

Oliver Twist

US : 1909 : dir. : Pathé Silent : ? min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

 Cast unknown

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	KBytes	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Restrained by Bill Sykes, a battleship Nancy gives Fagin what for – Oliver recoils from the Monster

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion general note:

"Dickens' novel was filmed many times in the early silent period: in 1909 by Pathé; in 1910 by Vitagraph; in 1912 by an independent company with Nat C Goodwin as Fagin. A famous American film version of 1916 had Tully Marshall as Fagin and Marie Doro as Oliver; in 1922 the roles were played by Lon Chaney and Jackie Coogan, and in 1933 by Irving Pichel and Dickie Moore.

The definitive version to date, however, is the British one directed by David Lean in 1948, with John Howard Davies in the title role. Alec Guinness' brilliant performance as Fagin "**OLIVER!**", a 1968 musical version, won six Oscars."

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. It isn't easy to make out from that still whether Oliver is a boy or a pseudo-boy, but in probability he is an actress in drag, and a very Fauntleroyish Oliver he looks too. Evidently turfed out from a better class of workhouse.

Dickens, with his natural flair for melodrama, was a great favourite of the early cinema. Among the very oldest titles in the archive are "**SCROOGE: or MARLEY'S GHOST**" (1901), "**DOTHEBOYS HALL**" (1903) and "**THE BOY AND THE CONVICT**" (1909). These were no more than shakily re-enacted highlights from the stories, but no fewer than seven silent versions of "**OLIVER TWIST**" were to follow this one, growing increasingly ambitious in scope, and the last was a prestige-mounted Jackie Coogan vehicle (the first occasion to my knowledge that an actual boy played the part).

Dickens himself, always something of the actor manqué, would no doubt have been at once delighted and aghast at the possibilities of this new medium, yet he has fared better at its hands than many another great author. Television, with the luxury of meticulous six-hour serialisations, has now all but obviated the value of filmed Dickens, although Christine Edzard's stunning 1988 production of "**LITTLE DORRIT**" (six hours long in two parts) was a bold attempt to out-gun television at its own game.

See also the 1909 Vitagraph version, remakes in 1912, 1916, 1922, 1933, 1940, 1948, 1982 and 1997, not to mention "**OLIVER!**" (68), two continental silent versions - "**TWIST OLIVER**" (1919) and "**DIE GEHEIMNISSE VON LONDON**" (20) - or numerous TV serialisations. See subject index under **CRIME / DELINQUENCY, DICKENS, GRANDPARENTS, HISTORY, ORPHANS / ADOPTION, PRISON / BORSTAL** (which would include workhouses), **RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS, SILENT CINEMA, SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS, STREET KIDS** and **WOMEN AS BOYS / GIRLS AS BOYS**.