

Sherlock jr essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sherlock Jr. released was in USA in April 1924. It was directed by Buster Keaton, produced by Metro pictures and Buster Keaton Productions. It was released in Black and white era. It is a 35mm film of length 45 minutes. Producer: Joseph M. Schenck; scenario: Clyde Bruckman, Jean Haves, and Joseph Mitchell; photography: Elgin Lessley and Bryon Houck; editor: Buster Keaton; art director: Fred Gabourie; costumes: Clare West. Cast: Buster Keaton (The Projectionist); Kathryn McGuire (The Girl); Ward Crane (The Rival); Joseph Keaton (The Father). In the history of cinematography over last 100 years, there were many eras that came about.

Few significant to mention are 1895-1930 (Silent era, mostly comedy movies, which relied on slapstick and burlesque. Earliest being ' Watering the Gardner' (1895) by Lumiere Brothers. Greatest actors of the era were Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd). 1930-1950 (Sound movies are introduced. Comedy movies became supplemental, social movies with optimism about daily life acme into being. Near World War II, military movies came to the fore front. And after the war, post war trauma related movies.

With advent of television in 1950, family oriented comedies, adult social situations. . 1960s-1980s (darker humor and more serious themes had begun to emerge, including satire and social commentary, anti-war sentiment, horror movies, detective movies.) 1990s-2000s (return of romantic movies, working class comedies, stoner comedies, black comedies, gross out humor etc.) Sherlock Jr. comes from 1895-1930 movie eras when significant number of movies produced was comedy movies. Since it was the time of silent movies most of it was visual humor with slapstick comedy. Buster

Keaton, one of the most powerful actors of the time, was directing and acting in the movie.

Often reputed as a comic actor, Buster Keaton came from the time and likes of Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd. The movie ' Sherlock Jr. ' revolves around a projectionist, played by Keaton himself. Here the projectionist lives with dream of becoming a detective himself. And he gets falsely accused of stealing the watch of his girlfriend's father. For which he is rebuked and set away, vows not to see his girlfriend again. With a mind of detective he starts a detective trail of a local Sheik, who is believed to frame him. But he remains unsuccessful in pursuit of proving himself not guilty.

He goes back to the projection room where he works and falls asleep. And what goes after is a ' Film within a Film'. A ghostly image comes out of his body, and starts a new story; only here he is now Mr. Sherlock Jr. , the detective in the lines of Sherlock Homes. In this trance of dream, he becomes more handsome and other villain look more villainous. Here he remains in pursuit jewelry theft. Here in the movie there is often a comparison between a real life and life in dream where Mr. Keaton lives in the extreme of unimaginable funny situations. Take for example Sherlock Jr. 's out of control ride on the handle bars of a motorcycle.

Here he avoids poisoned drinks, exploding billiards, falling blades, unending chases, cops crossing over, motorcycle jumping over bumps and many more, all in the sequence of dreams. Well many would like to live the life of a master detective, famed worldwide, do death defying stunts. Very romantic dreams indeed! Mr. Beaton the director, also the actor, perhaps lives the life

in the movies. Mr. Beaton, the director was an auteur of sorts. He was a director who would like to make use of commercial film making or rather direct it as a way a painter would like to paint a picture giving color to his imaginations.

The film theoretician, Andre Bazin, explained that: auteur theory was a way of choosing the personal factor in artistic creation as a standard of reference, and then assuming that it continues and even progresses from one film to the next. Auteur Theory suggests that the best films will bear their maker's 'signature'. This may manifest itself as the stamp of his or her individual personality or perhaps even focus on recurring themes within the body of work. " It's something like as if the director is filling the lives of the actor with colors of his personal life or perhaps his dreams.

Take his personal life for instance. Buster Keaton (born Joseph Frank Keaton, October 4, 1895) was born to a pair of medicine show performers, Joseph Hallie Keaton and Myra Cutler Keaton, on October 4, 1895. " When he was few months old he nearly suffocated in costume trunk, accidentally shut up. Few family legends say that Keatons escaped series of fire and train disaster. Aged three, he caught his fore finger in clothes wrangler, lost the first joint. He even gashed his head, near the eye with a brick that boomeranged after he threw it at a peach tree.

He was sucked out of an upstairs window by a passing cyclone that carried him floating through the air and conveniently deposited him, unhurt, in the middle of a street a few blocks away. Even his nickname Buster came in unusual circumstances. The great escape artist Harry Houdini while in their

home saw little Buster, then only about six months old, slip and tumble down a flight of stairs, arriving virtually unharmed, perhaps even amused, at the bottom.

“ What a buster your kid took! ” Houdini is said to have cried out. So he thus got the name ‘ Buster’. This is when his parents thought that it was safer for Buster to stay near them when performing in theatres. Oddly enough, he made his first appearance in theatre crawling from the wings of the back stage. There are many more stories of his exploits in his early childhood on the theatre. Well looking at the childhood, doesn't it look as if he has been living his childhood through the movies he directed, reliving the pain and comedy of his personal life. His jumping on the roof of the train, riding on the handle of the bicycle, tumbling down the stairs, all does remind of his childhood. Mr.

Keaton's film like many other films of 1920s was shot at slower speeds probably 16 - 23 frames per second rather than 24 frames per second. As in the case of Sherlock Jr. this slow speed was intelligently under cranked or Time Lapse Photography (cinematography technique whereby each film frame is captured at a rate much slower than it will be played back. When replayed at normal speed, time appears to be moving faster and thus lapsing was used to show slapstick (is a type of comedy where activities or scenes involving real life shown seem unrealistic like running full speed into a wall or simple slap makes one go round and round) comedies.

Film bases used at those times were nitrate base and at high speed they run a risk of catching fire. Apart from the technical aspect of film making,

Keaton's dream sequence in *Sherlock Jr.*, not only breaks the descriptive story line type of silent era (movie was shown with narration) but also it was 'film within a film' (perhaps how Keaton often thought about his life) and self-reflexive.

Self reflexive in the sense, that there was deliberate relation between reality and the dream sequence in *Sherlock Jr.* Keaton in movie shows that of an invincible character who could run top of a train in motion, jump impossible heights and even drive a bike sitting on the handle bar. This stunt, of driving a bike on a handlebar and policeman falling down from the bike, even gets today's stunt men nervous. ' *Sherlock Jr.* ' shows unparalleled combination physical action and comedy together. In his childhood days of Mr. Keaton in theatre, he was often thrown from heights by his dad, which was often misinterpreted as child abuse, which Keaton refuted and even said he liked it.

At the age of 70, perhaps his last movie where he did death defying stunt of going through multiple burning wreckages, director's concern for his health was refuted by " I have done it before". In his movies, this was often the factor where some of his actions were death defying and impossible to replicate in real life. In conclusion it should be stated that ' *Sherlock Jr.* ' is said to the high point in Mr. Keaton's career and indeed in history of cinematography. For, cinema in general and the cinema lover and fans alike, owe great deal to him.