



Mary Pickford Rediscovered

Kevin Brownlow

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Silent-film star Mary Pickford -- "America's Sweetheart" -- was Hollywood's first superstar. In this lavish tribute to Pickford (1892-1979), her enormous and wide-ranging body of work is illustrated with fabulous film stills, rare production shots, and personal photographs -- most never before published -- from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Margaret Herrick Library. Today's audiences have little knowledge of Pickford's films, let alone of her enormous behind-the-scenes power as one of Hollywood's pioneering producers and cofounder of United Artists. This first illustrated filmography of Pickford's career accords her achievements the recognition they deserve. Noted film historian Kevin Brownlow draws on interviews with Pickford and her circle to provide entertaining film-by-film commentaries full of wonderful anecdotes about the silent era.

Mary Pickford Rediscovered Details

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From Reader Review Mary Pickford Rediscovered for online ebook

Graceann says

This is a glossy coffee-table book paying homage to America's Sweetheart and her films - it isn't necessarily a true "biography," but a sumptuous look through a glorious career. Beautifully presented and gloriously rich.

Yasmin says

Clearly this coffee-table book is for fans of Mary Pickford and her movies. But I disagree that Mary Pickford also made a good child in appearance most of her life. You don't have to look hard at the large pictures of her to see that there is very much a woman looking back at you under a badly designed guise of a child. I've seen pictures of small children of the same period and she doesn't have any similarities at twenty-seven to a seven year old. In fact she wasn't very child like in appearance even as a child. I can't necessarily agree she was a better actress than Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton or Laurel and Hardy, I believe each comedian's talents were different to another and in my opinion none superior or lesser than the other. I can agree that each actress/actor did borrow skits from each other but they were able to make even those something of their own. Of course many black & white movie fans will have this as a continual debate and of course they shall be biased to the actor/actress they enjoy over others. I can't say that this author has swayed me to start watching Mary Pickford films in the same way I do with Charlie Chaplin. I don't watch Charlie Chaplin because I think he is better than any other but I was brought up watching Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy. So now I tend to watch those movies I was brought up with and they are still as funny to me now as they were all those years ago when I was a child.

Karen says

Great photos from most of the movies this amazing actress and business woman created.

Bobby Underwood says

England's Kevin Brownlow brings to life America's Sweetheart, Mary Pickford, in this richly textured and insightful book featuring myriad of lush and rare photographs chosen by Pickford expert Robert Cushman. Mary Pickford's contribution to cinema is seen in a new light here. Brownlow subtly makes the case that she not only was the most influential woman in the history of cinema, but a visionary force for the film industry itself.

It is difficult in today's climate of instant access to information to understand just how popular Mary Pickford was in her day. She was embraced by the entire world, and reportedly, every twenty-four hours, 12 1/2 million people saw her onscreen. She perfected her craft in an era of film when very few people actually saw her natural acting style for the hard work and genius it was. George Cukor called her the first method actor.

Mary Pickford's career as an actress spanned decades. She did much for women with her strong business

savvy and the roles she not only portrayed, but created. A very practical woman by all accounts, her films themselves reflected our better side as human beings and were often sentimental in tone. She didn't play weak characters as many of her contemporaries did. When people walked out of a theatre after seeing a Pickford film, they were often uplifted, feeling generous towards their fellowman.

Brownlow has done a wonderful job of bringing Mary Pickford to life as a three dimensional human being. With all the rare and beautiful photographs here to distract you it would have been easy to have an uninspiring text. But the introduction by Cushman and the lengthy and insightful comments by Brownlow, which include commentary on each Pickford film, makes this a mesmerizing journey into a life, both on-film and off.

There were many things about Mary the public knew, such as the famous Pickfair and her celebrated marriage to Douglas Fairbanks, as well as their friendship with Charlie Chaplin. They knew little, however, of a young girl who virtually had no childhood. Before her career finally took off she was poor in the extreme, sleeping in a chair so long it would take quite some time after owning a bed before she could sleep in any other position.

Who was the abusive alcoholic in Mary's life, and whom did she turn to for comfort? And at the height of her fame, what troubled her soul so much that she almost ended it all? Though these aspects of Mary's life are only touched upon and not dealt with in depth, it is admirable they are here at all, separating this from other coffee-table-style books.

The photographs are so stunningly beautiful (some never before seen) you may have trouble concentrating on the text. Of particular note: photographs on pages 110, 65, 17, 12, 27, 154, 121, and 66. They are beautiful, and not to be missed.

This lush and informative book is filled with affection for its subject, perhaps too much, but that is part of its charm. The sparse yet informative text is augmented by rare and breathtaking photographs. Definitely a must-own book for anyone who loves film, silent films especially. Its overall perspective of America's Sweetheart, Mary Pickford, while obviously biased, is nonetheless unmatched.

Hala Pickford says

A beautiful picture book that elaborates on her pictures and their making...goes into a little more detail in that respect than Whitfield's book but both are deliciously good.

Samantha Glasser says

Kevin Brownlow is absolutely brilliant. This is an amazing resource book. It has some biographical information, an extensive filmography section with excellent photos and background on every feature including those that are lost today, and an overview of the Biograph shorts. This is the real appeal of this book, but the other information provided, like the story of how Brownlow discovered her and eventually met her, is quite entertaining as well. Essential.

Jeannine says

A beautiful book. Synopsi and history about each and every Pickford film supplemented by gorgeous still photographs that were basically rescued after Pickford died and her belongings and paperwork scattered to the wind. Film enthusiasts and the film industry in general should give great hanks to the author and a few other devoted Pickford archivists for going so far as to visit pawn shops where unscrupulous people around Pickford pawned her things.

Many of these films no longer exist (in part because Pickford herself wanted her films destroyed so she would not be ridiculed) and what a shame, but the book pieces all of it together beautifully.

Brownlow won an Oscar a few years back for his work in preserving silent film history. His work shines here. Bless him. And I absolutely love this biting comment in his acknowledgements in the back of the book about the destruction of Pickfair (the iconic home of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks):

"This book came about thanks to a welcome change of policy by the Mary Pickford Foundation. During the past six decades, Pickford films had been rarely seen, and her place in film history had been seriously eroded. Even silent-film enthusiasts were hard put to raise much interest in a star who may have once been more popular than Chaplin but who was now a byword for quaintness. As a symbol of this loss of prestige, Pickfair, once regarded as the Buckingham Palace of Hollywood, was demolished by Pia Zadora (HER place in infamy is secure!)."

Oh snap, Pia!
