

A Glimpse into the Silent Past

By CV Weekly on August 3, 2023 · 0 Comments



Projectionist Joe Rinaudo, left, directs his crew member on setting up the equipment.

Photo by Mary O'KEEFE

By Lori BODNAR

Over a hundred people of all ages attended the free 10th Annual Silent Movies in the Park event at Two Strike Park on Saturday, July 29. It was hosted by the Historical Society of the Crescenta Valley and Friends of Rockhaven. Attendees could snack on popcorn while watching the silent movies, projected using a hand-cranked projector and accompanied by keyboard music. The Pathé comedy films shown at the event included the 1918 movie "Why Pick on Me?" "The Fourth Alarm" from 1926, "Super-Hooper-Dyne Lizzies" from 1925, and Charley Chase films. Pathé is the second-oldest operating film company in the world, founded by the Pathé brothers in France in 1896, over 125 years ago.



Photo by Lori BODNAR

The film "The Fourth Alarm" was produced by Hal Roach who wanted to show the American people playing together. "The Fourth Alarm" was one of the few films of its time that included both White and Black actors.

The film “Super-Hooper-Dyne Lizzies” was based on the invention of the first driverless car by Houdina Radio Control. The car was radio controlled and traveled through traffic in New York City in 1925.

In the era of silent movies, films entertained people in small towns whether it was a side-of-the-barn showing or films screened in a church. The projector used power and the voltage differed depending in what place the films were shown, so projectors were hand-cranked rather than powered through a motor. The person hand-cranking the projector could speed up the film or slow it down, creating an immersive experience for the attendees.

Joe Rinaudo brought his 100-year old hand-cranked projector to play silent films for the community.



Photo by Mary O'KEEFE



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“I work with the Academy [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences], [and] Library of Congress, so I have first generation printing negatives which is not normally what you see on television,” said Rinaudo. “The projector is a 1909 Model 6 and really great on film. I am tied into collectors, which is how I came across the projector. Photo Cam printed all this film; they are absolutely wonderful people who know what they are doing.”

“My favorite silent movies include actors Buster Keaton and Larry Sermon. Sermon did stunt comedy with cars flying in the air. When I was a kid, about 10 years old, my dad would show silent movies, especially the Buster Keaton films.”

Many people within the community enjoyed watching the silent films. “My husband went to the Silent Movies event last year,” said attendee Wendy Anderson. “I’m looking forward to watching the silent movie with him and hearing the piano.”

“Being in the community, the Silent Movies event is like our Hollywood Bowl and the weather is beautiful tonight,” said local resident Danette Erickson. “We come almost every year to the event, and it is a lovely evening. It is nice to support Rockhaven and meet all my neighbors and friends. I’m happy to be here.”

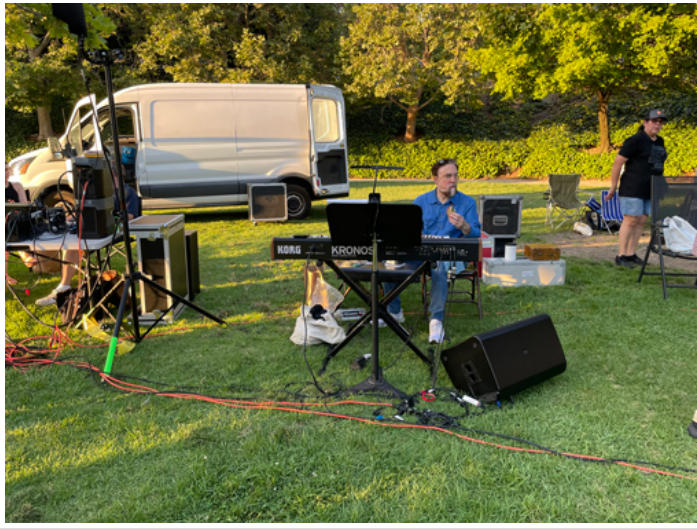


Photo by Mary O'KEEFE

“I enjoy the movies, the crowd, the kids, and the popcorn. I’m here for the food,” said Liz Nelson, another attendee at the event. “I have watched Sunday Silent films on television. The weather is nice today, so it was a good day for the event. I’ve been with the CV Historical Society since they started in 2008. I appreciate how stories are made and crafted, going back to early black and white films. One of my favorite silent films is ‘Moving Day.’ Silent animation steps off paper and preceded Mickey Mouse, which used to be Mortimer Mouse. My favorite silent actor is Charlie Chaplin.”



Added Mike Powers, “I attended the event because I’m interested in the history of film, and I have been with the CV Historical Society since 2017. American films started in New York. Edison monopolized the industry and moved to Hollywood, California since the weather here is good.”

The silent movies brought nostalgia to those who viewed them when they were kids while allowing others the chance to learn more about the past and enjoy a fun night out with friends watching silent flicks in the park.



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