

PRODUCTION CODE BASICS FOR MOVIE STILL COLLECTORS

By
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Production Code Basics for Movie Still Collectors

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2007, on our trip to Cinevent, we asked dealers at the convention what areas needed research and documentation. The overwhelming response was “production codes,” as nothing was available. This book, as a companion guide to our *Movie Still Identification Book*, is our response to those dealers’ request.

Special thanks have to go to four special people for their help with this book. Those are Barry Gilliam, Rudy Franchi, Richard Finegan and Gene Arnold. Without them, this book would not be possible.

We wanted to limit the advertisements in this book to just our regular sponsors to honor them. So when you see an advertisement, please remember that these wonderful sponsors care enough about the research, documentation and preservation of film accessories to sponsor us.

The support of the LAMP sponsors and dealers found throughout this book allows us the capability to present information, such as this book and our *Movie Still Identification Book*, to help YOU. Please support them whenever possible. We have a list of these wonderful sponsors on the last page of this book.

FROM THE AUTHORS

As the only film accessory researchers in the world, we are on a quest to preserve, document, and compile as much information as possible to keep film accessories (movie posters, stills, pressbooks, and props) from experiencing the same fate as early films have in the United States.

The declaration that 80-90% of all silent films made in the U.S., plus 50% of all U.S. films produced before 1951 (when they created safety film), **are already lost forever** makes the preservation of the film accessories as the remaining historical documents of this social media even more imperative.

But what good is it to preserve these historical movie stills when you can't identify them.

We have spent thousands of hours in the research and compilation of over 50,000 production codes to help with that identification.

Now we hope this companion book on *Production Code Basics For Movie Still Collectors* will help show how to utilize those codes to assist in the identification.

INTRODUCTION TO FILM PRODUCTION STILLS

Although the motion picture camera is credited with the creation of the worldwide cinema, still photography was basically the backbone of the industry. The use of still photography was, and still is, an integral part of the process of producing, distributing and marketing a film.

Starting in 1912 and expanding to all major studios during the teens, production, distribution and marketing stills were controlled by an accounting process called "Production Codes."

To understand the importance of production codes, we must first understand movie stills. And to understand movie stills we need to understand why they were made and how they were used.

Movie stills fall into many categories including: promotional, publicity, paparazzi, production, portrait, photographer, celebrity, autographed, and even amateur, etc.

In this book, we are addressing the production, portrait, shorts and TV stills that have identifiable markings that were placed by the distribution and production companies.

The first step in this journey is to understand how and why production codes came about. We will then look at the process that was used and how and why production codes were applied by various studios and distributors.

Please note that the following information is based on the “general” process followed by major studios for decades before the digital revolution. Each studio, however, would vary these procedures to meet their own specific needs. We will cover some of these variations later in the book.