

ACTIVITIES REPORT

THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

1981

Acquisitions of the Year

During 1981, 719 reels of film were acquired for preservation, of which 296 reels were on nitrate stock. This figure reflects the addition of more than three hundred new titles to the collection. The following films are considered highlights of 1981 acquisitions:

HALLELUJAH I'M A BUM (United Artists, 1933) approximately 40 reels of nitrate preprint. The film features Al Jolson and the music of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. At the time of its release, the critics and public questioned the poetic presentation of dialog mixed with song, but today the film is heralded as an important experiment in film musicals.

BACK TO THE WOODS (1919) with Harold Lloyd.

THE PASSING OF THE OKLAHOMA OUTLAW (1915). This historical reenactment features the capture of the infamous Doolin-Dalton Gang.

THE ROGUE SONG (MGM, 1930). Although only a three-minute segment of this legendary Technicolor musical was recovered, the Laurel and Hardy an lub, The Sons of the Desert, has given this find national publicity. Unfortunately, the search must continue to recover the rest of this long-lost feature. Anyone with material on this film is asked to write to AFI Archives.

The number of pre-1915 films in the collection is growing rapidly. In 1981, a significant number of these primitives were acquired, including productions of Thanhouser, Edison, Pathe, Ambrosio, Vitagraph and Lubin. More and more the early hand-color and stencil-color films are being donated for preservation.

Progress in the Field of Preservation

A total of \$426,375 in grants was awarded by The American Film Institute/ National Endowment for the Arts Film Preservation Program to eight organizations for film preservation projects. The program, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and administered by AFI, is part of the AFI-coordinated national effort to preserve a broad representational cross section of the American film heritage.

The organizations and projects funded this year include:

- American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, MA; \$13,120, in support of the ongoing program to identify and preserve films which document the Jewish experience.
- Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY; \$25,365, in support of the Independent Film Preservation Program.

- International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; \$113,700, in support of the ongoing nitrate film preservation program.
- Iowa State University, Ames, IA; \$1,750, for safeguarding color films deposited in the American Archives of the Factual Film.
- Memphis State University, Memphis, TN; \$2,625, for preservation of rare circus films in the Mississippi Valley Collection.
- Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; \$131,190, in support of the ongoing nitrate film preservation program.
- New York Public Library, New York, NY; \$7,435, to continue ongoing preservation of and improve accessibility to unique dance performance footage.
- The UCLA Film Archives, Los Angeles, CA; \$131,190, in support of the ongoing nitrate film preservation program.

Cataloging and Documentation

The Second Conference on Cataloging and Documentation of Moving Images was held on November 18, 19 and 20, 1981. More than seventy-five staff members of film and broadcast archives attended and took part in discussions of the use of computers in cataloging and the setting up of national standards for work methods.

Film Showings

FILMEX, the Los Angeles Film Exposition, paid tribute to the preservation efforts of AFI Archives in April, 1981. Among the films shown were BROADWAY BILL, the color print of REDSKIN, and THE AFFAIRS OF ANATOL.

35mm prints of STARK LOVE and ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON (with Gary Cooper) were shown to the Society of Cinephiles annual convention in Kansas City the first week in September. Also on the program were a number of films that were unearthed in Dawson City by the Public Archives of Canada and preserved at the Library of Congress.

Publications

Proceedings of the Conference on Cold Storage continued to be sent out to interested parties. In 1981, more than one hundred copies were distributed in response to requests from institutions, corporations and individuals.

The archivist continued to write a column called "AFI Archives" about preservation activities for the periodical Classic Images. In response to the articles, private film collectors have donated nitrate, diacetate, and unique 16mm prints for preservation. Readers of the column also have assisted in identifying film materials.

Members of the staff have given more than a dozen newspaper interviews on preservation topics, including color preservation, the discovery of a clip from THE ROGUE SONG, and information on The American Film Institute/National Endowment for the Arts Film Preservation Program.

Budgetary Matters

Due to financial cutbacks, AFI Archives was forced to reduce the staff by one person. With a department of four individuals, it has become a challenge to keep up with daily work and at the same time pursue long-term preservation goals.

International Relations

Larry Karr and Audrey Kupferberg attended the FIAF Conference at Rapallo.

Kupferberg attended the opening of the new film center building in Jerusalem at the invitation of the Israel Film Archive.

AFI Archives had visits from researchers from Australia, Japan, Norway, Great Britain and other countries throughout 1981.

A film was loaned to the National Film Archive, London for showing in December, 1981.

Several nitrate film prints were shipped to the Public Archives of Canada for preservation in Ottawa.

Special Events

The AFI Life Achievement Award was given to Fred Astaire in 1981.

The American Film Institute west coast office was moved to its own campus at 2021 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90027, the site of a former private college.

The unearthing of THE ROGUE SONG sequence brought a report by critic Arch Campbell of the NBC Washington affiliate, WRC-TV.

Discussions about color film preservation continued with director Martin Scorsese and editor Thelma Schoonmaker in 1981. Karr and Kupferberg met these distinguished artists on the set of their new film THE KING OF COMEDY.