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# The Charlie Chan Film Encyclopedia



## Synopsis

The first film featuring Charlie Chan, *The House Without a Key*, appeared in 1925. Forty-seven films and six Charlies later, the series still delights audiences. Charlie Chan connoisseurs cite a variety of reasons for the honorable detective's longevity and appeal, ranging from his wit and personality to the films' fascinating casts that often included future celebrities. This encyclopedia contains over 1,900 entries for characters, actors, crew members, plot devices, and facts, as well as film summaries and Charlie's famous aphorisms. Photographs accompany the text and the entries are arranged alphabetically for easy reference and access. Practically anything a fan of these films might want to know is thoroughly analyzed here.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fictional detective Charlie Chan appeared in more than 40 films, primarily during the 1930s and 1940s. This book provides capsule biographies of the stars and casts of the films, in addition to a detailed filmography and other Chan esoterica (including a section on Chan's proverbs). Berlin, an inventor and author who has written on a variety of subjects, supplies Chan fans with obscure details about the most popular films. He purposely excludes all mention of the Chan films and television series from the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s. Instead, he concentrates largely upon the Warner Oland and Sidney Toler films because they were the two most popular actors to portray Chan and because they starred in more Chan films than any of the other actors. Massive, fact-filled, and entertaining, this is one of the most important Chan movie reference volumes to date. Not only

does it present specific filmographies but it has entries on other actors and lots of trivial information about the movies, which sets it apart from two more general references on Chan: Ken Hanke's *Charlie Chan at the Movies: History, Filmography, and Criticism* (McFarland, 1989) and Charles P. Mitchell's *A Guide to Charlie Chan Films* (Greenwood, 1999). An exhaustive index and a useful bibliography round out this impressive book. A worthwhile purchase for most popular film collections.-David M. Lisa, Mercyhurst Coll., Erie, PA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Massive, fact-filled, and entertaining...one of the most important Chan movie reference volumes to date...impressive...worthwhile” --Library Journal  
“A major contribution” --ARBA  
“Superior...information-packed...photos are excellent...impressive...indispensable...a Chan fan’s dream” --Classic Images

Very useful reference. Not a book to sit and read. Some entries become repetitious out of necessity and I had minor issues with how the author identified some aspects of his presentation. For example, he would write (fictitious character here) SMITH, John...(REAL NAME..SMITH, John T.) which maybe should have been titled "actual' name or "correct spelling". As above, John Smith IS the actors REAL name it's just NOT his COMPLETE name and maybe he never used the initial "T" in identifying himself. As differed by a listing ( fictional) of SMITH, John.. Real Name: Marvin Jones. I know I'm being nit-picky, but it's an opinion. Otherwise, the book serves it's purpose and is a welcome addition to my Chan library. Would always like to see more photographs as sometimes I have to play the DVD to see who the author is writing about.

this thing read like an encyclopedia. oh wait, it is! lol.great read. I LOVE flipping thru the different sections and finding out little tidbits I never knew. If you're like me and never really enjoyed the monogram films, you will now give them a shot. Why? Because this book presents facts that make you curious about certain actors, scenes, and storylines. I mention the monogram but of course this book covered it all.

A truly encyclopedic compilation of CC films and everyone who ever played in them.

The author Howard Berlin previously wrote an interesting small book of quotations from Charlie Chan, taken from the films. It was a good book. There seems to be some type of war between

reviewers of Berlin's "Encyclopedia" and Ken Hanke's "Charlie Chan At the Movies", and I wasn't sure which one to go for. Both seemed overpriced. After reading the glowing recommendations by several other reviewers, I decided to take the plunge and spend \$55 for the Berlin book, "Charlie Chan Film Encyclopedia" from .com, which was the price for the original library binding. I was disappointed. I'm going to try to describe what I felt was lacking here. First, this is a film book, and the entries within it need some corresponding reference photos from the films. Howard Berlin evidently did not have access to more than a handful of promotional pictures to accompany the individual Chan films, and that's a problem with this book. Lobby cards for "The Trap" and "Charlie Chan in Shanghai" are disappointing examples of few photos shown for specific films. Toler's picture under the listing for his name is at least in character as Chan, but not for Oland or Winters. Most of the other actors' photos used are not even from Chan films. For example, the only photo of Mantan Moreland is from a 1955 non-Chan film; there's no picture for the Victor Sen Yung entry, even though the author says appeared in 18 Chan films; two Benson Fong pictures for his listing, neither from a Chan film; two non-Chan Keye Luke pictures for his listing. The photos of other actors in the Charlie Chan films likewise are not from Chan films. It would be helpful to see them in character as portrayed in the Chan films. Or, isn't the encyclopedia supposed to be focusing on the Charlie Chan films? Second, there are also scores of pointless entries in the book, many dealing with numbers. The author identifies Number One, Two, Three sons and daughters, which is interesting, but then things go haywire: what's the purpose of having listings such as "8251," "8:20 pm", "8:30 pm", "11:30 pm", etc.? Is somebody thinking of a Chan film actually going to open up this book and intentionally search out a listing, for example, of "8:20 pm"? Basically it appears the author attempted to collect a bunch of trivial information and include it to expand the book. But he failed to consider whether there was any practical significance. Last, the entries for the individual Chan films don't provide enough information. The author does include some technical production, release date and plot summary information, but how about some analyses of each of the films, or better yet, some reviews of the films from newspapers or other media sources in the years the original films were released? The only commentary or review we get for the individual films here are a few notes following the summaries, mostly stating it was the first/last appearance by an actor. As I say, I liked Berlin's "quotations" book, but I can't recommend anyone buy this "Encyclopedia" which was very disappointing for the price. It reminds me of a college textbook, bland, dry and unsatisfying, and seems to stray away from the subject and title of the book too often. It is an encyclopedia and not a filmography, but it's still a film reference book, and should provide more information on each of the original films, without focusing on sub-trivial elements, or on persons who didn't appear in Chan

films and had no association with them. I therefore wound up buying Ken Hanke's book "Charlie Chan at the Movies: History, Filmography, and Criticism" and highly recommend that book to all Chan fans instead. It is far more accessible and satisfying, and delivers the goods with plot summaries, pictures from the actual films, and analyses and reviews of all the films.

Almost everything you would want to know about Charlie Chan from the actors who played him and the other characters in the movies to a summary of each of the films. The only thing missing is the identity of the killers. There is so much information here it is remarkable. The author has done a tremendous amount of research complete with a list of Charlie's aphorisms, photographs, and information about the actors, crew members, plot devices, etc.

A great resource for all Chan film fans. The contents are exhaustive, with no item or reference too small or obscure. I loved the detail and meticulous researching that was done. Who but a real Chan fan would put so much effort into such a specialized work? Thanks, Howard Berlin!

I LIKE THE BOOK BUT VERY FEW POTOS OF CHARLIE CHAN ACTORS THE NO FILM LIST OF THE ALL THE CHARLIE CHAN ONES

This book is very informative. I like to look at it when I am about to watch a Chan film.

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