

“Through the Camera Lens”: Moving Picture World and the Silent Cinema Era, 1907-1927

*Follow the emerging film industry through
the eyes of an influential trade journal*

Date Range: 1907-1927
Content: 115,972 pages
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For those in the silent-film industry, information and opinion were largely shaped by aggressive trade publications, each competing for the same limited number of subscribers. Chief among these was “Moving Picture World,” whose reviews, news, features and interviews set a standard for wide coverage. Claiming to represent the Moving Picture Exhibitors’ Association, it carried columns on projection and theater music; its vast quantity of advertisements made the weekly a veritable film encyclopedia.

An industry powerhouse at its height, “Moving Picture World” frequently reiterated its independence from the film studios. In 1911, the magazine bought out “Views and Film Index,” and by 1914 its circulation was approximately 15,000. Its reviews illustrate the standards and tastes of film in its infancy, and shed light on story content in those early days. The publication remains valuable today for the raw research it provides on topics of film, social history and politics.

As a chronicle of the “Moving Picture World” years, “*Through the Camera Lens*” is a goldmine for scholars of the cinema, and supports study in broader issues of race, class, gender and business during the 20th century’s early decades. Researchers will see the effect of the dominance of the Hollywood studios in the 1920s on worldwide society and culture, as well as the system of vertically integrated production, distribution and exhibition of films by Hollywood studios.

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