



Early Charlie Chaplin: The Artist as Apprentice at Keystone Studios

James L. Neibaur

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Charlie Chaplin produced some of the greatest films of all time, including *The Gold Rush*, *The Circus*, *City Lights*, *Modern Times*, and *The Great Dictator*. Before making a name for himself as an undisputed master of cinema, however, Chaplin first developed his acting, writing, and directing skills at Keystone Studios. Mack Sennett, who attended one of Chaplin's music hall shows, thought the entertainer would be a good fit at his newly established studio, where they specialized in the roughhouse slapstick Chaplin performed on stage. Intrigued with the idea of preserving comedy on film, Chaplin began work for Sennett in 1913.

While some of the first efforts were crudely filmed, they allowed Chaplin to understand the rudiments of performing for the camera. As he became more interested in directing his own films, Chaplin learned techniques that set his work apart from other comedies. The films Chaplin made at Keystone were the catalyst for a significant motion picture career, and a character that he would create and develop at the studio would become among the most iconic images in the history of entertainment.

In Early Charlie Chaplin: The Artist as Apprentice at Keystone Studios, James Neibaur examines each of these films, assessing the important early work of a comedian who became a timeless icon. From his debut as a fast talking con man in Making a Living to his role in the six-reel Marie Dressler vehicle, Tillie's Punctured Romance, Chaplin displays many of the characteristics that would endear him to audiences around the world. The majority of these films have been made available on DVD, allowing the reader to appreciate the background behind these works. Early Charlie Chaplin is a must, not only for fans of silent cinema and Chaplin, but for anyone who appreciates film history.



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