *I'm No Angel*, also co-starring Grant. The AFI recently listed it as the #26 greatest movie line in American film history.

Some choice Mae West quotes in tonight's film

- On materialism: "Diamonds is my career."
- On morality and sex: "When women go wrong, men go right after them."
- On a lady's reputation: "I am delighted. I've heard so much about you." "Yeah, but you can't prove it."
- On fidelity: "Haven't you ever met a man who could make you happy?" "Sure, lots of times."

Mae West was not beautiful. She wasn't a great actress or singer. But she was one of the most original people in the history of show biz. She was decades ahead of her time in her views towards sex. She was often the sexual aggressor in her movies. The plots of which were never terribly important. They were but vehicles for showcasing her glorious talents.

West's position in pop culture sits somewhere above the Betty Boop level and maybe two or three notches below Marilyn Monroe: she's not an emblem of pure sex, but the desire and embrace of it. She's also noticeably and undeniably materialistic to a fault.

She Done Him Wrong was nominated for an Academy Award for Outstanding Production, now known as Best Picture. At 66 minutes, it is the shortest film ever to be so honoured. The reason why may not be too hard to explain, since, besides some well directed moments, the film was a box office smash – costing some \$200,000 it took more than \$2.2million at the box office. Controversy creates profits, and Mae West, no matter how diluted she was, was still some serious, crazy controversy.



***The Cameraman* (1928)** (67 minutes) signalled the end of an era for Buster Keaton, the launch of a promising new one, and the dawn of a painful decline. It was another successful Keaton comedy, made in the informal yet efficient manner he'd grown accustomed to yet unaware he'd never be allowed to work that way again. It heralded a shift so detrimental to his art and career that when Keaton wrote his autobiography several decades later, he titled the relevant chapter "The Worst Mistake of My Life."

It was Keaton's first film with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and is considered by fans and critics to be Keaton still in top form. By early 1928, Keaton had made 31 films of his own. There is no way he could have foreseen that within five years, his personal and professional life would be a shambles. Until 1928, Keaton had worked independently, his films produced by Schenck and released through other studios, including First National, United Artists and Metro.

"In 1928, I made the worst mistake of my career. Against my better judgement I let Joe Schenck (his brother in law who had himself joined MGM) talk me into giving up my own studio to make pictures at the booming Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lot in Culver City. "

In allowing himself to be signed over to MGM, Buster indeed made an irretrievable mistake—he would never again be completely free to create films, although he never gave up hope that he would be allowed to return to the work he adored. "I don't know if it was human nature, greed, or power, but the big companies were out to kill the independents," he said years later.

According to Keaton, Charlie Chaplin told him at the time: "'What's this I hear? Don't do it. They'll ruin you helping you. They'll warp your judgment. You'll get tired of arguing for things you know are right.'" Harold Lloyd apparently also advised him against the move.

When he came to MGM, Keaton had had an unparalleled run of success; in fact, he had never had a failure since he crawled on stage at the age of nine months. The world belonged to him and the future had no limits. He was accustomed to complete creative independence and working in an environment that encouraged innovation, so when MGM began insisting that its studio system knew better than he what made a good film, Keaton was naturally flabbergasted. His personal decline was swift and overwhelming.

"He couldn't get any work done that he thought was quality, because there were too many people interfering," his widow Eleanor Keaton said of that unfortunate time. Buster: "They were picking stories and material without consulting me and I couldn't argue 'em out of it. I'd only argue about so far and then let it go. They'd say, 'This is funny,' and I'd say, 'It stinks.' It didn't make any difference. We did it anyhow."

His first film under the new rules is still pure Keaton; the battles behind the scenes just don't show in what is a nearly perfect example of Keaton's seamless filmmaking. The situation soon became intolerable. Within a few months, Keaton's work suffered drastically. By 1933 and *What, No Beer?* with Jimmy Durante as his highly unsuitable partner, the on-screen Keaton is so miserable and in such an alcoholic state that he is almost unbearable to look at.

The Cameraman was at one point considered a lost film, destroyed in 1967. However, a complete print was discovered in Paris in 1968. Another print, of much higher quality, although missing some footage, was discovered in 1991. The two prints were combined into a best-available quality version which is regularly screened around the world.

One thing that fortunately remains lost is the worst single idea MGM ever tried to levy onto Keaton. They wanted the film to end with a sacrilege: Buster smiling. That scene was shot then test-screened. In this case, when the public spoke, they were adamant, and they were right. There would be no grinning Great Stone Face at the end of *The Cameraman*, or ever.

Iain McGlashan

Reactions to: **Son of the Bride**

Score **0** **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**
 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 2 4 15 13 2 ~

Total received – 36

Average Score – 7.25

Your Comments

An excellent film – my best so far

What a pleasant and enjoyable film

Appealing film – humorous and moving

Strong storyline, well acted – delightfully OTT!

A very entertaining and funny film – a bit of everything

Nice little film, beautifully acted and plenty of laughs

Too long, rambling – well acted though

“Rambling and digressive” indeed, but touching and entertaining

An increasingly moving, serious, humorous, brilliantly acted film – signed “Dick Watson”

It's amazing what a spell of ICU therapy can do – Glad we found out who Dick Watson was!

Very well worthwhile watching, even though too exaggerated and too painful in content at the beginning

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Testament of Youth	8.25
2 nd	Pride	8.08
3 rd	Selma	8.03
4 th	Belle	8.00
5 th	The Theory of Everything	7.84
6 th	Le Clan des Sicilian	7.27
7 th	Son of the Bride	7.25
8 th	Rebel Without a Cause	7.16
9 th	Get Santa	6.8
10 th	Dallas Buyers Club	6.5
11 th	Love is Strange	6.37
12 th	The Band's Visit	5.88
13 th	Stations of the Cross	5.0
14 th	The Spirit of the Beehive	4.9

Sweet as tiramisu

An interesting, unusual film

I enjoyed the bathos

Life is not that bad after all

Lovely film

Good casting

A bittersweet comedy

Next film - 12 May 2016

Soshite chichi ni naru

“The questions posed by Like Father, Like Son are universal in nature and the manner in which Kore-eda addresses them makes for superior drama”

“Sensitively written, smartly directed, and powerfully performed, like father, like son uses familiar-seeming elements to tell a thought-provoking story.”

“A thoroughly satisfying effort that always finds the truth of the moment, ignoring the ease of melodrama”

“It's well-acted and quietly powerful without settling for easy solutions to its unique dilemma”

“Gem of a Family Drama”

“A PIERCING, TENDER POEM ABOUT THE BITTERSWEET EBB AND FLOW OF PATERNAL LOVE” ★★★★★
ROBBIE COLLIN - THE TELEGRAPH

★★★★★ ★★★★★
EASTERN KICKS RICH CLINE - SHADOWS ON THE WALL

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

THE NEW FILM BY HIROKAZU KORE-EDA

