

I thought I would talk to you today about the first huge superstar in cinema - CHARLIE CHAPLIN. The first ever film (only a few seconds long) was made in 1896 by the Lumiere Brothers, from France. It was called 'Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat' - and when people saw it, they were so terrified, thinking that a train was coming towards them, that they started running away from it. Here is that film, smoothed out and upgraded:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RYNThid23g>

Scary, eh? :)) So that was 1896. But soon people had learned to make longer films, and the American film industry settled in Hollywood, California, where the great weather and constant sunshine was ideal for filming.

Charlie Chaplin was born in London in 1889 - seven years before the first ever film had been made - and from a very young age he started performing in music halls. At the age of 19, in 1908, he got his big break - he was spotted by a talent scout and signed to the FRED KARNOW COMPANY, which took him to America to perform in music halls there. (Chaplin was also very lucky that he ended up going to America in 1908 - WORLD WAR I broke out six years later, and a 25 year old living in London would have been expected to 'sign up' and become a member of the British Army and fight in France, where Chaplin could well have been killed.) A lot of Fred Karno's performers ended up in the films, and in 1914, Charlie Chaplin was signed to work for the KEYSTONE STUDIOS. In only the second film that he made for Keystone Studios, Chaplin invented the character and costume that would make him a world superstar - THE TRAMP. This is what 'The Tramp' looked like in his first ever appearance on film. The key elements were all there: the bowler hat, the toothbrush moustache, the walking stick (later turned into a cane, which could bend more because a bendy cane makes for a funnier image) and the baggy pants. The Tramp was ingenious, athletic, and always attempting to preserve his dignity despite his run down condition and appearance. American audiences loved 'The Tramp' and followed his adventures through a large number of short films that made Charlie Chaplin a world star by 1918. This is a picture of Wall Street in 1918:

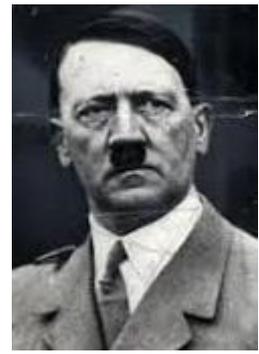


Look at those crowds! They had all turned out to see Charlie Chaplin (the man being held up) and another film star, Douglas Fairbanks (the man holding Chaplin up) - and Chaplin and

Fairbanks were trying to persuade the crowd to buy 'war bonds' which would help pay for the American army to fight in WORLD WAR I. After World War I was over, Chaplin had 'The Tramp' appear in a number of longer length films that are regarded today as classics - THE KID (1921), THE GOLD RUSH (1925), CITY LIGHTS (1931), and MODERN TIMES (1936). All these films were silent films - Hollywood hadn't yet worked out how to attach sound to film, and would only produce the first 'talkie' in THE JAZZ SINGER (1927). Chaplin was initially resistant - like a lot of silent film stars (who didn't sound too good when you heard them talk!) - to 'the talkies' and the idea of his films having people talk in them. And that's why 'City Lights' and 'Modern Times' were silent films. But for his next film, Chaplin made an exception.



As I said, by 1918 Chaplin was a world superstar. And a young Austrian corporal who was out of work after the end of World War I had heard of Charlie Chaplin as much anyone had. His name was ADOLF HITLER, and he decided that he too would have a toothbrush moustache just like Chaplin. He went from being the guy on the left, to being the guy on the right. And having borrowed his image from Charlie Chaplin, Adolf Hitler started working his way to power, becoming



CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY in 1933. By the late 1930s, Chaplin had started paying attention to the dangerous German dictator who had borrowed his image, and when WORLD WAR II broke out - thanks to Hitler's Germany invading Poland - Chaplin decided he would make a film making fun of Hitler and condemning the way he oppressed the JEWISH PEOPLE.

The film was called THE GREAT DICTATOR and was released in 1940. This film was made with people talking in it, and culminated in Chaplin making a direct appeal to Hitler to act humanely at the end of the film. Chaplin arranged for the film to be sent to Hitler, and apparently Hitler watched it twice. But he was unmoved by the appeal, and Hitler under German's rule was one of the most disgusting and barbaric regimes ever known in the history of the world, as - sadly - we will have to recount sometime, much later on. Chaplin's career was never the same after THE GREAT DICTATOR. Talking films weren't really for him, and he was suspected of having dodgy political views, which got him into a bit of trouble with the authorities. He stopped making films featuring 'The Tramp' and the films he made without 'The Tramp' in them were not very popular and there were not very many of them. Chaplin moved to Switzerland in 1953, and only went back to the United States, once in 1972 to receive an honorary Oscar. He received a 12 minute standing ovation - the longest in Oscar history. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II and made Sir Charles Chaplin in 1975, and died in 1977.

Chaplin was one of the biggest movie stars in history, but his movies aren't much watched now and people your age can't be expected to have heard of him. Part of the reason for this is that his films just aren't regarded as being that funny nowadays. Humour moves on, and what makes people scream with laughter in one decade, leaves them stone cold the next. Ultimately, Chaplin's films will live on not because they are particularly funny, but because of their heart - the depiction of people struggling to get by, and coming together in love to help each other through their troubles.

Here is a scene from 'The Kid', starring a boy (Jackie Coogan), who is almost as cute and as adorable as you:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNseEVlaCl4>

And this is the final speech from The Great Dictator:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7GY1Xg6X20>