

INTRODUCTION TO FILM PRODUCTION STILLS

Although the motion picture camera is credited with the creation of the worldwide cinema, still photography was basically the backbone of the industry. The use of still photography was, and still is, an integral part of the process of producing, distributing and marketing a film.

To understand the importance of stills, we will first need to understand why they were made and how they were used. Stills fall into many categories including: promotional, publicity, paparazzi, production, photographer, celebrity, autographed, portrait and even homemade, etc. In this book, we are addressing the stills that have identifiable markings that were placed by distribution and production companies.

To properly use the codes in this book, you really need to understand the process that was used and how and why they were applied. To help you with this, we have outlined the standard filming process used by most film production companies, both in the United States and in most major film producing countries.

Please note that the following information is based on the “general” process followed by studios. Each studio, however, would vary these procedures to meet their own specific needs.

FILMING PROCESS PRIMARY USES OF THE PRODUCTION STILL

Still photography on a film began in the pre-production stage and continued until the film's completion. Each major studio normally had a **Unit Photographer** on staff for general photography purposes. In addition, particularly on larger productions, additional photographers were sometimes brought in for either overflow purposes or special assignments. **Secondary Photographers** were sometimes used, such as one photographer taking black & white and one taking color shots.

Also, **Special Assignment Photographers** were hired by the studios at the request of certain actors or publications. The photographs taken by these special photographers were for the photographer's use and discretion. However, in some cases, the studio would request the use of certain images taken by the special photographer. And, in addition, in exchange for major advertising, some large magazines would make special arrangements with the studio to send in their own **Special Photographers** for some exclusive shots for their publication.

UNIT PHOTOGRAPHER

The images taken by the unit photographer or overflow photographer were developed daily and distributed to various departments for specific purposes. These include the following:

- Pre-Production
- Production
 - Scene Continuity
 - Publicity
 - Key Set Creation
 - Exclusive Uses
 - Advertising
 - Creation of Posters
 - Creation of Lobby Cards
 - Creation of Advertising Clips
 - Press Use – Studio/National Screen Service
 - New York Newspaper Set
- Special Uses

These areas are addressed below.

Pre-Production

The first stills taken on a film were normally done before filming actually began and were incorporated into the initial planning and development of the project. After sample costumes were made, the main cast members were sent to photo sessions in these costumes, hence many people call these “Casting Stills.” These were used in a variety of ways such as storyboarding, administrative decision-making, designing wardrobes, and creating advance publicity. Sometimes, these were sent to artists to start conceptual artwork for early advertising campaigns and exposure.

Since these are quite often done before production of the film even starts, these can be a nightmare and the marking of these can be quite erratic. Here is an example:



Let's take a look at our sample on the left.

There is a number in the bottom right corner (see arrow). We have enlarged the number in the box below. It is clearly the number "33."



See the
number
33

This number is not a standard production code and is just a mark for still number 33

Since there isn't any other identification on the front, we have to scrutinize the back for more clues.

LUCKILY, the back side of the still identifies the actor as William Farnum for the film *Riders of the Purple Sage* and gives a still number of E-PB 207. Unfortunately, pre-production numbers can rarely be used for identification purposes.

Remember, these are done BEFORE any actual filming is started and it is used for planning purposes. This means that normally there are numerous changes made and budgets adjusted during this process.

One of the many problems with casting stills is that it is very common for the actor that is originally cast in a part to not be the actual actor used when the film starts production. These instances can make you want to pull your hair out!!

Production

Once filming began on the project, the unit photographer had several jobs. Here are just some of the responsibilities of the unit photographer:

Scene Continuity - The still photographs which were taken at the end of a day's film shoot were used by the director and his production staff to make sure that each subsequent day's scene layout and props would match exactly with the prior day's scene. This was to avoid mishaps such as appearing and disappearing salt shakers, curtains changing color, tables and chairs in different places, etc. These were marked and numbered in a WIDE variety of ways.

Filming - During the production, the unit photographer was responsible for capturing thousands of still shots of the production. The photographer would stand next to a movie camera operator and take photographs that would appear almost identical to specific scenes in the film. Some of the shots would offer a different angle than the motion picture camera and some of the shots would be behind the scenes with actors and directors.

After the production still shots were taken each day, the photographer would take the roles of film negatives and place them on a “contact sheet.” These contact sheets were created by laying the negatives on a piece of printing paper and exposing them to light to create a set of mini prints the same as the film frames.

The image on the right shows a typical contact sheet. ➡

The advantage to using a contact sheet was that all of the film negatives, generally around 36 images, could be viewed at one time with a “ring” or magnifying glass. The negatives and contact sheets were then sent to the publicity department.



Publicity Department

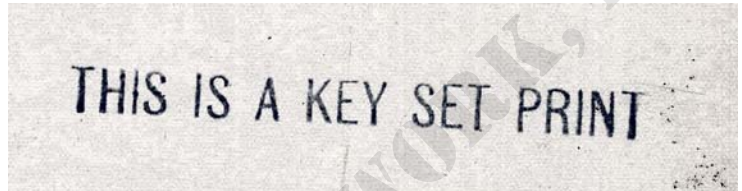
The Publicity Department was, among other things, responsible for generating early publicity about a film, including providing information to magazines and publications. The publicity department would review the contact sheets and select images for specific purposes, such as creating a “key set,” keeping track and providing exclusive images to magazines and publications, and sending the advertising department information and photos necessary to begin preparation of promotional materials.

Key Set Creation - After a review by the publicity department, the better images were picked to become part of a key set. The selected images were marked with the assigned production number and the individual still number, and the stills printed and placed into the key set binder. The rejects were skipped over and left unnumbered. The negatives and contact sheets were then filed. These could be pulled at a later date if someone wanted something different.

By the end of the shooting, this key set would normally consist of hundreds of the better still shots to be used in a variety of ways by the publicity department. They were kept in large bound books that could be used at any time for reference.



Key stills were marked a variety of ways by different studios. Notice, our sample on the left has two holes punched at the top. Some studios literally punched holes and stuck them in a huge ringed binder. The negatives were filed by the production code number. When someone wanted that particular still, they pulled the negative to print and distribute. Other studios used sleeves and stamped them on the back, like our sample shown below.



Exclusives – Major magazines and publications would quite often want exclusive photos to do an article on an upcoming film. This was a tremendous way for the film to get FREE publicity AND give that particular paper or magazine something exclusive to brag about. To accommodate them, the publicity department would put a hold tag on numerous stills and send over a group for the editor to choose from. Once the exclusives were picked, the tags would be removed from those images not selected so they could be used for other purposes.

As a side note (just to add in a little confusion): **SOMETIMES**, for larger and favored publications, the publicity department would choose certain images and enlarge them to 10x13” or 11x14”. These larger shots gave the image a more portrait appearance and would quite often win more publicity space.

Here's the good part about “exclusives.” They are usually the best of the best of the publicity stills and are normally GREAT shots of the stars or major scenes in the film.



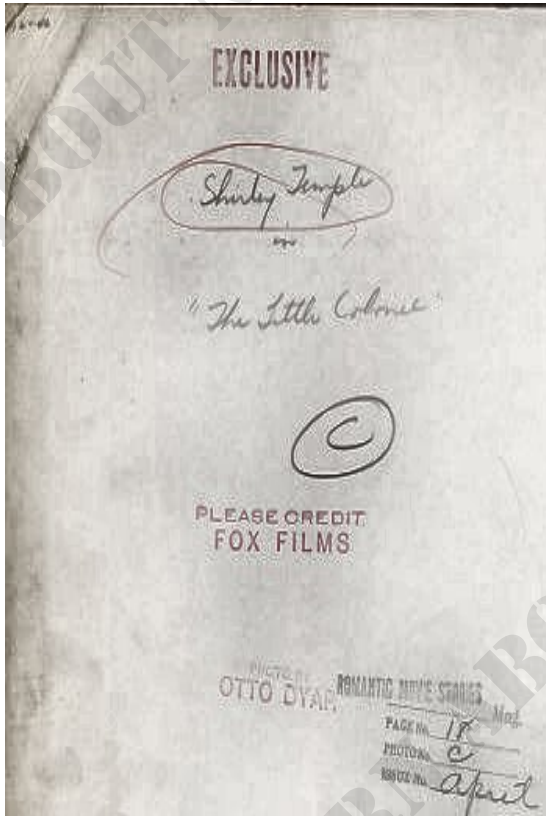
Notice the sample still on the left.

This “exclusive” still features Shirley Temple from the 1935 Fox release of *The Little Colonel*.
What a GREAT SHOT!!

As for identification, since these are the best shots from the film, it is normally not that difficult to identify the film, except in cases where a particular star has released several films that are similar in subject. In this case, it is a matter of a little further research to determine the title.

NOW, that being said, here are some of the problems with “exclusives.”

Most of the time, the publicity department did not want the production codes “marring” the photo that was being used in a newspaper or magazine. They would instead write the production code on the BACK of the still, along with any additional information for the paper or magazine.



Most studios would stamp the word “EXCLUSIVE” on the back of the still if it was for a major paper or magazine. That is not the case for smaller publications.

On your left, you will see the BACK of our still showing how it was marked.

NOTICE: there is an EXCLUSIVE stamp on the top, followed by the name of the star, the film’s title and then the film credit information. Below that is the photographer’s name, and on the side is a stamp with the name of the magazine (*Romantic Movie Stories*) showing that placement as page 18, photo C in the April issue.

ALSO NOTICE: in the top left corner is a small number (192-46). This is the production code with 192 being the number code for *The Little Colonel*.

This is the way “exclusives” were normally handled; BUT that was not ALWAYS the case. No matter what studio was producing a film, sometimes they were in a rush and would forget to mark the stills.

Let me give you another example from the SAME studio that presents a slightly different problem with exclusives.



Notice the still on the left.

This still features a GREAT shot of Will Rogers playing golf. Notice that there are no production codes or markings on the front of the still as was fairly common with most exclusives. In this case, we would then look on the back side of the side. When you look at the back side below, you will notice that the publicity department did not put the production code on the back EITHER.

You will see at the top of the backside of the still is the standard “EXCLUSIVE” stamp, which helps identify it as an exclusive.

Also notice that there a hand written note just below the stamp that says “Will Rogers, Fox star, in a scene from the Fox picture ‘Merry Andrew’”.

And then there is a date stamp on the left that says “May 1934.”



This brings up another common problem with stills identification. These shots were taken and sent to the publicity department **during the shooting of the film**. These were used for advance publicity **before the film was released**. The publicity department tried to create some excitement about the coming release. BUT it was also quite common for a film to have a title change once it was finished and edited. The publicity department sent this still out **BEFORE the film was finished** and the final title assigned. *Merry Andrew* was actually the working title; the film was released as *Handy Andy*.

Advertising Department

The advertising department was responsible for developing and initiating the advertising budget to be used for promoting the film. Once the budget was established, the advertising department would outline their complete advertising campaign. The black & white and color stills provided by the publicity department would be used in a number of ways, including the following:

Creation of Posters – The advertising department would select certain stills and provide them, along with a synopsis of the film, to the art department. It was the art department’s responsibility to design and complete the poster art, either using in-house staff or contracting with a commercial artist.

Creation of Lobby Cards – The art department would also utilize the color stills provided by the publicity department to create the lobby cards.

Creation of Advertising Clips – The advertising department would use both stills and artwork provided by the art department to create the ad mats that were to be used by the theater managers to promote the film locally.

In the silent and early “talkie” years, this artwork would be sent to contracted companies to produce the ads on wood blocks that could be ordered by the theater and sent to the local newspapers for publication. This was replaced by the lighter plates and then eventually by ad supplements that had clip art that the theater could send to the newspaper.

Press – Prior to distribution rights being given to the National Screen Service (“NSS”), the advertising department would offer sets of stills to individual theaters for their use in advertising a specific film. When NSS took over the distribution of movie paper for the major studios, it would offer press stills to theaters and exhibitors along with the other sizes and types of movie posters and promotional materials. Beginning in the 1970’s, press stills became a part of the press kits that were distributed by NSS.

New York Newspaper Set – Starting in the 1960’s, the advertising department provided a basic pack of stills, referred to as “The New York Newspaper Set,” to wire services and newspapers around the country. This set included 30-40 stills selected from the key set.

COLOR PHOTOGRAPHER

In earlier days and on smaller productions, the color photographer was also the unit photographer. But for larger productions, it was very common for a second photographer to be used on the set just to produce the color stills. This really increased in the 1960’s when magazines and major publications started demanding more color.

These stills were handled exactly the same as the standard black and white stills EXCEPT that they were a separate operation. In other words, different personnel handled the color stills as a separate operation

The rolls were sent on contact sheets and chosen the same way. The color desk also provided the advertising department with a selection to be used to make the lobby cards.

SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHER

Under certain circumstances, particularly with some major films, specially contracted photographers were used. For example, some actors and actresses would prefer their own photographers to take special promotional shots. These photographers were allowed on the set for major scenes or at the end of the day’s shooting where the star would recreate a certain scene or pose for publicity purposes.

Sometimes a specific publication that was going to do a major feature on an upcoming film would send down its own special photographer. In these instances, it was a common practice that the photographer would own the rights to the shots they took. Instead of any payment from the studio, the special photographers would mark their stills and charge royalties for any outside use.

Below are two samples of individual photographer tags that were placed on the back of their prints.



Most of the time, very little information was placed on the back of the photographer prints. If there was, the type and amount of information would vary.



From time to time, a studio would request the use of one or more of the special photographer's images. These images would then be incorporated into the key set or other press materials, with the permission of the special photographer and with the photographer's name on the back.

Notice our sample on the left. This still features Gloria Swanson from the 1934 film *Music in the Air*. (It has the two hole punches at the top for the Key Book Set).

This still was used by the fashion department to promote Miss Swanson's gown, which was designed by Rene Hubert. It has a write up on the back with a stamp giving the photo credit to Otto Dyar.

Now that we have covered the general process and uses, we will now focus on the stills that became part of the key set.

THE PRODUCTION CODE AND HOW IT WAS USED

FIRST, let's present the standard way utilized by the major studios for their OWN productions. Afterward, we will address several variations and problems.

Major Studios

Each studio would assign a specific code or number to their individual film projects, based on the studios unique numbering system in place at the time. This code was used as a control number for all filming assigned to that particular film production.

For still collectors and archivists, this code number becomes an important tool for still recognition. Many of the stills in the master book or key set have the production code, then a dash and number on the still.

Let's step through the process.



Here is a still to use as an example. There is no identification except for the still itself, and for the purpose of this article, let's say that there is nothing on the back. (Quite often, there is other information that is printed or written on the back of a still that may be helpful.)

Of course, Clark Gable and Joan Crawford are quite recognizable but we want to use the production code for identification of the film.

The image on the right features the lower right corner of the still above. It shows the film's production code which is 795-12. The first number (sometimes it is a letter or series of letters) is 795 which identifies the film production number. The second number, 12, is the still number out of the Key Set.



The next step would be to try to narrow down the possibilities. Go directly to the Numbers Chart and look up the number 795. Here is a clip from our logs showing Production Code # 795

795	DEVIL'S HOLIDAY	GOULDING	PARAMOUNT	1930
795	FORSAKING ALL OTHERS	VAN DYKE	MGM	1934
795	ROMANCE IN MANHATTAN	ROBERTS	RKO	1934
795	THREE SMART GIRLS	KOSTER	UNIVERSAL	1936
795	CALL ME MISTER	BACON	20th CENTURY-FOX	1951
795	SOUTH SEA WOMAN	LUBIN	WARNER BROS	1953

In this instance, the only film starring Clark Gable or Joan Crawford is.... *Forsaking All Others*. **It's that simple!**

If you do not know the actor, then you try to use any additional information that you may have, such as studio, director, time period, etc. to eliminate as many as possible, to get to your identification.

Outside the Major Framework

The term "production code" and the system used were designed for the major studios. Once you move outside of that system, things do not work quite as smoothly, and there are numerous additional problems. So let's take a look at some of them.

Production Companies

The major studios had all of the departments to handle every step of the process, BUT the small production companies didn't. They didn't have advertising departments and art departments and publicity departments, etc. They rarely dealt with anything like special photographers and exclusives. During the planning stage and meetings, the production code would be established. It might be the director's initials, the stars' initials, a character series, or whatever code that was decided on for that film. Whatever it was, it was normally put on the stills very similar to the system described earlier except on a smaller basis.

If the production company already had a distributor, they would send over the stills and the distributor would handle the other areas. If the production company DIDN'T have a distributor, then the best stills were picked out and used to create a package to present to try to secure a distributor.

If no distributor was signed before the end of the production, then material was compiled and decisions made on how to promote the film.

Distribution Companies

Outside the major studios, the term should actually be changed to production and distribution code, because the DISTRIBUTOR had total control over the code number. It is the distributor's name that the film was listed under and NOT the production company. It was up to the DISTRIBUTOR if they wanted to keep that number on the stills or assign another one or erase them all, etc. So here's where some of additional complications begin.

The distributor was normally promoting material from a variety of sources. It could be a steady client, a one-time customer, an import film or even rights to distribute a re-release. Because of this, quite often it appears the distributor would re-number the stills to fit into THEIR accounting system. So it is not unusual to see two sets of codes or more... OR even no codes at all.

Problems and Analysis

Now that we've presented you the way that it is 'supposed' to work, let's NOW try to present you with a dose of "reality."

In this section, we present some of the major problems.

Imported Films and Reissues

We're presenting these together because this is primarily the situation with "almost" EVERY imported film, from the distributor's point of view. The film is being "reissued" by a distributor that is "different" from the original distributor in the country of origin.



Because imported films and reissues went through numerous hands, quite often multiple codes will appear. Here's an example:

The 1938 British film *Vessel of Wrath*, starring Charles Laughton, was released by Paramount the same year in the United States under the title *The Beachcomber*. In 1949, the film was re-released in the United States by Verity Films.

Our sample on the left reflects six stills that were issued for the R1949 promotion.

All the images have a consistent tag across the bottom and the NSS number on the bottom right. All also have the Production Code Number 1776 and then the still number. BUT, the still on the top left has some additional information. (See sample below).



This particular still has two additional code numbers. You see the 1776 on the right, but just above it is VW 131. Since the original title was *Vessel of Wrath* (VW), this was apparently put on the still by the original DISTRIBUTOR, which was Associated British Film Distributors (ABFD). But also notice on the left MF.1/540. The production company was Mayflower Pictures. This happens to be the first film that we have on record for them. The assumption would be the MF-1 would be for Mayflower 1, making this the original production code.

The only question we have is this: was the 1776 production code put on by Paramount, which was the original US distributor, or was it put on by Verity? The only way to tell would be to compare a 1938 Paramount still with the Verity stills. Unfortunately, we don't have one available to compare, so we will have to wait until later to be able to answer that question.

Sometimes, everything seems very logical, like this one. And then sometimes... it makes NO sense at all.

Lack of Consistency

You have to remember that at the time these stills were originally released, people were just doing their job and there was NEVER EVER a single thought that MAYBE... 40... 50... 60 ... or more years down the road someone might have trouble figuring out what this still was. Their only thought was to do their job and promote the film.



Let's take a look at a fairly well known title. Shown on the left are some stills for the 1972 re-release of Charlie Chaplin's *Limelight*. All stills have the National Screen Service tag and number (72/26) on the right and the production code "L" for *Limelight*. This would indicate that all of these stills were used for the 1972 reissue.

NOW, here are some inconsistencies: three of the six have a 1956 copyright on the left with no studio (which is odd since the original came out in 1952). The other three have a 1972 copyright by Columbia Pictures. In addition, the one on the top left has two additional production codes: a CC - 8 (which I would assume to be Charlie Chaplin 8) AND P-116 (No Clue??)



We've learned some very important lessons while compiling production codes. The MOST important lesson that we have learned is that production codes can be used for identification... When oddities arise, you basically have to be a detective to search for clues. Sometimes it is written one way and then another. If you don't find it under one listing, try it under a slight variation, etc.

BUT, if you are looking for consistency, STOP NOW. THERE IS NO CONSISTENCY!

PARTICULAR STUDIOS THAT NEED ADDRESSING

OK, let's take a look at some of the major studios and some of their particular oddities.

COLUMBIA PICTURES

Our first studio is Columbia. For some unknown reason, Columbia Pictures consistently numbered stills for the same movie in a wide variety of ways. Here's an example:



All four of these stills are from the 1941 release *Free and Easy* and were part of the actual Key Set (notice the punch holes) so you would think that they would be consistent.

The top left and bottom right have the Production Code number 1173. The top right and the bottom left have the Production Code number S-1173. So why is this a big deal?

Columbia issued large numbers with the “S” prefix AND with the “D” prefix. **BUT** these could also be found with or without the prefix... **OR** with another prefix of “COL” and **THEN** with or without the prefix... **OR** with another prefix of “CPC” and **THEN** with or without the prefix ... **OR** with another prefix of “CP” and **THEN** with or without the prefix ... **OR ANY COMBINATION IN BETWEEN!!!!**

So, if it is determined that the still is from Columbia, ALL variations should be considered. Add the prefixes above to any number to see if you can get a match.

PARAMOUNT

Paramount was BY FAR the most aggressive studio. This applied in their marketing, their copyright and control and even in their production. We've documented Paramount codes as far back as 1912. The next earliest studio that WE'VE documented is New York Motion Picture in 1914, followed by Epoch, Selig and Universal in 1915, Goldwyn and Christies in 1916, and Fox in 1917. Most others started soon afterward.

One of the oddities that you will see in the production code logs is that in the 1920s through the 1950s, quite often there was more than one production code number for a particular title. The next question should be... WHY? Again, we, by nature, begin to look for some type of consistency or reasoning.

We initially bought the most accurate Paramount list that we could find and have, since that time, added hundreds of additional Paramount numbers. BUT, the majority of the original Paramount list was a number prefix, divided into two types of numbers: L Series and NYKN (New York Key Numbers). Quite often the title would be presented in BOTH series types. Here's a clip from the original Paramount list:

PROD.#	DESC	TITLE	DIRECTOR	STAR	YR
460	L SERIES	DRUMS OF FATE	MAIGNE	M. MINTER	1923
460	NYKN	BACK HOME AND BROKE (SEE F-245)	GREEN	T. MEIGHAN	1922
461	L SERIES	ADAM'S RIB	DEMILLE	M. SILLS	1923
462	L SERIES	WHITE FLOWER	IVERS	B. COMPSON	1923
463	L SERIES	COVERED WAGON	CRUZE	J. KERRIGAN	1923
464	L SERIES	BELLA DONNA	FITZMAURICE	P. NEGRI	1923
464	NYKN	NICE PEOPLE	DEMILLE	W. REID	1922
465	L SERIES	NOBODY'S MONEY	WORLSEY	J. HOLT	1923
466	L SERIES	RACING HEARTS	POWELL	A. AYRES	1923
466	NYKN	SIREN CALL	WILLAT	D. DALTON	1922
467	L SERIES;NYKN	BORDERLAND		A. AYRES	1922
468	L SERIES	TIGER'S CLAW (SEE # 514)	HENABERY	J. HOLT	1923
468	NYKN	MAN UNCONQUERABLE	HENABERY	J. HOLT	1922
469	L SERIES	PRODIGAL DAUGHTERS	WOOD	G. SWANSON	1923
469	NYKN	TO HAVE AND TO HOLD	FITZMAURICE	B. COMPSON	1922
470	L SERIES	TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE	MAIGNE	M. MINTER	1923
470	NYKN	OLD HOMESTEAD	CRUZE	BARNES	1922

The list of letter prefixes, which was a lot smaller, has an additional code that identifies smaller groups, such as: Artcraft; Hal Wallis; Pine Thomas, etc. We could not present all the variations in this book, but these will be available in the LAMP Member and Advanced Research Section of our website.

REPUBLIC

Republic, like Paramount, normally had 2 different numbers for the same film. This might be due to the fact that Republic distributed films for smaller production companies and then re-marked the stills with their own distribution numbers.

However, Republic does have the distinction of being the ONLY studio that we know of that quite often placed a separate number for their REISSUES. YES!! Their reissues carried a DIFFERENT production code number. We have hundreds of them in our logs and we tried to identify the original release title (if it was different) AND the original year. We also marked the release year with an “R” to show that it was a reissue. For more information on this see the upcoming section on How to Use the Production Code Logs.

UNIVERSAL

We purchased an “official” Universal production code starting list and continued to expand it as we did other studios. There were a couple of major differences with Universal. While they did a great job of documenting their codes, a LOT of the codes was documented for WORKING TITLES. This is good IF you have some type of connection to the actual release title. Unfortunately, we have numerous codes with NO connection, AND they didn’t put the YEAR or ANY OTHER info to help us identify the film. We are continuously trying to make the connections to the release title. Besides them being obvious in the logs, we have marked them as working titles. You will also see the ones marked that we have identified

OTHER STUDIOS AND ODDITIES

OK, let’s move to some other oddities. This is the first time that we have addressed these types of problems. So, MAYBE an explanation is in order as to WHY this has become so noticeable before we present some oddities.

When we created our first production code book in 2007, it was developed completely from lists that we had acquired from several reputable sources. Since that time, we have been modifying the lists because we were USING THEM as we were going through thousands and thousands of stills. THIS is the FIRST edition where there are approximately as many codes taken directly from the stills as were in our acquired lists. And I can tell you that taking them DIRECTLY from the images has shown every kind of crazy variation imaginable. Because of this, we think it would be beneficial for YOU to see a couple of the oddities to help you understand some of the unusual marks that you might see.

When you first start using production code numbers, you will immediately recognize the huge amount of inconsistencies. We gathered these codes from a WIDE variety of sources, such as studio records, lists from dealers and collectors AND going through tens of thousands of stills. BUT, the problem isn’t from the wide variety of sources; the problem is within the studio system. These codes

were used for control at THAT particular time for THAT particular purpose. They didn't take into consideration that maybe different people who created different stills from the Key Set would write the numbers differently, OR that when the distributor remade the stills for press releases, they would write it a different way, OR, if it was redistributed later by a different distributor, or even a distributor in a different country, that the codes would become slightly different.

Example 1: We were asked for help to identify some cast members on some early stills from the teens. The stills had a studio stamp, the title, a recognizable star, a well-known director and a good production code number, so we "thought" this wouldn't be too much of a problem.

After our initial search, none of the regular sources had the cast members, so we contacted the studio archivist. We sent over the title and production code and received a shocking report: **THEY HAD NO RECORDS OF THAT PRODUCTION.** We said: "Wait, here's a copy of the stills with the studio stamp and you can see the production codes!" The studio archivist said: "We have no record of that."

After some additional discussions, we came to the conclusion that it was fairly common for the production company to use their own system and THEN the studio would completely re-number and re-title the project. The problem is that the documentation during production was basically eliminated and NO records kept. Sometimes, identifying pre-release stills CAN GIVE YOU NIGHTMARES!

Apparently, it was more common for production codes on pre-release stills to have "LETTERS" instead of numbers. Because of this, in this edition, we added the director's column AND put more emphasis on the "LETTERS" section. The hope was to create more recognizable patterns with director or series codes to help with this type of problem identification. We will continue to expand this more in the LAMP Member and Advanced Research Section of our website.

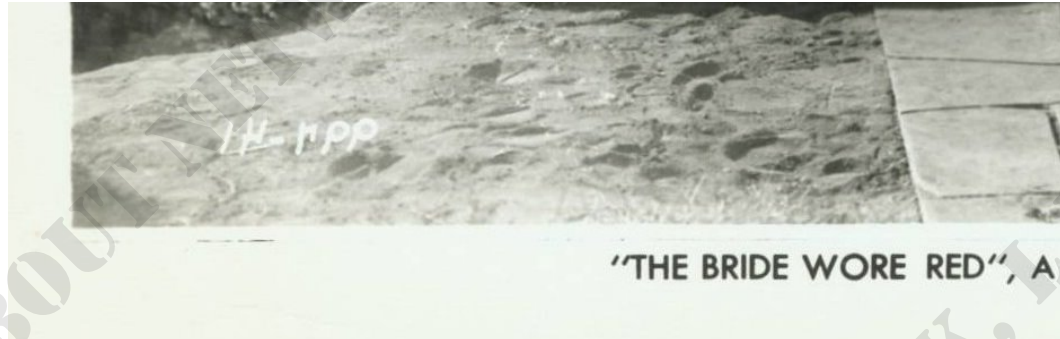
Example 2: One area to watch out for involves re-makes of films using different actors BUT the SAME codes. Warner Brothers was one of the worse to do this. Numerous times Warner Brothers would re-make a film 5 to 10 years later and then use the same production code for BOTH films. For example *Two Against the World* was released in 1932 starring Constance Bennett with the working title of *Higher Ups*. In 1936, Warner Brothers released *Two Against the World* starring Humphrey Bogart. It was also released under the TV title *One Fatal Hour* and the British title *Case of Mrs. Pembroke*. BOTH the 1932 and the 1936 films used the SAME PRODUCTION CODE.

For this reason, when possible, always try to reconfirm the identification by a second source. For example, if you identify a still by the production code, if there are actors in the still, if possible, try to confirm their identification.

Example 3: Unfortunately, we could probably create an entire book on the oddities and problems, but we know that we have to keep this fairly brief. So, for this final example, we present a couple of small clips that we hope will show you that you can't always COUNT on JUST the production code. While we realize that the employees were not worried about future problems and were probably very busy, some of them must have experienced some "senior moments" when processing these stills.

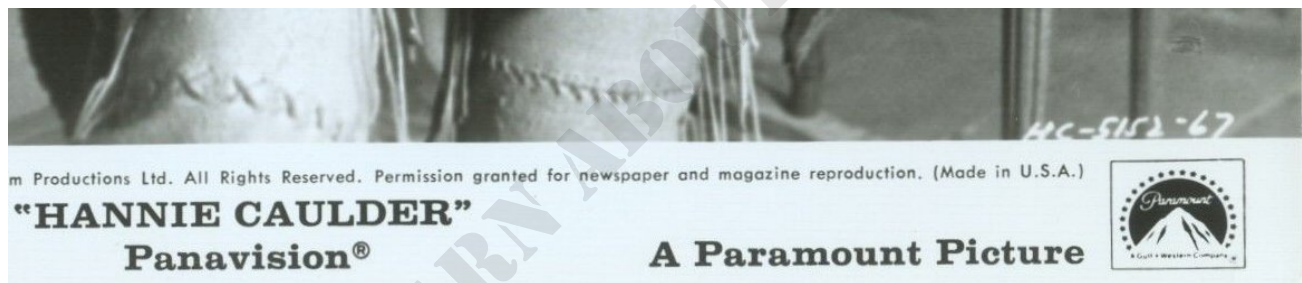
Hopefully, THIS will give you more of an idea of what we're talking about.

Here's a clip of a still from the film *The Bride Wore Red*.

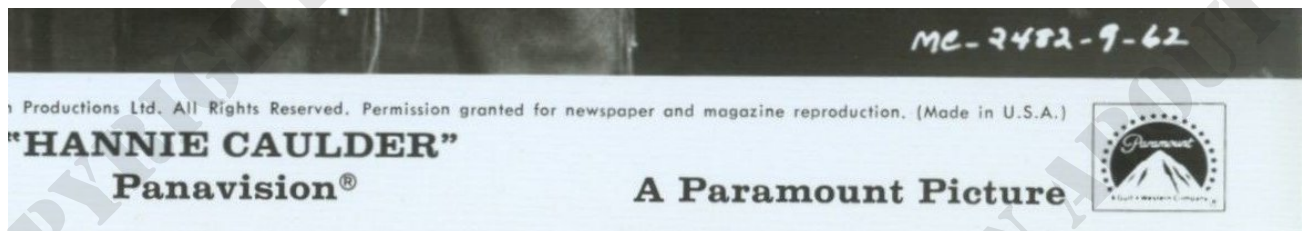


The production code number is actually "997," which you would see if you hold a mirror up to the still. The code is written in REVERSE.

Here are a couple of clips from stills for the film *Hannie Caulder*. The production code that we found on dozens of stills from *Hannie Caulder* was HC.

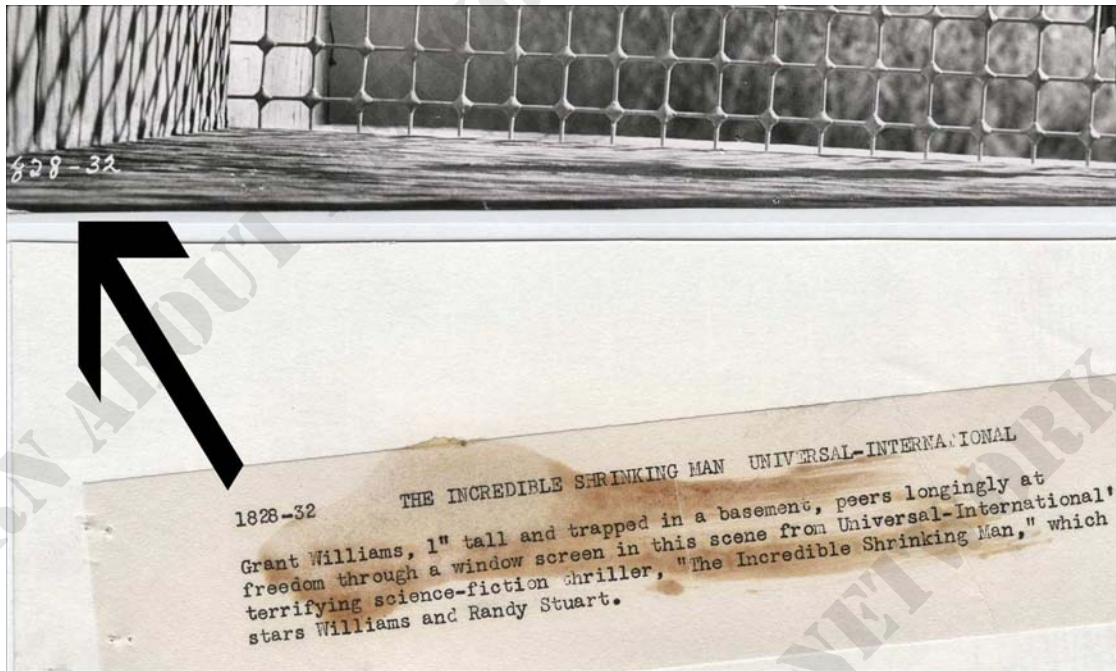


HC = Hannie Caulder. That seems fairly simple unless you have a learning disability. The problem is that the second still has the production code of "MC."



Maybe they were just hard of hearing and thought someone said "MANNIE CAULDER."

Now let's look at our final example. This excerpt is taken from a still for the film *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Fortunately, this is a popular film and should be recognizable to most. However, there is NO identification on the front of the still, and all you have is the production code. Unfortunately, if the identification of THIS particular still was based solely on the production code, it would remain unidentified. Here's why.



The production code on the still, “828” was actually chopped at printing. The actual production code, as seen on the snipe that was attached to the back of the still, is “1828.” Fortunately, in this particular instance, there was a studio clip on the back side!!!!

If you are a veteran at production stills, then you know that you will run into every scenario imaginable. You basically have to be a detective looking for clues to the identity of THAT still. So any information that can be gleaned from the still, such as distributors, markings on the back, scene explanations, magazine stamps, etc., are potential clues. We hope that all the new additions in this edition will help in that search.

Now let’s show you how we’ve broken down the information and how to use the logs.

How to Use the Production Code Logs

This book will not answer or identify all of your stills, but we hope this will become a major tool in helping you with your identification. We have assembled almost 32,000 production codes to help you to try to identify those unknown stills. They are broken into three (3) sections: NUMBERS, LETTERS, and PORTRAIT.

The column breakdown of the NUMBERS Section and the LETTERS Section are the same, so let’s deal with these 2 sections first.

Both sections have 5 columns consisting of Code; Title; Director; Studio; and Year. Let’s address each column.

Code:

If the code is a combination of letters and numbers, then it will be listed under whatever comes first, such as A1 would be listed in the Letters section under A, where 1A would be listed in the Numbers section under 1.

We have tried to remove all department codes. These are codes that sometimes appear after the production code, then a dash and something like ART or PUB for Art Department or Publicity Department. There is a wide variety of different department codes used by different studios. They are extensions to the production code and not the actual code. They DO NOT help identify the still in any way, so we did not document them here. We will document them on our website though.

Sequence: The NUMBERS Section is in actual numeric order, but the LETTERS and PORTRAIT Sections are NOT. When sorting alpha-numeric codes, the sort is from left to right and NOT numeric. For example: “BOR-13” will come BEFORE “BOR-2,” and so on.

Title:

We have several new additions to this column:

- A. If the title is identified as a working title, we placed an asterisk (*) by the title.
- B. If we have identified the title as a cartoon/animation, it is identified with (T)
- C. If we have identified the title as an import, we have placed an abbreviation for the country beside the title. i.e. (IT) – Italian
- D. When a rerelease is identified, we put the original title and year in parenthesis
- E. Some aka's are put in parenthesis without a release year
- F. Some shorts and series are identified; these are from the original lists that were acquired.
- G. Many serials are also identified beside the title

Director:

A last name is used unless there was question. If more than one director is identified, the names are separated with a comma.

Studio:

Even though it is called a production code, we list the distributor and not the production company. In addition, when we know that it was a states' rights distributor, we have added an asterisk (*) behind the distributor name.

Year:

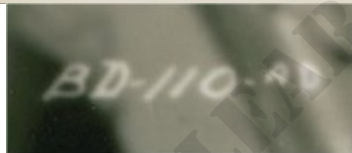
We noted the year of release. If the listing is of a rerelease, we placed an 'R' before the year for identification.

PORTRAIT AND SERIES CODES

Here's a new and important addition for this edition. Let's take a look.

Portrait Codes

Here are two stills featuring Merle Oberon from the film *Temptation*:



The still on the left has a code of “BD-110” while the still on the right has the code “MO.” The code “BD-110” is for the film, *Temptation*, while the code “MO” is not a production code. It is known as a portrait or celebrity code. The MO represents Merle Oberon.

Just like the production codes, many studios assigned a code to employees for accounting and tracking purposes. While production codes were used for scenes in the film, portrait codes were used for accounting purposes AND for photos that could be used for other publicity besides just that particular film.

The portrait code was not only for the celebrities, as many think. It also included directors, producers, writers, cameramen and, beyond that (especially at Paramount), anyone employed by the studio (craft workers, drama coaches, secretaries, etc.) and anyone connected to a film (the real life subject of a biography, the author of a source novel, etc.).

There are many variables that need to be considered, such as:

- a. Portrait codes were primarily used between the 1920s and the 1960s.
- b. When someone left the studio and came back later, usually a NEW code for that person was issued.
- c. Some studios used initials, some used names, some used numbers
- d. Some studios would combine the portrait code with another code such as F or P for fashion or publicity.
- e. Sometimes the code was assigned to a group of stars
- f. Sometimes the studio used initials for their REAL name instead of the stage name.
- g. And on and on

There is no way that we can cover all the different types in this book. We will continue to expand and document the variations in the Advanced Research Section of our website.

Series Codes

A Series Code was used in several ways. Sometimes it would mark a particular film series such as the Ken Maynard (KM) series or the Jack Holt (JH) series.

They were also used to mark smaller production companies such as the Pine-Thomas Productions (PTP) whose films were distributed by Paramount. Some of these codes can be found in the Letters Section. We added the Directors Column to help with the identification.

We have found that some series codes are only on the PRE-distribution stills and were removed by the distributor.

FINALE

While the research and preparation of this book was MASSIVE, we understand that there is an unbelievable amount of work that still needs documenting in this area. We've tried our best to present the most accurate and reliable information possible, and hope this will be beneficial to you in your research. We will continue to document and expand in all directions on our website until we have gathered a sufficient amount of additional information to warrant a new edition.

Be sure to visit our website (LearnAboutMoviePosters.com) where this information is available in online form along with our other books and research. Also, the website gives us the flexibility to resort this information and present it in several different formats to aid specific types of research. Please email (edp@LearnAboutMoviePosters.com) or call (504) 298-LAMP) as we would love to show you through our advanced research areas.

We hope that you will enjoy our book. Please let us know your comments and suggestions. Thank you and good luck with your research

Ed and Susan Poole