

Charlie Chaplin: The Little Tramp [B2]

Quarantacinque anni dopo la sua scomparsa, la figura di Charlie Chaplin con bombetta, baffi e bastone di bambù continua a esercitare un grande fascino. Nato nella povertà, il rivoluzionario artista britannico divenne la prima grande star cinematografica, agli albori della settima arte.



Known to millions of fans around the world as The Little [Tramp](#) Charlie Chaplin [rose to worldwide fame](#) in the era of silent movies. His incredible gifts as a comic performer would make him the most famous film icon in history. His life is also an extraordinary rags-to-riches tale.

BORN INTO POVERTY

Chaplin was born in London on 16 April 1889. His parents were desperately poor music hall entertainers. [Not yet ten](#), he had to look after himself when his father died and his mother became mentally ill. He [took to](#) the stage, where he discovered his genius as an entertainer.

AMERICAN TOUR

After touring the US with a vaudeville company, he was offered a film contract. In a [stroke of genius](#) he invented the character of The [Tramp](#) — [cheeky](#), [gallant](#) and [wistful](#) in his [ill-fitting](#) clothes, loved for his [slapstick](#) acrobatics and resilience in adversity. He made dozens of films in just a few years. By 1918 he was one of the world's best-known figures and Hollywood's highest-paid actor.

CLASSIC FILMS

In the 1920s and 1930s, Chaplin made a number of silent films now regarded as classics: The Kid, [The Gold Rush](#), The Circus, City Lights and Modern Times. Sound had arrived in 1927 and was a challenge for the star, as his tramp character depended on mime and was universal, with no need for translations. Chaplin decided to ignore sound, even with the complicated Modern Times, an attack on the de-humanising effects of modern technology.

ATTACK ON HITLER

In 1940, Chaplin made his first film with sound, The Great Dictator, a satirical attack on Adolf Hitler. The film ends with a now-famous humanitarian speech. Although it also established the actor as a giant of the [‘talkies’](#), his subsequent movies provoked criticism from conservatives in America.

“I remain just one thing, and one thing only — and that is a [clown](#). It places me on a far higher plane than any politician.”

POLITICAL PARANOIA

Post-war America was a time of Cold War paranoia and [rabid](#) anti-communism. Chaplin, as a foreigner with liberal attitudes, was frequently attacked. His private life — marriages and relationships with very young women, and accusations of abusive behaviour — did not help. In 1952, travelling to London for the [premiere](#) of [Limelight](#), he learnt that he was

[banned](#) from the United States. Chaplin [settled](#) in Switzerland with his fourth wife, Oona O'Neill, who was thirty-six years younger than him. They would have eight children together.

FINAL CURTAIN

Chaplin made a few more films but his glory years had passed. He died on Christmas Day 1977. Time magazine put him on their list of the 100 Most Important People of the 20th Century. The image of The [Tramp](#) is part of the world's cultural history. Many film-makers consider him the father of cinema. Not just an actor, he also wrote, directed and produced his own films. In the words of Time, he "helped turn an industry into an art."

WATCH THIS VIDEO

Rendiamo omaggio al genio del cinema muto raccontando la sua storia: dalla dura infanzia a Londra caratterizzata dalla povertà ai grandi successi di Hollywood con il suo alter ego Charlot.

Glossary

- **banned** = bandire
- **stroke of genius** = colpo di genio
- **slapstick** = farsesche
- **clown** = pagliaccio
- **Limelight** = luci della ribalta
- **settled** = stabilirsi
- **rose to worldwide fame** = raggiungere la fama
- **ill-fitting** = raffazzonati
- **'talkies'** = film sonori
- **premiere** = debutto
- **Tramp** = vagabondo
- **gallant** = galante, gentiluomo
- **The Gold Rush** = febbre dell'oro
- **rabid** = fanatico, furibondo
- **Not yet ten** = non aveva ancora dieci anni
- **took to** = attaccarsi
- **cheeky** = sfacciato
- **wistful** = malinconico