



Saving Film & Television for Future Generations

UCLA Film & Television Archive's film series, a tribute to Fay Wray + Robert Riskin, opens March 8, 2019 with the original box office record-breaking King Kong (1933) at the Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum in Westwood

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LOS ANGELES, CA, (Feb. 25, 2019) – The UCLA Film & Television Archive presents a classic film series dedicated to actress Fay Wray and screenwriter Robert Riskin, inspired by their daughter Victoria Riskin's book, *Fay Wray and Robert Riskin: A Hollywood Memoir*. On March 8 at the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater, *King Kong* is the first of 10 classic films the Archive is screening to highlight the careers of Wray and Riskin.

Victoria Riskin, film producer and past president of the Writers Guild of America West, has written a dual biography of her famous parents. *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kenneth Turan wrote of her book, "...one of the great real-life Hollywood love stories... [a] warm, evocative and deeply moving tale."

This Hollywood romance began on the eve of World War II when both the Academy Award-winning screenwriter Riskin and glamorous movie star Wray were in a personal transition. Wray was ending her two-year relationship with playwright Clifford Odets and Riskin had suspended his successful partnership with Frank Capra to dedicate himself full-time to the war effort.

Fay Wray began her acting career as a teenager at the end of the silent era in one of its greatest artistic achievements, Erich von Stroheim's *The Wedding March* (1928). Von Stroheim cast her in the starring role when she was 19, describing her as having a "sensual innocence."

By the early 1930s Wray had become the busiest actress in Hollywood, in a two-year period (1933-1934) starring in over 20 films opposite the leading men of her era: William Powell, George Raft, Ronald Colman, Wallace Berry, Fredric March and Spencer Tracy. She worked with directors like Gregory La Cava, Raoul Walsh, Michael Curtiz and William Wellman. With her role as Ann Darrow in *King Kong* (1933) she achieved legendary fame. *Kong*, along with a handful of Wray's other horror films of the era (*Mystery of the Wax Museum* and *Doctor X*), have become the focus of contemporary academic inquiry and cinephile fascination.

Robert Riskin, a successful Broadway writer and producer, came to Hollywood in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, when hundreds of theaters shuttered. He was given a contract at Columbia Pictures, a Poverty Row studio. The success of the eventual Robert Riskin-Frank Capra

collaboration catapulted the studio from a second-tier enterprise to a mini-major studio. *It Happened One Night* (1934) was the first film in cinema history to sweep all the top Academy Awards—Best Writer, Director, Picture, Actor and Actress. Riskin’s gift for storytelling, ear for witty dialogue and innate optimism when combined with Capra’s cinematic brilliance resulted in movies that gave audiences during the Depression what they needed—hope.

The films of Wray and Riskin played an important role in Hollywood history during its Golden Era.

The series was curated and program notes written by UCLA Film & Television Archive Director Jan-Christopher Horak. Admission to each evening’s double feature is \$10:

Mar 8 - *King Kong* / *The Miracle Woman*

Mar 9 - *Meet John Doe* / *The Most Dangerous Game*

Mar 16 - *Viva Villa!* / *Virtue*

Mar 22 - *It Happened One Night* / *The Richest Girl in the World*

Mar 30 - *The Wedding March* / *American Madness*

During opening weekend before the March 8 and 9 screenings, Victoria Riskin will be available to sign copies of her new book, *Fay Wray and Robert Riskin: A Hollywood Memoir*.

For more information about *Fay Wray + Robert Riskin*, please visit the Archive website: www.cinema.ucla.edu.

About UCLA Film & Television Archive

The mission of the UCLA Film & Television Archive is to save film and television for future generations.

The Archive is internationally renowned for rescuing, preserving and showcasing moving image media and is dedicated to ensuring that the visual achievements of our time are available for information, education and enjoyment. The sixth-largest moving image repository in the world, and the second largest in the U.S., behind only the Library of Congress, the Archive’s more than 450,000 holdings are stored in a state-of-the-art facility that meets and exceeds all preservation standards, from nitrate film to digital.

A unit of UCLA’s School of Theater, Film and Television, the Archive’s Research and Study Center provides free access to its holdings to researchers, writers and educators. Many of the Archive’s projects are screened at prestigious film events around the globe, as well as locally at UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater.

For more information, please contact Marisa Soto at (310) 206-8588 or msoto@cinema.ucla.edu