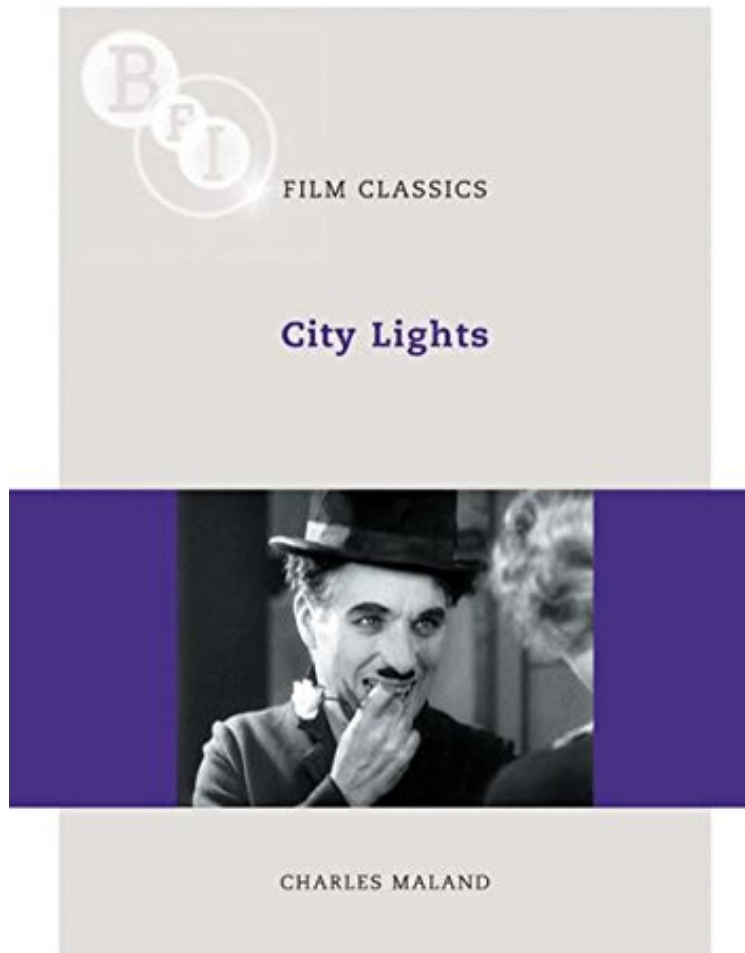


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City Lights (BFI Film Classics)

Charles J. Maland

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Charles J. Maland : City Lights (BFI Film Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised City Lights (BFI Film Classics):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. MALAND'S INSIGHT INTO CHAPLIN CONTINUESBy Sir Gerald WordsmithThis in-depth analysis of Charlie Chaplin's greatest film, "City Lights," brings new appreciation to this great American film. As in his previous book on Chaplin,Chaplin and American Culture, Maland renews and deepens my appreciation of Chaplin and his films. I have recently completed teaching an 8-week course on Chaplin: The man, his art, his times, at a university here in St. Louis. If I had had "City Lights" by Maland, I believe we could have spent the entire 8 weeks on this one movie. This book covers the entire story, beginning before the camera ever rolled, to the recording of the music track. As usual, he places Chaplin's art against the background of American

culture, a historical context which sheds light on what Chaplin accomplished. If you're interested in Charlie, his films, his art, or just think "City Lights" is a wonderful film, this is a book you must have. One suggestion: watch the movie first, then read the book, then watch the movie again.

In 1967, Charlie Chaplin told, "I think I like "City Lights" the best of all my films." Based on archival research of Chaplin's production records, this work offers a history of the film's production and reception, as well as an examination of the film itself, with special attention to the sources of the final scene's emotional power.

From the Back Cover In 1967 Charlie Chaplin told an interviewer, 'I think I like City Lights the best of all my films'. Speaking of the film's famous ending, James Agee wrote that 'it is enough to shrivel the heart to see'. Although City Lights had a long and extremely difficult production history, the final film, in Alistair Cooke's apt words, flows 'like water over pebbles, smooth and simple for all to see with no hint of the groaning pressure that had gone into it'. It could easily have been otherwise. Chaplin began the film in 1927, even before the release of *The Circus*, just months after a highly publicized divorce from his second wife and in the midst of a tax dispute with the US government, both of which cost him dearly. In addition, Chaplin's mother, with whom he had a close and complex relationship, died in August 1928. Besides the burden of these financial and emotional strains, Chaplin also had to contend with the transition of the American film industry to the talkies and the downward spiral of the depression following the Stock Market Crash in October 1929. He chose a novice actress, Virginia Cherrill, as the female lead for the film, and during production he fired the man originally cast as the millionaire and then re-hired Cherrill. Yet he pressed forward, releasing the film to much acclaim and box-office success in the first two months of 1931. Aesthetically, technologically, and culturally, *City Lights* is a key transitional film in Chaplin's body of work, as the director/writer/actor responded for the first time to sound films and stepped in the direction of the social commentary that would become more overt in *Modern Times* (1936) and *The Great Dictator* (1940). Based on extensive archival research of Chaplin's production records, Charles Maland's *City Lights* offers a careful history of the film's production and reception, as well as a close examination of the film itself, with special attention to the sources of the final scene's emotional power.

About the Author CHARLES MALAND is a Professor of Cinema Studies, American Studies and English at the University of Tennessee