

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 14, 2014
7:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

HOLD 'EM YALE

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



Greeted by critics with a mixture of blind appreciation (“What’s the use of being critical when you have had your money’s worth of honest fun out of a picture?”) and withering criticism (“A careful analysis would bring tears of pain to graduate eyes”), HOLD 'EM YALE was the first of three films released by De Mille Pictures in 1928 pairing director Edward Griffith and star Rod La Rocque. The film was adapted from a 1906 stage play, *At Yale*, written by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Owen Davis and heavily modified for the screen by writer George Dromgold. Jaime Emmanuel Alvarado Montez (La Rocque), a young man from “the Argentine,” heads to Yale at the behest of his father. In New Haven, he searches for success on the football field and love in the arms of a professor’s daughter, but must constantly evade a police detective convinced the collegian is a wanted criminal.

Director Edward H. Griffith began his career acting and writing, and eventually directing, for the Edison Co. in 1915. He directed numerous films for De Mille in the 1920s, and made a successful transition to sound pictures in the 1930s, directing several romantic comedies starring Madeleine Carroll and Fred MacMurray. Rod La Rocque, a reliable De Mille player since his starring role in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS in 1923, found success with leading roles in dramas and adventure films throughout his career, and surprised critics with his ability to play comedy in HOLD 'EM YALE while retaining his “inherent elegance.”

No. 5

The famous Yale Bowl, the first of the huge football stadiums, makes its screen debut as a setting for a motion picture in “Hold 'Em, Yale!” Rod LaRocque’s new vehicle for Pathé. Providing further authentic background for this DeMille special, the screen version of Owen Davis’s play, “At Yale,” the sets constructed at the DeMille studio for the picture are fashioned after a series of carefully selected photographs of buildings and scenes on the Yale campus.

New York Times, March 4, 1928

HOLD 'EM YALE suffered in critics’ eyes as just another entry in a glut of college-themed films, a craze that had exploded with the release of Harold Lloyd’s THE FRESHMAN in 1925. By 1928, at least a dozen “college pictures” were being released each year, and HOLD 'EM YALE seems to have been lost among the flood. As *Film Daily’s* review complained, “When Davis wrote this one, the college stuff was fairly new, but with the deluge of collegiate films lately, the stuff is not so hot.” More than 85 years later, though, judged on its own merits, the film is solidly entertaining, with some surprisingly funny slapstick sequences as well as fascinating glimpses of the Yale Bowl and Old Campus. La Rocque’s charming comedic turn, Tom Kennedy as the confused detective, and the antics of “Firpo” the monkey make HOLD 'EM YALE, as one reviewer put it, “a farce so good one easily forgives the triteness of the tale.”

DIRECTED BY **WILLIAM H. GRIFFITH** (1928) 74 MIN.

SCREENPLAY ADAPTED BY **GEORGE DROMGOLD**
FROM THE PLAY **AT YALE** BY **OWEN DAVIS**
PRODUCED BY **DE MILLE PICTURES**
RELEASED BY **PATHÉ**

STARRING **ROD LA ROCQUE, JEANNETTE LOFF,**
HUGH ALLAN, JOSEPH CAWTHORN, TOM KENNEDY,
AND **FIRPO**

HOLD 'EM YALE was one of more than 175 American silent films in the collection of the New Zealand Film Archive that were recently brought to light through a collaborative repatriation project. Between 2009 and 2013, the National Film Preservation Foundation, the NZFA (now called Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision), and five American film archives (The Academy, UCLA, MoMA, George Eastman House, and the Library of Congress), combined to research, inspect, and identify original nitrate prints of many films once thought to be lost. These films were returned to the U.S., where archives and film laboratories worked together to make new preservation masters as well as new 35mm exhibition prints like the one screening here tonight.

DID YOU KNOW: THAT'S (MOSTLY) HIS REAL NAME! ROD LA ROCQUE WAS BORN RODERICK LA ROCQUE DE LA ROUR (OR LA TOUR) IN CHICAGO IN 1898. HE MARRIED HUNGARIAN STAR VILMA BÁNKY IN 1927, AND, UNLIKE MANY STARS OF THE SILENT ERA, HE MADE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO TALKING PICTURES, STARRING IN MORE THAN 15 FILMS AFTER 1927 BEFORE RETIRING TO GO INTO REAL ESTATE IN 1941.

NEXT UP: PUT YOUR BANDIT HAT ON AND JOIN US FOR A SCREENING OF WES ANDERSON'S DELIGHTFUL ADAPTATION OF THE ROAL DAHL CLASSIC **FANTASTIC MR. FOX**, SCREENING AT THE WHITNEY HUMANITIES CENTER ON **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 AT 7:00 P.M.**