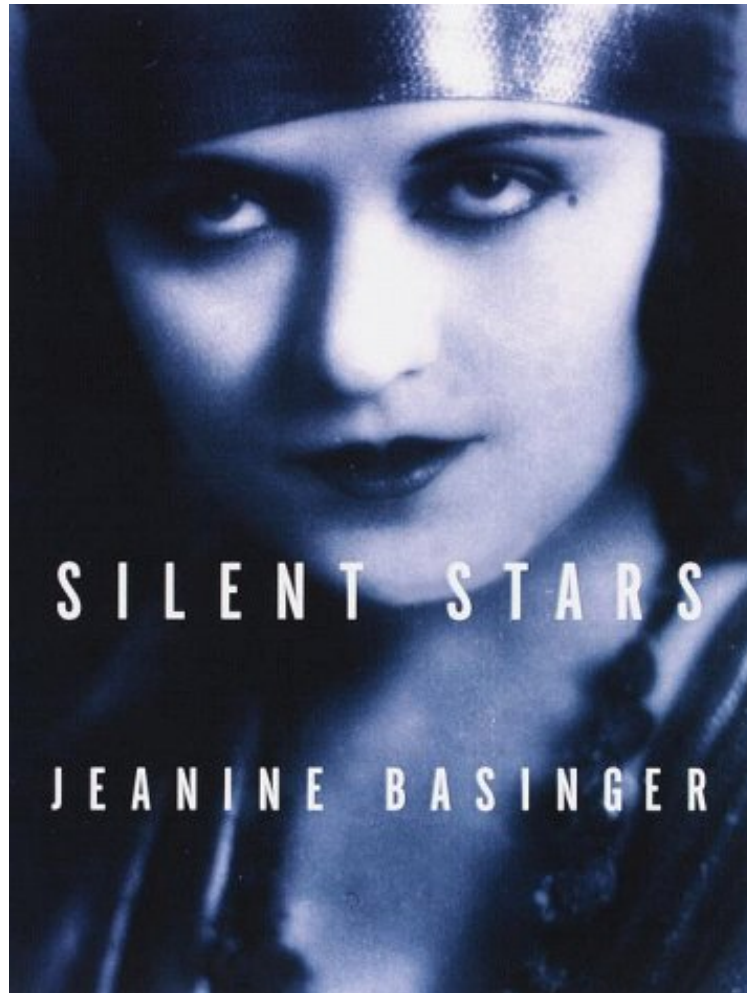


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Silent Stars

Jeanine Basinger

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Jeanine Basinger : Silent Stars before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Silent Stars:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Silent Stars is a Sound Discussion of Famed Faces of the Fabled Flapper Era By C. M. Mills Silent Stars is a 1999 book by renowned film historian Jeanine Basinger. She is Chair of the Film Studies Program at Wesleyan University and is often seen on Turner Classic Movies making comments about cinema. I have read and reviewed her fine book "The Star Machine" and found her writing so fetching I decided to order this older book on the Silent film era. The book is a delight in its countless black and white photographs of the stars and the detailed but succinct recounting of the careers of some of the era's most notable stars. Basinger recounts the career of Mary Pickford "America's Sweetheart" (who was actually Canadian born) and her athletic superstar husband of swashbuckling films Douglas Fairbanks Sr. This couple were more famous than Angelina and Brad! Doug

and Mary were beloved of the public until their divorce and the coming of sound ended their careers. Mabel Normand was an early slapstick comedian who made her fame and fortune with Max Sennett's Keystone Kops. Max was in love with the flighty Mabel though the two never wed. Mabel died young in 1930 as the era of pie in the face fun ended. Her chapter on cowboys Tom Mix and William S. Hart tells us that Mix was the precursor of drugstore singing cowpokes like Roy Rogers and Gene Autrey. Hart focused on realism in the Western oaters he starred in during his fabled career. The chapter on Rin-Tin-Tin and animals stars was good. I was surprised to learn that Rinny died in the arms of Jean Harlow! Basinger looks at the Talmadge sisters; worldly sirens such as Gloria Swanson and seductive Pola Negri (the lover of Charlie Chaplin and Rudolph Valentino) and the mysterious and sublime Greta Garbo. Flappers Colleen Moore and the "It" Girl Clara Bow are also profiled. Major chapters deal with Valentino, Marion Davies (longtime mistress of publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst); Lon Chaney "the man with a thousand faces" and John Gilbert who loved Garbo and who died young from drink and a ruined career in the talkie era were interesting. Basinger screened countless old silent films prior to writing this book. Her work is readily understandable to a general reader making it easier to comprehend than such technical works on silent films as those by Kevin Brownlow such as his "The Parade's Passed By." This is a fun book to take with you to the beach or on your next business trip. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. great gift for anyone By Zangikuli like all Basinger's books, this imparts lots of info and is a fun, often funny, read. it does not, however, go as deep as her other books and is just a selective introduction for the non-specialist to the world of silent films thru its actors: brief bio-critiques, of varying degrees of rigor interest, of Mary Pickford, Mabel Normand, Douglas Fairbanks, Norma Constance Talmadge, Tom Mix, Wm. S. Hart, Gloria Swanson, Pola Negri, Rudolph Valentino, Marion Davies, Lon Chaney, John Gilbert, Clara Bow, Colleen Moore and Rin-Tin-Tin. some chapters are very rivetting enlightening [Lon, John, Rudy, Wm.], others ho-hum [Mary, Marion], and one ["Doug" (sic)] so vapid that one must turn one's eyes away and blush. the photos, however, are altogether gorgeous. a lush book of high general interest many hours of perusing pleasure. 30 of 33 people found the following review helpful. Among The Great Books On Silent Film By John McElwee I love silent films, and Jeanine Basinger has given us a work that ranks at the very top for me---right alongside Kevin Brownlow's "The Parade's Gone By", Bill Everson's "American Silent Film", and Walter Kerr's "The Silent Clowns". Honestly, I carried Jeanine's book around with me for days until I'd read it from cover to cover---my only regret was she didn't give us another thousand pages on another hundred stars---that's how good it is. Unlike so many latter day academics and historians, this writer actually enjoys the films and personalities she writes about, and her enthusiasm is infectious---and no, this isn't just fan worship on her part---Basinger has clearly spent a lifetime pursuing the study of silent film, and her insights reveal a maturity and appreciation for this vanished era that could only come from someone who has truly devoted herself to the subject at hand. There aren't many film scholars operating at this level---believe me, I've endured the agonies of overpriced, University press offerings for too many years---"Silent Stars" is one in a thousand. If you care anything about this era and the people who enriched it, order this book today. It'll be the best money you've spent this year.

From one of America's most renowned film scholars: a revelatory, perceptive, and highly readable look at the greatest silent film stars -- not those few who are fully appreciated and understood, like Chaplin, Keaton, Gish, and Garbo, but those who have been misperceived, unfairly dismissed, or forgotten. Here is Valentino, "the Sheik," who was hardly the effeminate lounge lizard he's been branded as; Mary Pickford, who couldn't have been further from the adorable little creature with golden ringlets that was her film persona; Marion Davies, unfairly pilloried in *Citizen Kane*; the original "Phantom" and "Hunchback," Lon Chaney; the beautiful Talmadge sisters, Norma and Constance. Here are the great divas, Pola Negri and Gloria Swanson; the great flappers, Colleen Moore and Clara Bow; the great cowboys, William S. Hart and Tom Mix; and the great lover, John Gilbert. Here, too, is the quintessential slapstick comedienne, Mabel Normand, with her Keystone Kops; the quintessential all-American hero, Douglas Fairbanks; and, of course, the quintessential all-American dog, Rin-Tin-Tin. This is the first book to anatomize the major silent players, reconstruct their careers, and give us a sense of what those films, those stars, and that Hollywood were all about. An absolutely essential text for anyone seriously interested in movies, and, with more than three hundred photographs, as much a treat to look at as it is to read.

.com Through concise biographies, explorations of filmographies, and captivating still shots, Jeanine Basinger offers remarkable insight into both the on- and offscreen lives of the cinema's first stars. Basinger shows an incredible knack for getting past the average movie fan's barriers to appreciating silent film actors: the larger-than-life acting style, frequently goofy plots, and general difficulty in finding films of all but a few luminaries like Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Deft plot synopses, careful explanations of the skills needed for silent acting, and a genuine affection for the movies she's describing allow Basinger to give the reader a real sense of why these early actors were so beloved--and why they are so deserving of tribute. Mary Pickford, long unfairly maligned for playing saccharine little girls, is revealed to be a shrewd and highly professional performer, involved in every aspect of film production, careful to expand beyond her audience's expectations of her, and possessing deft comic flair. The lives and careers of two silent cowboys, the soulfully stoic William S. Hart and the flamboyant Tom Mix, are also compared and contrasted--

oddly enough, to the detriment of neither. The book also covers the great sex symbols like Pola Negri and Rudolph Valentino and takes a welcome dive into the comedies of Mack Sennett. Equally engaging as browsing material or a cover-to-cover read, *Silent Stars* gives voice to both the sung and unsung pioneers of film. --Ali Davis

From Publishers Weekly: Rudolph Valentino, Gloria Swanson, Tom Mix and dozens of others are the "forgotten, misunderstood, and underappreciated" stars whom film historian Basinger (A Woman's View, etc.) profiles in her excellent tribute to the silent film era. No tell-all, this book recreates the excitement the actors provoked while illustrating the nature of their appeal. Colleen Moore's onscreen transformation from maiden to flapper "is the exact story of what happened to the American girl" in the 1920s; tight-lipped William S. Hart provided the "first and truest face in the Old American West on film." Basinger also discerns the strengths lost in historical caricature: Mary Pickford's roles revealed a range far beyond that of "America's Sweetheart"; Marion Davies's successful career belies her legacy as inspiration for the off-key singer Susan Alexander in *Citizen Kane*. Not surprisingly, a recurrent theme is the ephemerality of fame. Not only do most silent stars' careers (famously, John Gilbert's) end with the talkies, but the near-obscure of these actors today suggests that, for anyone, it's a mere four generations from footlight to footnote. While Basinger's blend of erudition and reportage often translates into an impersonal style, it is redeemed by her love of the subject and a Margaret Dumont-like lack of irony that allows her to assert, "The astonishing thing about watching Rin-Tin-Tin is that you begin to agree that this dog could act." Learned and wholehearted, the book is classic Basinger fare: effortless history that sets no fires but quickly establishes its necessity. 285 photos. Main selection of Eagle Book Club's Movie and Entertainment Book Club. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal: *Silent Stars* is a fond yet perceptive look at some overlooked, misunderstood, or underappreciated stars of the silent era. With wit, enthusiasm, and a refreshing lack of condescension, Basinger (film studies, Wesleyan Univ.) surveys the lives and careers of stars like "America's sweetheart" Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Lon Chaney, and even animal star Rin-Tin-Tin (whose exploits helped save the fortunes of one studio). She explores Valentino's sexual ambiguity, shows that John Gilbert's high voice did not doom his film career in talkies, and explains that Marion Davies's status as the mistress of William Randolph Hearst overshadowed her considerable gifts as a comedienne. In her excellent introduction, Basinger also notes that the silence allowed audiences to bond with their favorite stars and that the easily translated title cards made international fame possible--though, incredibly, some studios were reluctant to reveal actors' names, which they feared would lead to exorbitant star salaries. This book deserves to take its place next to Kevin Brownlow's classic *The Parade's Gone By* (LJ 2/15/69). Drew's (*Speaking Silents*) oral history-based book focuses exclusively on lesser-known leading ladies of the late 1920s and 1930s. After giving a bit of background, he lets each actress--including Constance Cummings, King Kong star Fay Wray, and Claire Trevor (best known for her Oscar-winning turn in John Huston's *Key Largo*)--tell her own story. They discuss the different paths that brought them to Hollywood and the divergent turns their lives took after the days of stardom. The inclusion of many personal details here may put some readers off, but the appended filmography is valuable. *Silent Stars* is highly recommended for public libraries; *At the Center of the Frame* is for large academic and special libraries. --Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., PA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.