



Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping

By Noël Carroll

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In *Comedy Incarnate*, Noël Carroll surveys the characteristics of Buster Keaton's unique visual style, to reveal the distinctive experience of watching Keaton's films.

- Bold and provocative thesis written by one of America's foremost film theorists
- Takes a unique look at the philosophies behind Keaton's style
- Weighs visual elements over narrative form in the analysis of the Keaton's work
- Provides a fresh vantage point for analysis of film and comedy itself

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- Sales Rank: #2692372 in eBooks
- Published on: 2008-06-09
- Released on: 2008-06-09
- Format: Kindle eBook



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Editorial Review

Review

“Buster Keaton was an engineer of the comic, a craftsman of gags, a mechanic of humor. While Carroll does not aspire to be as funny as Keaton, he can match (and follow) him in intricate and brilliant analysis, providing a logic of illogic. A book that will change how slapstick and film style are written about.”

Tom Gunning, University of Chicago

“*Comedy Incarnate* is a brilliant, inventive and lucid examination of Buster Keaton’s *The General*. Through close textual analysis, Carroll opens up a wide expanse of historical and theoretical territory – positioning *The General* in relation to the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and Poulet, as well as to the films of Chaplin, Lloyd, and Langdon. *Lucy Fischer, University of Pittsburgh*

“Building on Keaton’s directorial practice as a sort of civil engineer who engaged a mechanical universe, Carroll...investigates how Keaton’s emphasis on gags and their intelligibility characterize the film in specific ways. In so doing he opens up an understanding of how Keaton’s comedy of body intelligence works, especially in contrast to contemporaries like Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, and he shows how intelligence--the artist’s and the viewer’s--informs laughter.” *CHOICE*

Review

“Buster Keaton was an engineer of the comic, a craftsman of gags, a mechanic of humor. While Carroll does not aspire to be as funny as Keaton, he can match (and follow) him in intricate and brilliant analysis, providing a logic of illogic. Carroll’s book shows in detail how Keaton’s *The General* was built, gag by gag, producing a tour de force of visual analysis, showing the hard work that goes into constructing humor in the cinema. Further, Carroll in his introduction makes an important intervention in the usefulness of phenomenology for understanding the way the body and the world interact in Keaton’s film, and cinema, more broadly. A book that will change how slapstick and film style are written about.”

Tom Gunning, University of Chicago

“*Comedy Incarnate* is a brilliant, inventive and lucid examination of Buster Keaton’s *The General*. Through close textual analysis, Carroll opens up a wide expanse of historical and theoretical territory – positioning *The General* in relation to the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and Poulet, as well as to the films of Chaplin, Lloyd, and Langdon. Most original is Carroll’s claim that Keaton’s work is characterized by a comedy of visible bodily intelligence which the director achieves by viewing the world through the eyes of an engineer or mechanic.”

Lucy Fischer, University of Pittsburgh

“Written in the same tradition as Carroll’s inimitable *Philosophy of Horror*, this recrafted dissertation embarks on a quest to understand the distinctive physical comedy of Keaton’s masterpiece *The General*. The book is informed by the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others, which it uses to focus on Keaton’s “visual intelligibility”—i.e., his unique way of seeing and constructing gags for perceptive spectators. Building on Keaton’s directorial practice as a sort of civil engineer who engaged a mechanical universe, Carroll (Temple Univ.) investigates how Keaton’s emphasis on gags and their intelligibility

characterize the film in specific ways. In so doing he opens up an understanding of how Keaton's comedy of body intelligence works, especially in contrast to contemporaries like Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, and he shows how intelligence--the artist's and the viewer's--informs laughter. This iconographic study plays with themes of automatism and adaptability, illuminating how both Keaton's character's perceived failure to think and his successful transparency of thought function to shape the film's matchless comedy. Along the way, Carroll adeptly addresses such stylistic marks as the long shot of authenticity and camera angulation, which help the viewer not only see but also understand the comic questions in the narrative." *CHOICE*

From the Back Cover

Comedy Incarnate explores the intricacies of Buster Keaton's unique visual style to discover what provokes laughter in his timeless films, paying special attention to *The General*. Keaton's precise body comedy, coupled with his unconventional directorial decisions, suggests a new way of analyzing the film in terms of its visual elements as opposed to its narrative. Written by one of America's foremost film theorists, this in-depth examination of the comedy of the steam, steel, and railroad era will provide a fresh vantage point for analysis of film and comedy itself.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Victoria Schwan:

Information is provisions for people to get better life, information currently can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even an issue. What people must be consider whenever those information which is inside former life are challenging to be find than now could be taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you buy it as your main information we will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen throughout you if you take *Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping* as the daily resource information.

Stacey Lawrence:

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study. Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping can be your answer because it can be read by you actually who have those short time problems.

Juan Dishon:

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