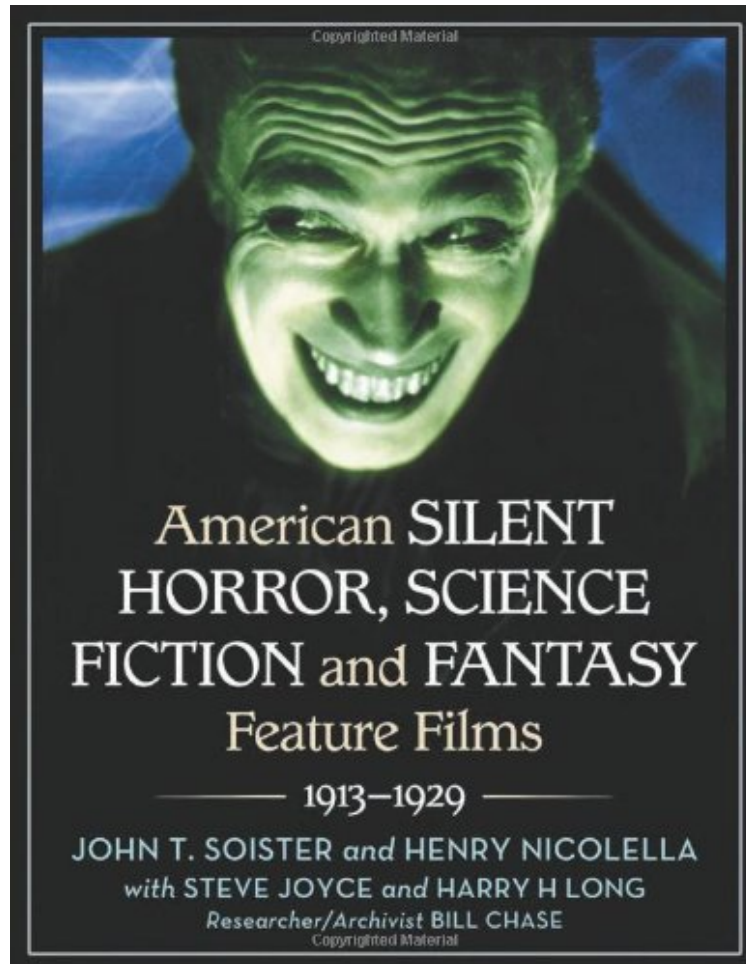


## American Silent Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Feature Films, 1913-1929

*John T. Soister, Henry Nicolella, Steve Joyce, William F. Chase, Harry Long*  
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**John T. Soister, Henry Nicolella, Steve Joyce, William F. Chase, Harry Long : American Silent Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Feature Films, 1913-1929** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Silent Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Feature Films, 1913-1929:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Dust....and Magic.....By Brad Baker 75% of all the movies made before 1950 have turned to dust. Films made before 1930 are "lost" at an even higher rate. Many of these old two-reelers were crude; many of the great D.W. Griffith's early Biograph movies are almost unwatchable. Yet a handful of these early efforts are remarkable, magical; sought out by collectors, historians, and movie lovers...of all ages...Professor John Soister and his gang have produced (2010) "American Silent Horror, Science Fiction, and Fantasy, 1913-1929", a two-volume masterpiece, looking at the good, the bad, and the forgotten. Hurrah. Hurrah. Some of these old silent horrors are exceptional (and, amazingly, can still be found today). Among the over 250 listings

is the 1919 classic, "The Miracle Man", which transformed Lon Chaney from a character actor into a star. "The Frog", a hopeless cripple, is cured by a humble preacher before the eyes of a young boy...who starts to cry. "The Miracle Man" is lost, but promoters wanted it remembered, and a 2 minute, 35 second remnant can be seen on YouTube(the famous scene). The remnant is also on "TCM Archives-Lon Chaney Collection", as a DVD extra. Promoters wanted to rifle old movies for shorts, and so we have 1 minute and a half of Helen Twelvetrees being mauled by a beast from "The Cat Creeps", a 1930 re-make of "Cat and the Canary". It is part of the 1930's short called "Boo!". The book reviews some films of Danish director Benjamin Christensen, famous for camerawork and art direction. His 1923 "Saxan/The Witches" was banned for years. At the end of the silent era, Christensen shot three horror/comedies for First National, titled "The Haunted House(1928)", "House of Horror(1929)", and one more, all featuring Thelma Todd and Chester Conklin. His third feature, "Seven Footprints to Satan(1929)", is the story of Jim, a wealthy young explorer, who with his girlfriend, Eve, plan a three-year trip to Africa. One night, Jim and Eve enter a fancy downtown cab when the cab's break-away rear door opens, somehow hurtling the pair down a corridor, and into a dark mansion, ruled by a black-hooded leader called Satan. Jim and Eve wander the haunted house, meeting a dwarf, a cripple, a sexy witch, and a gorilla. Wall panels slide away to reveal secret rooms, with men and women in some kind of medieval ritual. An Asian woman is glimpsed; her feet bound by a gorilla; her wrists tied behind her. Variety called it "hot. No picture for kids". All three of Christensen's films were lost until the 1960's, when a European TV station broadcast "Seven Footprints to Satan" with Italian subtitles. Dark and choppy, you can buy the VHS tape on the Internet. Another entry is genius German director Paul Leni's "The Last Warning(Universal)". Leni died suddenly, and young(age 44), or he surely would have directed Bela Lugosi, about a year later, in "Dracula". "The Last Warning" is the story of a playwright who re-opens a Broadway theater with the same play("Dangerous Currents") and cast from five years before. But someone(or something) menaces the cast, as trapdoors and scenery collapse, and as a notes warn: "Do not open!" A tinted, color psychedelic opening montage heralds miniature downtown sets, and a theater-front window that transforms into eyes, and a mocking face. Part-talkie, "The Last Warning(1929)" had dialogue, and the rare, surviving DVD film has a muted soundtrack, with crowd noises and sound effects. The history of American film is a long, rich canon; some titles are classics. They owe a nod to the brave, revolutionary artists who started it all. 100 years ago, in a dark, old theater, a man played the organ. Another gentleman ran a noisy projector, and someone watched lights and shadows on the wall....2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. ComprehensiveBy Dave GoudswardThe Silent Era of films is not noted as a hotbed of horror. Most of the silent horror films most often cited and recalled are foreign imports such as Nosferatu (1922), The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) or The Golem (1920). American films, cognizant of the fact they were competing with vaudeville and melodrama, tended to stay with the current mainstream topics. American Silent Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Feature Films, 1913-1929 looks at the few exceptions to that status quo.For every The Phantom of the Opera (1925) and London After Midnight (1927), there are dozens of obscure and forgotten films (some justifiably so) that dabble in supernatural threats, evil mesmerists and mad scientists.This is a two-volume encyclopedia of the genres interpreted by a past era. Many of the movies are lost, but the authors were able to build solid synopses and assessments of these lost films from contemporary sources, and the reader will be hard pressed to tell them from extant films without notes from the authors.I wish the authors had started earlier than 1913 and included shorter films. Such a suggestion, based on the authors' notes, would put all five of the contributors on suicide watch. I understand their reasoning but still...My only complaint per se about the book is the excessive amount of flippant remarks that I assume are supposed to be clever, but merely detract from the in-depth scholarly appeal of the text. That aside, this is a vital addition to the collection of any early film historian or enthusiast.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Very good overview of silent American fantastic filmBy Thomas64A detailed overview of silent-era horror, fantasy, and sci-fi movies which covers classic silent films as well as turkeys. The coverage also includes a wide variety of lost films. The authors also take some unexpected positions, arguing, for example, that the long-lost Lon Chaney/Tod Browning film London After Midnight probably wasn't very good. This book gives lots of interesting background information on American silent movies that I am familiar with, and has inspired me to take a look (or second look) at these films. The discussions of the movies include plot summaries, background information, a summary of contemporary critical opinion, and, where possible, an assessment of the merits of the films by the authors.People who are interested in film history, silent cinema, or fantastic film will find this book to be a valuable resource.

During the Silent Era, when most films dealt with dramatic or comedic takes on the "boy meets girl, boy loses girl" theme, other motion pictures dared to tackle such topics as rejuvenation, revivication, mesmerism, the supernatural and the grotesque. A Daughter of the Gods (1916), The Phantom of the Opera (1925), The Magician (1926) and Seven Footprints to Satan (1929) were among the unusual and startling films containing story elements that went far beyond the realm of "highly unlikely." Using surviving documentation and their combined expertise, the authors catalog and discuss these departures from the norm in this encyclopedic guide to American horror, science fiction and fantasy in the years from 1913 through 1929.

"What an achievement...an unbelievable definitive study of American silent fantastic films...an absolute pleasure to read. One of the finest studies of horror film I've ever read." --PsychobabbleAbout the AuthorJohn T. Soister is a teacher of modern and classical languages, and lives in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania. Henry Nicolella lives in Syracuse, New York. Software developer Steve Joyce lives in Marietta, Georgia. Georgia. Harry H Long lives in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. He reviews DVDs for the Lebanon Daily News and is editor of two magazines: Scarlet: The Film Magazine and Van Helsing's Journal. Bill Chase is a library assistant at the Cleveland Public Library and lives in Cleveland, Ohio.