

10 of the Most Interesting Sounding Lost Films of All Time

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Some of these are so tantalizing it's downright devastating to think we'll never see them.



Unfortunately, countless films have been lost over the decades, with large chunks of film history going missing and never being recovered. It's a particularly devastating concept for fans of older movies and film historians, as often, all that remains to show that these films existed are still images, newspaper reviews, or promotional material.

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Whether it was because of film being seen as a disposable artform, infamously flammable [film reels being destroyed in fires](#), or copies simply being misplaced due to human error, too many films to count have gone missing, particularly those from the silent era. The following 10 lost movies are among the most interesting sounding, and yet unless there's some miracle find, will likely remain lost (and unseen by modern viewers) forever.

'The Oregon Trail' (1936)



Love him or hate him, it's hard to deny that **John Wayne** was the equivalent of a superstar in his day, and became a pop culture icon for his various western roles. He blew up in the late 1930s, and continued acting into the late 1970s. He doesn't have the same adoration today ([thanks to some controversies](#)), but audiences of his day devoured his many films.

All that's a preamble to say that it's strange that one of his first westerns, [The Oregon Trail](#), is considered a lost film. Perhaps it's because he didn't become a titan at the box office until 1939's **Stagecoach**, even if it came three years after another John Wayne-led western. Regrettably, the all that remains from *The Oregon Trail* is a [series of photographs taken](#) during the making of the film.

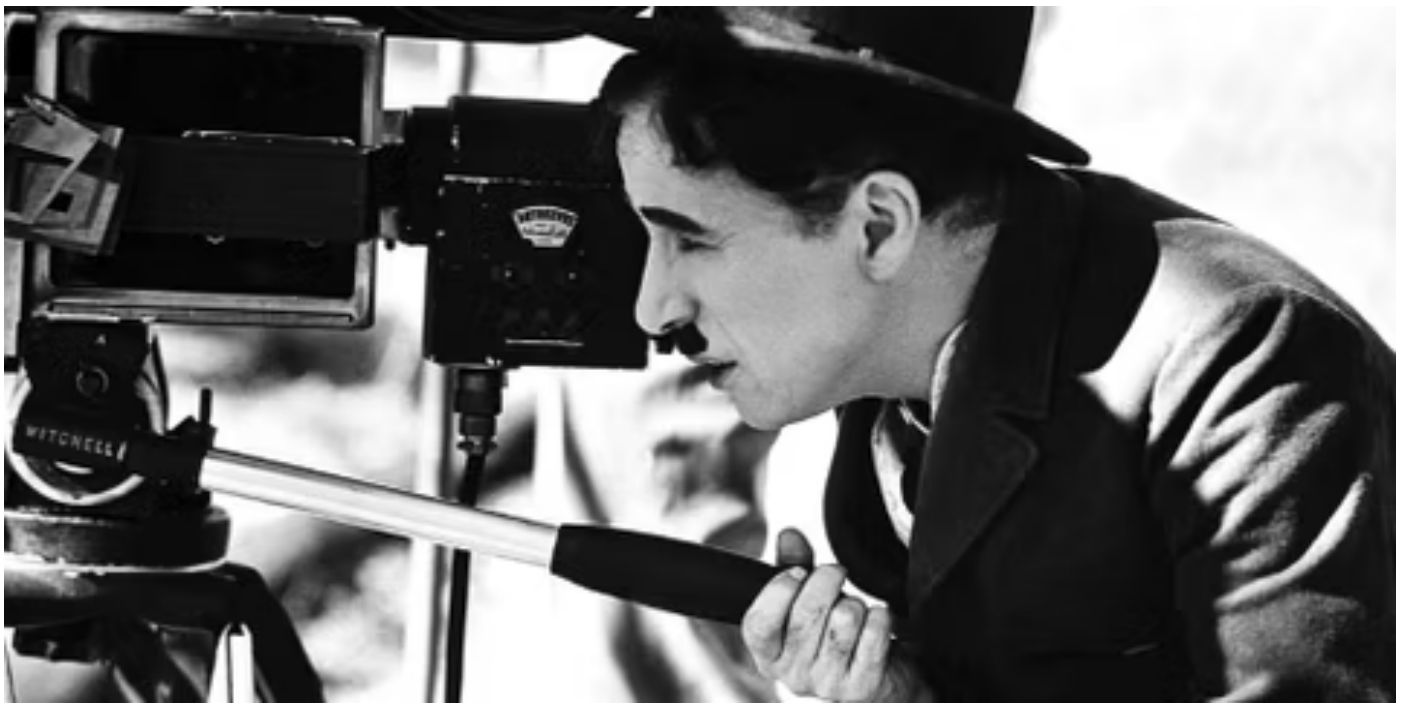
'Il mostro di Frankenstein' (1921)



Translating to *The Monster of Frankenstein* in English, this 101-year-old Italian horror marks one of the earliest attempts at adapting the story of [Frankenstein](#) to the screen. Two other *Frankenstein* films existed before this - one a short film, and the other also lost - all notably predating the 1930s series made by Universal that really helped elevate Frankenstein's Monster to a true pop-culture icon.

The Monster of Frankenstein stands out as one of the earliest known examples of a horror movie made in Italy, a country that would go on to make some of the most iconic horror movies of all time, thanks to the Giallo movement. For its historical importance in these regards, it's a true shame that no footage survives to this day.

'Her Friend the Bandit' (1914)



Charlie Chaplin is perhaps the most well-known American filmmaker of the silent era. He wrote, directed, and starred in numerous short and feature films that endure to this day because of their timeless comedy, simple and well-told storylines, and bittersweet emotions.

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As such, the vast majority of his work has been preserved, and is still viewable for modern viewers born countless decades after the silent film era ended. Yet not quite all of his works remain, and perhaps his 1914 short film, ***Her Friend the Bandit***, stands out because it's one of his only works that time has claimed as a casualty. It's notable for having Chaplin play someone other than his Tramp character, and for having an amusing-sounding plot where he apparently ruins a fancy, upper-class party.

'Humor Risk' (1921)



Like Charlie Chaplin, the **Marx Brothers** are also held up as examples of superstar comedians from the early decades of the 20th century. The [filmmaking team of brothers](#) are best known for their over-the-top, rapid-fire comedies of the 1930s, with their film career kicking off in 1929 with a film called ***The Cocoanuts***.

Well, that's when their run of successful films began, at least. Interestingly, their first film was made almost a decade before, ***Humor Risk***, which was both a short film and a silent film. People have only been able to speculate about what happened to it, given it disappeared over a century ago, with it being possibly destroyed because the brothers were so disappointed with the final product.

'The Power of Love' (1922)



From its plot outline (which is reasonably detailed for a completely lost film), ***The Power of Love*** doesn't sound too remarkable. It was a silent drama that combined romance, crime, and tragedy in a story about deception, arranged marriage, and forbidden love.

However, the fact that it was the first 3D feature film ever made is what gives it its historical significance, and the main reason why it's a shame it wasn't preserved. Perhaps the most novel idea that the 3D presentation allowed was the fact it reportedly gave audiences the choice [between a happy or sad ending](#) to the film, as the red lens on the 3D glasses let one see an optimistic conclusion, while the green lens showed a tragic one.

'The Mountain Eagle' (1926)



[Alfred Hitchcock](#) directed many movies in England during the 1920s and 1930s before moving to America to make the majority of his remaining films. Despite their age, most of his earliest works have been preserved and are viewable, even though some surviving prints are very damaged, with poor video and audio quality.

Still, Hitchcock fans and film historians would all prefer poor-quality prints to no prints at all, which is the case for *The Mountain Eagle* - his only feature film that's lost. [Apparently, it wasn't a great film](#), and Hitchcock didn't look back on it favorably either, but for being just the second feature film directed by the legendary filmmaker, it's still a loss to the film world that *The Mountain Eagle* can't be seen.

'The First Men in the Moon' (1919)



While ***The First Men in the Moon*** isn't the very first example of the science-fiction genre being explored in film, it's among the earliest. It was adapted from the **H.G. Wells** story of the same name, and is about two people taking a trip to the moon, and their encounter with the Selenites, the moon's population.

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Some slack should be cut for the premise. Science-fiction is a speculative genre, after all, and Wells' speculated, at the time, that maybe some beings lived on the moon. Either way, the few scraps of evidence that show this movie once existed look intriguing - particularly the look of the alien creatures on the moon - and if it were to be rediscovered someday, that's naturally something that would make sci-fi buffs pretty happy.

'**The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple**' (1928-1931)



Among the countless lost films that sound truly fascinating, ***The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple*** still manages to stand out. For one thing, it was one of the longest films of all time, released in 16 parts over three years, totaling 27 hours. Film serials were popular in the 1910s and 1920s, but this takes the idea to a whole other level.

In addition, it's also an important film in the history of Chinese cinema, as it's thought to be one of the first martial arts/wuxia films ever made. The sheer length makes it all the more surprising that not one of its 16 parts remains, though it was apparently a victim of wuxia films being [banned in China in the early 1930s](#), presumably leading to all copies of the film being destroyed.

'The Werewolf' (1913)



The werewolf sub-genre has gone on to become one of the most [popular and reliable within the broader horror genre](#). The idea of a person transforming into a human/wolf hybrid has been terrifying for literal centuries, which makes it all the more regrettable that the first film to put the creature on screen, 1913's ***The Werewolf***, is a lost film.

Very little is known about it, thanks to it being a victim of a [Universal Studios fire in 1924](#), and even the limited stills of the production are of poor quality. Beyond being groundbreaking by being the first werewolf movie, it's also notable for having a female character be the one who transforms into a wolf, when you consider that even into the 1930s, most horror movie creatures were male (even ***The Bride of Frankenstein*** gets very little screen time in her own movie).

'London After Midnight' (1927)



Surely one of the most famous lost films of all time, ***London After Midnight*** is one that film buffs have wanted to resurface for decades now. It featured the legendary **Lon Chaney** playing two roles, and had a story about a wealthy man dying in mysterious circumstances before shady figures take over his estate.

There are many stills from the film that survive, and a great deal more information about its production and critical reception than most other lost films. This makes its status as a lost film all the more perplexing and frustrating, and even the scraps of what remains of *London After Midnight* [have proven influential](#).

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About The Author

Jeremy is an omnivore when it comes to movies. He'll gladly watch and write about almost anything, from old Godzilla films to gangster flicks to samurai movies to classic musicals to the French New Wave to the MCU. When he's

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