



The Silent Comedians

Richard Dyer MacCann

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MacCann features Mack Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Harry Langdon in this guide to the lives and works of the most important silent comedy movie-makers in America?the fourth in his acclaimed series, *American Movies: The First Thirty Years*.

In twenty-eight articles reprinted from various sources, twenty-five contributors show how these five artists struggled in early years to find themselves, rise above limited circumstances, and make their entries into production at a time when Hollywood was the new frontier of the twentieth century. For each artist, MacCann includes some kind of statement by the artist himself about comic goals and methods.

Contributors include **James Agee, Samuel Gill, Penelope Houston, Theodore Huff, Janet E. Lorenz, Donald McCaffrey, Charles J. Maland, Daniel Moews, Graham Petrie, David Robinson, Michael Roemer, Robert E. Sherwood, Anthony Slide, William Schelly**, and others.

MacCann's introduction eloquently discusses the value of comedy and laments the critical tendency to prefer tragedy: "...the jolly fat clowns of comedy must more than ever be critically stretched to conform with lanky and lugubrious Hamlets in order to be worthy of praise. The celebration of the sad clown is a triumph of philosophy over art."

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