

L O S T & F O U N D
American Treasures
FROM THE
NEW ZEALAND
F I L M A R C H I V E

LOST AND FOUND:

AMERICAN TREASURES FROM THE
NEW ZEALAND FILM ARCHIVE

**Foreword by the Honourable Christopher
Finlayson, Minister for Arts, Culture, and
Heritage—New Zealand**

The New Zealand government recognises film as a significant art form and is pleased to support the New Zealand Film Archive / Ngā Kaitiaki O Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua in its work to collect and preserve New Zealand's moving image history and heritage.

The first moving images arrived on our shores at the dawn of cinema. Many of these early films have been lost—but in an ironic twist, “the tyranny of distance” provided a unique survival opportunity for many early European and American films. At the end of the international exhibition chain—and long forgotten by their distributors—they made their

way into the hands of local private collectors. Over the last 30 years, these films, including works by renowned directors such as John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock, have become part of the New Zealand Film Archive collection.

I acknowledge the valuable support of the National Film Preservation Foundation and American archivists in assisting the New Zealand Film Archive with the care and protection of these films. I was delighted this dedication to preserving the world's early cinema was recognised by the presentation at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto of the 2011 Jean Mitry Award to the National Film Preservation Foundation and the New Zealand Film Archive.

The release of *Lost and Found: American Treasures from the New Zealand Film Archive*

will be welcomed by all those who love early cinema. I am pleased the New Zealand Film Archive could play its part in bringing these precious examples of the world's audio-visual history to the screen once more.

Foreword by Leonard Maltin

Member, NFPF Board of Directors

Imagine writing a treatise on Shakespeare without having access to most of his plays, or a study of Mozart without being able to hear the majority of his compositions. If history is written by the victors, you might say that silent film history is written by the survivors. Since fewer than half of the films produced during the first three decades of the 20th century still exist, scholars have had to make do with what does survive, supported by the accepted truths passed on by journalists and early historians of the period.

This DVD celebrates the discovery of long-unseen silent films, and while none could be said to change our overall view of the period,

each one adds to our understanding of this developing art form—and the careers of some of its leading practitioners.

It also commemorates an extraordinary cache of American films that was hidden away in New Zealand for more than nine decades. Through a partnership with the New Zealand Film Archive and American institutions, the NFPF arranged for these films to be shipped to the United States for preservation to 35mm film. As it turns out, for 70 percent of the titles, the New Zealand print is the only copy known to exist.

That films lost in the United States came to be found 7,000 miles away speaks volumes about the popularity of American movies right from the start. By 1926, America made 90 percent

of all commercial pictures screened around the world. Distributors found that, by translating intertitles into the local language, American movies could play as well in Prague as they did in Peoria. The coming of talkies made early motion pictures like these seem obsolete; as a result, many prints and even negatives were destroyed. Today only one in five of the films made in the United States before 1928 survives in this country.

The breakthrough New Zealand–American project shows that history sometimes provides a second chance. When U.S. distributors sent prints abroad, they expected them to be shipped back or destroyed at the end of their run. But New Zealand was the last stop on the worldwide exhibition circuit, and some prints fell through the cracks—or, more specifically,

into the hands of eager collectors. Over the years copies made their way to the NZFA, where dedicated archivists stored the flammable nitrate prints under conditions that kept the films in good shape.

Today the prints safeguarded in New Zealand are an amazing time capsule of the silent era. They not only resurrect lost works by major directors—John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Mabel Normand—but also point to the full array of American pictures seen in commercial theaters. Industrial films spotlighting U.S. products, newsreel stories, cartoons, travelogues, serial episodes, previews, and of course, comedies—*Lost and Found: American Treasures from the New Zealand Film Archive* samples them all.

So let's savor these discoveries, giving a round of applause to the NZFA for sharing its treasures and the American archives for preserving them, and hope that this exciting collaboration spearheaded by the NFPF blazes the trail for many more to come.

Leonard Maltin is a long-established film critic and historian with many books to his credit.

About the New Zealand Project

In 2010, the National Film Preservation Foundation and the New Zealand Film Archive announced a partnership to preserve and make available an astonishing collection of American motion pictures that no longer survived in the United States and had been virtually unseen anywhere in nearly a century. The headliner was John Ford's *Upstream* (1927), a feature by the four-time Academy Award-winning director that had long been assumed lost, but there were other surprises as well: the first surviving film directed by and starring Mabel Normand; the first extant narrative shot in Yosemite; an early one-reeler with Jean the Collie, America's first canine movie star; Westerns made in Arizona, Texas, and Oklahoma; comedies with Charles Puffy, Ethel Teare, Snub Pollard, and

Joe Murphy; late 1920s productions from the De Mille studio; and many more. That's not counting the reels from *The White Shadow* (1924)—the first surviving feature credited to Alfred Hitchcock—that turned up several months later. All told, the collaboration recovered 176 films dating from 1898 to 1929.

The groundbreaking initiative grew from a modest start. During a visit at the NZFA in 2009, Meg Labrum of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia talked about the NFPP's successful project to preserve early American films found at her archive. A few months later, Brian Meacham of the Academy Film Archive dropped by during his vacation and suggested exploring a similar partnership. The NZFA followed up with an invitation. With a research grant from The Andrew W. Mellon

Foundation, the NFPP sent Brian, along with NFPP project manager Leslie Lewis, back to inspect the nitrate prints and prepare condition reports. The NZFA's commitment to preservation and public service got the project started—it was the NFPP's job to get it done.

Three years later, the preservation work is nearly completed, thanks to a Save America's Treasures grant; gifts from Turner Classic Movies, preservation facilities, and private donors; and the know-how contributed by the NFPP's five American partners—the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, George Eastman House, the Library of Congress, the Museum of Modern Art, and UCLA Film & Television Archive—which supervised the film-to-film preservation copying. The lion's share of the support came from five Hollywood

studios that underwrote the preservation of titles illuminating their corporate heritage and also guided most of that technical work.

The preservation process followed three paths: Most of the nitrate prints went to Colorlab Corp. in Maryland for high-resolution scanning; after the digital files were corrected to the archivists' specifications, the results were output to 35mm film. Hollywood's Film Technology Company handled many of the photochemical assignments, including preservation of the two-color Technicolor nitrate print of *The Love Charm* (1928). The unique prints of *Upstream* and *The White Shadow* were too precious to ship overseas without a backup copy; they were preserved to 35mm film at New Zealand's Park Road Post Production, with the help of the NZFA. As

preservation work was completed, the American archives took custody of the nitrate originals, as well as the new preservation masters, prints, and video access copies. The NZFA, whose good stewardship made the effort possible, received exhibition prints and video copies of all complete films. Over months of collaboration have grown bonds of respect and trust that are sure to last far beyond this project.

Film repatriation, the return of moving images to their country of origin, has come to mean the transfer of films from one archive to another, but as this initiative demonstrates, it can also revolutionize public access. After preservation work is completed, the NFPF's American partners make available new copies for exhibition and study, as does the NZFA. For

many short films, the NFPF also posts digital files on [our website](#), with program notes, so that they can be viewed around the world.

This DVD is the final step in that process. To salute the NZFA and tell the larger preservation story, the NFPF produced this anthology showcasing 13 of the more remarkable finds brought back to life through the collaboration. (Three of the initial films preserved in the United States were featured in the NFPF's 2011 anthology, *Treasures 5: The West, 1898-1938*.)

The NFPF's *Treasures* DVD sets have made it a practice to showcase films that have been previously unavailable to the public in any professional-quality home-video release. *Treasures New Zealand* does the concept one

better by presenting movies that only four years ago were assumed to be lost. The celebrated finds *Upstream* and *The White Shadow* bookend the lineup, but viewers will also take delight in the shorter films in between, which highlight both the range of films recovered through the New Zealand–American partnership and the sheer variety of American productions screened abroad during the early decades of the movie industry. We are deeply grateful to the National Film Preservation Board of the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Argyros Family Foundation for supporting the DVD component of this project.

As you view these rarities, presented with new music by Michael Mortilla and Donald Sosin, remember that preservation keeps film alive.

Our understanding and enjoyment of film, as art form, historical record, and personal expression, is shaped almost entirely by accessibility. The short-film types from the silent era represented on this DVD—comedies, cartoons, newsreels, promotional films, serial episodes, experiments in color and sound—are only beginning to be appreciated once again, because so relatively few examples have been available outside archives. Culturally significant films that, for one reason or another, cannot be seen will drop from public memory unless they are shared with audiences in some vital way. In archives around the world thousands more await discovery. Their identification, preservation, and presentation continue only through public support.

It is with pride and excitement that the NFPF, the American archives, and the NZFA, along with the hundreds of contributors who helped along the way, send these treasures back into the world. Enjoy!

—Annette Melville, NFPF Director



For more information, please visit

www.filmpreservation.org