

King Vidor's 'The Crowd': A Haunting Tale of Modernization and Alienation



King Vidor's THE CROWD: The Making of a Silent Classic (Past Times Film Close-Up Series Book 8)

by Kevin Brownlow

★★★★☆ 4.9 out of 5

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King Vidor's 1928 silent film *The Crowd* is a powerful and moving indictment of the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and urban life. The film tells the story of John Sims (William Haines), a young man who moves to the big city in search of a better life. John is full of hope and ambition, but he soon finds himself overwhelmed by the sheer size and impersonality of the city.

John gets a job as a clerk in a large office building, but he quickly becomes disillusioned with the mind-numbing routine of his work. He meets and falls in love with Mary (Eleanor Boardman), a beautiful young woman who works in a nearby store. John and Mary marry and have children, but their

happiness is short-lived. John is laid off from his job and the family is forced to move into a run-down apartment.

As John's financial situation worsens, he becomes increasingly desperate. He takes on a series of odd jobs, but nothing seems to work out. Mary tries to support the family by working as a waitress, but she is too proud to accept charity from her family. John and Mary's relationship begins to deteriorate under the strain of their financial problems.

In a desperate attempt to earn money, John agrees to participate in a dangerous stunt at a local amusement park. The stunt goes wrong and John is killed. Mary is left alone to raise their children. She is heartbroken and disillusioned, but she is determined to make a better life for herself and her children.

The Crowd is a powerful and moving film that captures the alienation and despair of modern life. Vidor's use of innovative camera techniques, such as long takes and crowd shots, creates a sense of realism and immediacy that is still striking today. The film's message is still relevant today, as we continue to grapple with the challenges of modernization and urban life.

The Dehumanizing Effects of Industrialization

One of the central themes of *The Crowd* is the dehumanizing effects of industrialization. John Sims is just one of many thousands of workers who are cogs in the vast machine of the modern city. He is treated as a number, not a person, and he is constantly at the mercy of forces beyond his control.

John's job in the office building is a perfect example of the dehumanizing effects of industrialization. He is one of dozens of clerks who sit in long rows, performing repetitive tasks all day long. There is no room for creativity or individuality in his work. John is simply a cog in the machine, and he is easily replaceable.

The city itself is also a dehumanizing force in *The Crowd*. The vast crowds of people, the noise and pollution, and the constant hustle and bustle can be overwhelming. John feels lost and alone in the big city. He is surrounded by people, but he has no real connections with anyone.

The Alienation of Modern Life

Another central theme of *The Crowd* is the alienation of modern life. John Sims is an isolated and alienated individual who feels lost and alone in the big city. He has no real sense of community or belonging. He is surrounded by people, but he feels like an outsider.

John's alienation is due in part to his job in the office building. He spends his days surrounded by people, but he has no real connections with any of them. His co-workers are simply acquaintances, and he has no real friends or confidants.

John's alienation is also due to the anonymity of the big city. In a small town, everyone knows everyone else and there is a sense of community. But in the big city, people are just numbers. John is just one of millions of people, and he feels like he doesn't matter.

The Power of Hope

Despite the despair and alienation that pervades *The Crowd*, there is also a glimmer of hope. John Sims is a flawed character, but he is also a resilient one. He never gives up hope, even when things are at their worst.

John's hope is inspired by his love for Mary. Mary is a strong and determined woman who is always there for John, even when he is at his lowest point. Mary's love gives John the strength to keep going, even when things are tough.

The ending of *The Crowd* is bittersweet. John is killed in a tragic accident, but Mary is left to raise their children. Mary is heartbroken, but she is also determined to make a better life for herself and her children. The ending of *The Crowd* is a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always hope.

King Vidor's *The Crowd* is a powerful and moving film that captures the alienation and despair of modern life. The film is a timeless classic that is still relevant today, as we continue to grapple with the challenges of modernization and urban life.



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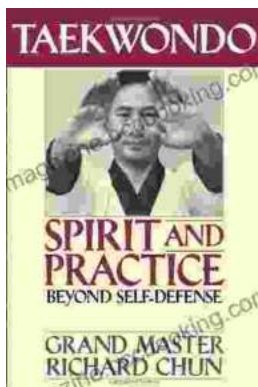
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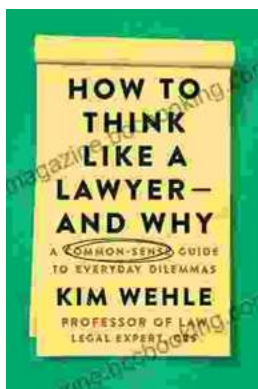
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