

= Sherlock Holmes Baffled =

Sherlock Holmes Baffled is a very short American silent film created in 1900 with cinematography by Arthur Marvin . It is the earliest known film to feature Arthur Conan Doyle 's detective character Sherlock Holmes , albeit in a form unlike that of later screen incarnations . The inclusion of the character also makes it the first recorded detective film . In the film , a thief who can appear and disappear at will steals a sack of items from Sherlock Holmes . At each point , Holmes 's attempts to thwart the intruder end in failure .

Originally shown in Mutoscope machines in arcades , Sherlock Holmes Baffled has a running time of 30 seconds . Although produced in 1900 , it was only registered in 1903 , and a copyright notice stating this is seen on some prints . The identities of the actors playing the first screen Holmes and his assailant are not recorded . Assumed to be lost for many years , the film was rediscovered in 1968 as a paper print in the Library of Congress .

= = Action = =

Sherlock Holmes enters his drawing room to find it being burgled , but on confronting the villain is surprised when the latter disappears . Holmes initially attempts to ignore the event by lighting a cigar , but upon the thief 's reappearance , Holmes tries to reclaim the sack of stolen goods , drawing a pistol from his dressing gown pocket and firing it at the intruder , who vanishes . After Holmes recovers his property , the bag vanishes from his hand into that of the thief , who promptly disappears through a window . At this point the movie ends abruptly with Holmes looking " baffled " .

= = Production = =

The film was produced by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company and was intended to be shown on the Mutoscope , an early motion picture device , patented by Herman Casler in 1894 . Like Thomas Edison 's Kinetoscope the Mutoscope did not project on a screen , and provided viewing to only one person at a time . Cheaper and simpler than the Kinetoscope , the system marketed by the American Mutoscope Company quickly dominated the coin @-@ in @-@ the @-@ slot " peep @-@ show " business .

The Mutoscope worked on the same principle as a flip book , with individual image frames printed onto flexible cards attached to a circular core which revolved with the turn of a user @-@ operated hand crank . The cards were lit by electric light bulbs inside the machine , a system devised by Arthur Marvin 's brother , Henry , one of the founders of the Biograph company . Earlier machines had relied on reflected natural light .

To avoid violating Edison 's patents , Biograph cameras from 1895 to 1902 used a large @-@ format film measuring 2 @-@ 23 / 32 inches (68 mm) wide , with an image area of 2 x 2 ½ inches , four times that of Edison 's 35 mm format . Biograph film was not ready @-@ perforated ; the camera itself punched a sprocket hole on each side of the frame as the film was exposed at 30 frames per second . Sherlock Holmes Baffled ran to 86 @.@ 56 metres in length , giving the film a running time of 30 seconds (although in practice , due to the hand @-@ cranked gearing of the Mutoscope this would have varied) .

The director and cinematographer of Sherlock Holmes Baffled was Arthur W. Marvin (May 1859 ? 18 January 1911) , a staff cameraman for Biograph . Marvin completed over 418 short films between 1897 and 1911 , and was known for filming vaudeville entertainers . He later became known as the cameraman for the early silent films of D. W. Griffith . The identities of the first screen Holmes and his assailant are not recorded .

Biograph films before 1903 were mostly actualities (documentary footage of actual persons , places and events) , but Sherlock Holmes Baffled is an example of an early Biograph comedy narrative film , produced at the company 's rooftop studio on Broadway in New York City . According to Christopher Redmond 's Sherlock Holmes Handbook , the film was shot on April 26 , 1900 . Julie

McKuras states that the film was released in May of the same year . Despite being in circulation , Sherlock Holmes Baffled was only registered on February 24 , 1903 , and this is the date seen on the film 's copyright title card . The occasionally suggested date of 1905 is probably due to confusion with a Vitagraph film titled Adventures of Sherlock Holmes ; or , Held for Ransom (1905) .

= = Rediscovery = =

The film was assumed to have been lost for many years until a paper copy was identified in 1968 in the Library of Congress Paper Print archive by Michael Pointer , a historian of Sherlock Holmes films . Because motion pictures were not covered by copyright laws until 1912 , paper prints were submitted by studios wishing to register their works . These were made using light @-@ sensitive paper of the same width and length as the film itself , and developed as though a still photograph . Both the Edison Company and the Biograph Company submitted entire motion pictures as paper prints , and it is in this form that most of them survive . The film has subsequently been transferred to 16 mm film in the Library of Congress collection .

= = Analysis = =

The plot of Sherlock Holmes Baffled is unrelated to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle 's canonical Sherlock Holmes stories ; it is likely that the character 's name was used purely for its familiarity with the public . Shot from a single point of view on a stage set , the intention of Sherlock Holmes Baffled was probably to act as a showcase for basic film trickery and film editing effects , particularly the stop trick first developed four years earlier in 1896 by French director Georges Méliès .

Sherlock Holmes Baffled marks the first in an observable trend of early film @-@ makers to show the character as a figure of fun ; in this case the somewhat louchely dressed Holmes is left " baffled " by a burglar , in contrast with the detective prowess displayed by his literary namesake . William K. Everson in his book The Detective in Film noted that Sherlock Holmes Baffled , in common with all other silent detective films " labored under the difficulty of not being able to conduct prolonged interrogations or oral deductions ... the stress was on mystery or physical action rather than on literary @-@ derived sleuthings . " It was only in 1916 that William Gillette 's Sherlock Holmes attempted a serious adaptation of Conan Doyle 's character . Michael Pointer has suggested that the appearance and costume of the anonymous actor in Sherlock Holmes Baffled is an imitation of Gillette 's stage portrayal of Holmes . Gillette 's play Sherlock Holmes had made its Broadway debut at the Garrick Theater on November 6 , 1899 .

Michael Pointer 's report on the rediscovery of Sherlock Holmes Baffled in 1968 stated " it is an early trick film clearly made for viewing on a mutoscope or peepshow machine . Although a tiny , trivial piece , it is historic as being the earliest known use of Sherlock Holmes in moving pictures . " By extension of being the first Sherlock Holmes story , the inclusion of the character also makes it the first known example of a detective film . It has been posited that Sherlock Holmes has become the most prolific screen character in the history of cinema .