



Col. William N. Selig, the Man Who Invented Hollywood

Andrew A. Erish

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All histories of Hollywood are wrong. Why? Two words: Colonel Selig. This early pioneer laid the foundation for the movie industry that we know today. Active from 1896 to 1938, William N. Selig was responsible for an amazing series of firsts, including the first two-reel narrative film and the first two-hour narrative feature made in America; the first American movie serial with cliffhanger endings; the first westerns filmed in the West with real cowboys and Indians; the creation of the jungle-adventure genre; the first horror film in America; the first successful American newsreel (made in partnership with William Randolph Hearst); and the first permanent film studio in Los Angeles. Selig was also among the first to cultivate extensive international exhibition of American films, which created a worldwide audience and contributed to American domination of the medium.

In this book, Andrew Erish delves into the virtually untouched Selig archive at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library to tell the fascinating story of this unjustly forgotten film pioneer. He traces Selig's career from his early work as a traveling magician in the Midwest, to his founding of the first movie studio in Los Angeles in 1909, to his landmark series of innovations that still influence the film industry. As Erish recounts the many accomplishments of the man who first recognized that Southern California is the perfect place for moviemaking, he convincingly demonstrates that while others have been credited with inventing Hollywood, Colonel Selig is actually the one who most deserves that honor.

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