

## DVD Review: Charlie Chaplin’s ‘Modern Times’ Features Comic Master in Top Form

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 19, 2010 - 5:35pm

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CHICAGO – There’s a scene early in “Modern Times” in which Charlie Chaplin’s timeless Little Tramp character has been so mentally and physically damaged by the routine he’s been forced to do over and over again on an assembly line that he can’t stop moving his arms in the same repetitive motion. As he tries to turn everything that looks like it can be turned with a wrench, the routine perfectly captures the genius of Chaplin in its duality. Not only is it a commentary on how men are being destroyed by the machine of industry but it’s damn funny at the same time.



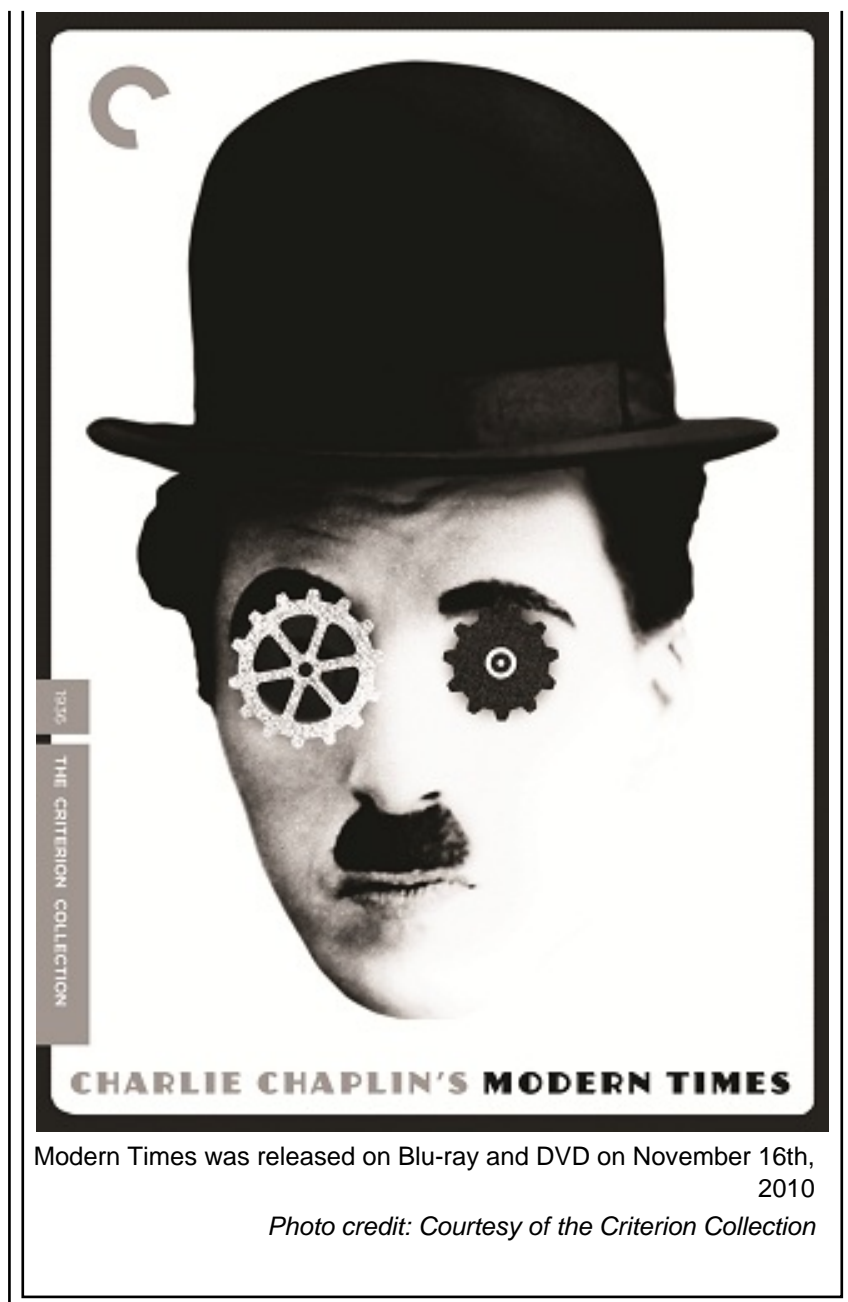
Very few people in the history of film have been able to use comedy in the way Chaplin could. Not only was he one of the best physical comedians of all time but he was also incredibly subversive, challenging the aspects of society that had led to the depression through which most of his fans had suffered. It’s hard to pick a favorite or best of Chaplin’s films but “Modern Times” is certainly high on the list and a great choice for the Criterion Collection, “*a continuing series of important classic and contemporary films.*”



Modern Times was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 16th, 2010  
*Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection*

It’s revealed on one of the excellent special features in this two-disc collection that “Modern Times” was heavily inspired by a visit Chaplin made to the Ford assembly plant in Detroit, Michigan. He saw how men were being turned into cogs in the great capitalist machine and he crafted a film about the class struggle he knew was growing around him. He even modeled the boss of his fictional plant in “Modern Times” on Henry Ford himself. The special feature reveals that he was practically a lookalike.





In "Modern Times," the Little Tramp loses his mind on the line and becomes expelled from the productive world. He meets a beautiful character known only as the gamine (Paulette Goddard, who Chaplin had a relationship at the time and, consequently, used his camera to make his love look simply stunning) and the two help start a revolution.

"Modern Times" was made well into Chaplin's career and would actually mark the last time he would play the Little Tramp. It's a wonderful final number to a timeless character and features Chaplin at an interesting turning point. Released in 1936, sound had been around for almost a decade before the film's release and "Modern Times" features some dialogue and even song but it's primarily another showcase for arguably the best silent comedian of all time.

With a beautifully-restored 2K resolution digital transfer created in collaboration with the Cineteca di Bologna, "Modern Times" looks ridiculously good. It's perfect in its original full frame presentation. I honestly don't think I've ever seen a (mostly) silent film with this level of video quality. And the monaural track perfectly mixes the excellent score.

"Modern Times" is weighed down with special features that include a commentary, two incredibly-informative visual essays (stills with narration), two segments cut from the film, home movies, and more. It's one of Criterion's most notable collections of bonus material for one of their most notable inclusions of 2010.

#### Special Features:

- o New audio commentary by Chaplin biographer David Robinson
- o Two new visual essays, by Chaplin historians John Bengtson and Jeffrey Vance
- o New program on the film's visual and sound effects, with experts Craig Barron and Ben Burt
- o Interview from 1992 with Modern Times music arranger David Raksin
- o Chaplin Today: "Modern Times" (2004), a half-hour program with filmmakers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne
- o Two segments removed from the film
- o Three theatrical trailers
- o "All at Sea" (1933), a home movie by Alistair Cooke featuring Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, and Cooke, plus a new score by Donald Sosin and a new interview with Cooke's daughter, Susan Cooke Kittredge
- o "The Rink" (1916), a Chaplin two-reeler highlighting his skill on wheels
- o "For the First Time" (1967), a Cuban documentary short about a projectionist who shows Modern Times to first-time moviegoers
- o A booklet featuring an essay by film critic Saul Austerlitz and a piece by film scholar Lisa Stein that includes excerpts from Chaplin's writing about his travels in 1931 and 1932

*'Modern Times' stars Charlie Chaplin and Paulette Goddard. It was written and directed by Charlie Chaplin. It is not rated and runs 87 minutes. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 16th, 2010.*



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