

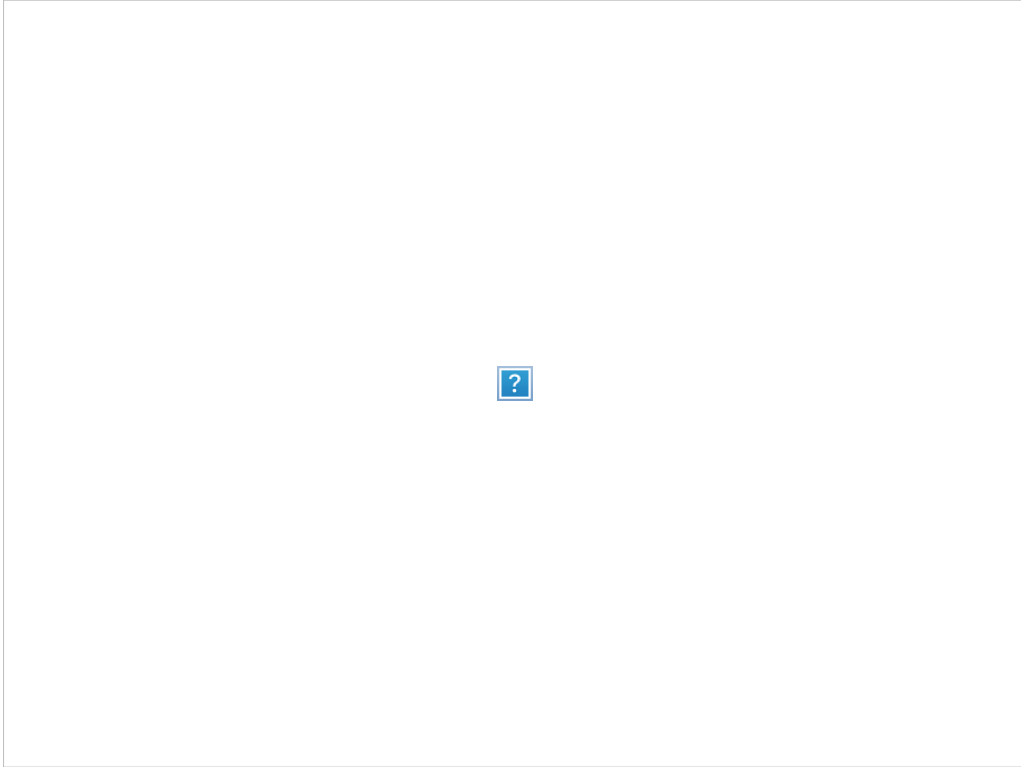
Tom Mix Silent Film Double Feature Blu-Ray Review - Long Lost Talent Is Given A Thrilling Second Life

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Tom Mix was one of silent film's biggest stars, and was never absent from movie screens during the silent film era, starring in 83 features from 1919 through 1929. Mix's westerns were a much-anticipated staple of movie-going for audiences and theater owners, and yet his films are relatively unknown, even to fans of classic cinema. A majority of his 1920s output is missing, or survives incomplete. Undercrank Productions has undertaken this restoration project to help bring Tom Mix and his films back to the prominence and familiarity he deserves. Tom Mix: Sky High and The Big Diamond Robbery – Restored presents one of Mix's better-known surviving films and one that has not been seen since it was in movie theaters at the end of the silent era. Both films are presented in new 2K digital restorations, and new musical scores have been created for them by Ben Model.

In SKY HIGH (1922), Tom Mix battles a ring of corrupt jewel smugglers who have also kidnapped the daughter of the businessman bankrolling their operation. Tom rescues the daughter and captures the thieves, with all of this action filmed on location at the Grand Canyon, adding a stunning backdrop to this action-packed adventure. SKY HIGH was added to the National Film Registry in 1998, and this new edition reinstates the film's original tinting and toning. In THE BIG DIAMOND ROBBERY (1929), a wealthy tycoon hires cowboy Tom to break his roaring-20s daughter of her thrill-seeking habits. When her prized diamond necklace is stolen by gangsters, Tom and the young woman go in pursuit of it out west. This was Tom Mix's last silent film, and has not been seen since its original release in 1929.

For thoughts on *Tom Mix Double Feature (Sky High/The Big Diamond Robbery)*, please check out our discussion on The Video Attic:



Video Quality

Sky High and *The Big Diamond Robbery* make their Blu-Ray debut thanks to Undercrank Productions with another astounding restoration effort. *Sky High* is presented courtesy of a new 2K digital scan of a 35mm safety duplicate at the Library of Congress which was made in the 1970s from an unstable nitrate print. The original tinting scheme has been reinstated. *The Big Diamond Robbery* comes from a 2K digital scan of a combination of a 35mm nitrate print with French intertitles from Lobster Films and a 35mm safety duplicate negative of the American release from the Library of Congress, utilizing the best source for the given scenario. Both films share a disc, but with a combined runtime of less than two hours, there is no concern about compression artifacts or anything of that nature. These two restorations eliminate so many issues for a truly gorgeous viewing experience which only comes up slightly short of perfection due to the elements.

Each film maintains its natural grain well with no extreme fluctuations in

quality. You might be surprised by how much detail is present with nice textures on the rustic clothing and within the setting thanks to the enhanced resolution. The sequences filmed at the Grand Canyon in *Sky High* deliver so much dimension to the cliffs. The contrast is admirably defined with not much in the way of flicker or egregious damage to the print. There are some stray vertical lines that make a quick appearance, but you can count on Undercrank Productions to make things look pretty marvelous. Black levels present with some fine depth with no major occurrence of black crush or compression artifacts. Undercrank Productions is a true godsend for fans of silent-era cinema.

Audio Quality

This Blu-Ray set presents these films with a Dolby Digital 2.0 lossy audio track that revitalizes these efforts. These two are graced with original scores composed by Ben Model which are exciting and suit the material well. The music is the only element to contend with in this track, and it comes through with perfect fidelity and no signs of damage or age related anomalies. Silent film fans will appreciate the sound quality of the tracks, as these compositions feel like they are what was intended for these narratives. A lossless audio track may have been able to enhance things a bit further, but you can't find much fault otherwise.

Special Features

There are no special features provided on this disc.

Final Thoughts

Sky High and *The Big Diamond Robbery* are two movies that make it especially disappointing that so many films from Tom Mix are lost to time. He truly had a great screen presence, and he showed a nice range with these two works. The location and stunt work in *Sky High* especially boggles your

mind with some of the dangerous stunts that were pulled off. Undercrank Productions has released a Blu-Ray with a top tier A/V presentation but no supplemental features this time around. This is a true gem of a release that fans of silent film should cherish and applaud. **Recommended**

Tom Mix Double Feature (Sky High/The Big Diamond Robbery) is currently available to purchase on Blu-Ray and DVD.

Note: Images presented in this review are not reflective of the image quality of the Blu-Ray.

Disclaimer: Undercrank Productions has supplied a copy of this disc free of charge for review purposes. All opinions in this review are the honest reactions of the author.