

Universal Pictures: Restorations and Rediscoveries, 1928–1937

May 13–June 15, 2016

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

Founded in 1912 by German immigrant Carl Laemmle, Universal Pictures remains among the powerhouses of the American entertainment industry. ***Universal Pictures: Restorations and Rediscoveries, 1928–1937*** focuses on one segment of the studio's rich history—the period from 1928 to 1936, when the studio's head of production was the founder's son, Carl Laemmle, Jr. Known condescendingly as "Junior" Laemmle and the butt of endless Hollywood jokes ("the son also rises"), the younger Laemmle was in fact a sophisticated, ambitious, risk-taking producer, who gambled the studio's finances on a series of challenging projects—and eventually lost. When cost overruns on the 1936 *Show Boat* forced the studio into the hands of its creditors, the Laemmle era came to an end.

Brief as it was, that era yielded an extraordinary number of important films, including such celebrated classics as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. This program, however, concentrates on lesser-known work, much of it with a distinctively European flavor provided by Universal's many émigré directors, including James Whale (with 1933's sublime *The Kiss Before the Mirror*), Paul Fejos (a major new restoration of the 1929 *Broadway*), and William Wyler (a Laemmle relative himself, represented by the Ibsenesque drama *A House Divided* and the comedy *The Good Fairy*). At a time when other studios seemed bent on standardizing their product for the new world of sound, Universal gave free rein to such distinctive stylists as John Stahl (represented by *Only Yesterday*, the first film adaptation of Stefan Zweig's *Letter from an Unknown Woman*), the irrepressible Tay Garnett (*Okay, America*) and the ferociously creative Edward L. Cahn, here with three films including the recently rediscovered 1933 masterwork *Laughter in Hell*.

The series opens with the revival premiere of the 1930 musical *King of Jazz*, shown in its full-length version for the first time since the 1930s, with its two-color Technicolor returned to its full eye-popping glory by Universal's new digital restoration unit.

Organized by Dave Kehr, Adjunct Curator, Department of Film.

Special thanks to Michael Daruty, Paul Ginsberg, Janice Simpson, Mike Feinberg, and Emily Wensel (NBCUniversal); Mike Mashon and Rob Stone (The Library of Congress); David Stenn, Richard Koszarski, and Anastasia Antonopoulou.

Press Contact:

Sara Beth Walsh, (212) 708-9747, sarabeth_walsh@moma.org

About @MoMAFilm:

The Museum of Modern Art's Department of Film marked its 80th anniversary in 2015. Originally founded in 1935 as the Film Library, the Department of Film is a dedicated champion of cinema past, present, and future. With one of the strongest international collections of motion pictures in the world—totaling more than 30,000 films between the permanent and study collections—the Department of Film is a leader in film preservation and a discoverer of emerging talent. Through The Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center, a state-of-the-art storage facility in Hamlin, Pennsylvania, MoMA restores and preserves films that are shown across the world and in many of the Museum's diverse programs, most notably in *To Save and Project: The Annual MoMA International Festival of Film Preservation*. The Department of Film engages with current cinema by honoring films and filmmakers that will have a lasting historical significance through its annual Film Benefit, which raises funds for the continued maintenance and growth of the collection, and *Contenders* series, an annual series of the year's best movies, as selected by MoMA Film curators from major studio releases and top film festivals. Always looking to the future, the Department of Film is constantly unearthing

emerging talent and providing a venue for young filmmakers through programs such as *New Directors New Films* and *Documentary Fortnight*. Playing an essential role in MoMA's mission to collect, preserve, and exhibit modern and contemporary art, the department was awarded an Honorary Academy Award in 1978 "for the contribution it has made to the public's perception of movies as an art form."