

GO FOR A STAR

Throughout the 1940's, 50's, and the start of the 60's, when I wanted to enjoy a romantic adventure, puzzle over a "Who Dun it", or just want a laugh, I had to "go to the pictures". I was delighted by Hollywood stars that became my idols for years. Today those same films can be watched on TV in the afternoon, or late at night, but the stars can be seen on far smaller screens - stamps. So why not collect the idols of our younger days, and remember when we paid 1s 3d for complete enjoyment, or maybe even 1s 9d for the back row. .



HOLLYWOOD STARS ON THE SMALL SCREEN



Among the pioneers for both postage stamps and filmmaking, the United States waited a long time to get the two together. In 1968, some 75 years after the country's first commemoratives, they issued a stamp showing Walt Disney the creator/producer of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and many other cartoon characters to delight children around the world. Disney, who put Mickey Mouse on screen in 1929, had moved on to the likes of "Pinocchio", "Dumbo" and "Mary Poppins" before his death in 1966. The mark

he made for the USA world-wide was underlined by his stamp two years later. But it was another 16 years before the first Hollywood actor appeared on a US stamp - Douglas Fairbanks. He was shown, as he had been the all action swashbuckler in many films since "The Mark of Zorro" in 1920. His son Douglas Jr. Followed him with similar movies, but the 1984 stamp didn't need to read Snr. Because US commems only showed dead people. The rule was broken in 1990 when, perhaps at last realising that its stars were seen all over the world, it issued a "Classic Films" set. Judy Garland with a scene from "The Wizard of Oz", and Clark Gable with our own Vivienne Leigh in "Gone with the Wind" were joined



by a pair of tough guys, Gary Cooper, and John Wayne. In 1991 funny men came along, including English born Stan Laurel with his ever present partner Oliver Hardy, plus Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, Jack Benny, Fanny Brice and Edgar Bergen. Rock Singer Elvis Presley was featured in a 93 set, including a scene from "Love me Tender" and several other music-movie guys and gals also appeared. In 1994 a set looked back to those earliest Hollywood, silent stars Rudolph Valentino, Buster Keaton, Clara Bow, those comic Keystone Cops, and that other well known Brit, Charlie Chaplin. Two years later America launched a regular issue,



"The Legends of Hollywood", Marilyn Monroe, nor surprisingly, was the first and since then James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, British Director Alfred Hitchcock, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, and Lucille Ball have followed. If you want a hint of horror with your stamps then Movie Monsters with the USA's 1997 set featuring the likes of Bela Lugosi as "Dracula", Boris Karloff in "Frankenstein" and Lon Cheney of "Phantom of the Opera". A general set called "the 20th Century" included Charlie Chaplin plus a scene from The Great Train Robbery alongside the Model T Ford car and a box of Crayola crayons. Should you decide to screen a theme, or perhaps persuade a friend to try stamp collecting by remembering their memories of cinema's, US issues have also featured behind the camera men like producer D.W.Griffiths, actors and actresses, or singers who have only made brief appearances on screen but who can still be found on stamps. And of course Hollywood "greats" have appeared in stamps from around the world. If you put these into a collection then tell other thematic friends that at least these stars are known by the folk in obscure issuing lands. You can't say that about many other themes. Watch out for Stars on UK stamps and stars from other countries.



The Blond we all Preferred

The former Norma Jean Baker who became Marilyn Monroe in Hollywood and soon had men drooling over her, at first via her bodily attractions rather than her acting, when she appeared in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes". She was the top crowd puller through a series of 1950's pictures before she ended an unhappy personal life with suicide in 1962 aged just 36. The much married star improved her talent to as she moved on to pack in the audiences for films like "The Seven Year Itch", "Some like it Hot", and "The Misfits". She was the obvious starter for the USA's Legends of Hollywood series and

Germany naturally included her in their Great Screen Stars series. Look too at film issues from Guinea, Antigua, Gambia, Congo, and several more. But Marilyn hasn't been the American actress with the most appearances on stamps.

John "The Duke" Wayne - was, I believe, a contender for the "Legends" stamp of 1989, 10 years after his death. This picture is perhaps the planned issue. The epitome of Western "good guys" in around 20 films up to "true Grit" in 1969 when he won an Academy Award. The Duke will surely get his "Legend" one day.



World Stars

Following on from our look at some of the Hollywood stars you can further expand your thematic collection with many other world screen stars. The Republic of Ireland featured scenes from four of its movies in 1996, having featured the Grace Kelly family link the previous year on a single stamp.

France was also slow to screen its stars only showing Romy Schneider, Simone Signoret, and several actors in 1998. Showing even less favour for its stars is Germany who waited until 2002 to feature Hildegard Knef, and Marlene Dietrich some ten years after her death at age 90.

If you wish to screen the film greats, and they are not all American, you will need to look at the catalogue listing of the lesser countries. A recent search produced one of the all time greats Sophia Loren in a set from Bulgaria along with several other well known stars. If you want to complete some pages of British stars who became greats in America, you can find Charlie Chaplin, Bob Hope, and Stan Laurel featured on many World Issues.

And Remember - Its not just about collecting stamps, what about postmarks of some of the places where there were studio's making movies. Don't forget to find some related covers, and possibly booklets, there must be lots of related philatelic material to illustrate some of the stories that could be told.

ENJOY YOUR SEARCH FOR THE STARS