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March 8, 1993

From: FRED OLEN RAY

To: The National Film Preservation Board

Dear MEMBERS,

One of the most unusual situations in the field of Film Preservation in our history must be the total loss of MGM's silent film, LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT, starring Lon Chaney, Sr.

For a film made in the 1920s by a major Hollywood studio, this complete loss is almost unbelievable. Yet it happened.

The amazing thing is that posters, books, scripts and even Chaney's top-hat and false teeth have survived, but the film itself has vanished. This should never be allowed to happen again.

Film preservation at the public's expense is a fine idea. The question that remains is what exactly does the public get out of it. If we, the government, build a road at tax-payers' expense, then everyone gets to drive on it. If films are preserved at tax-payers' expense then everyone who paid should have a right to see them.

If this isn't a law, then it just isn't right and we all know it.

Access should not necessarily be free or unlimited, but specific guidelines that are not prohibitive should be in place and public enjoyment and appreciation of the preserved films should be ensured. If the public is denied reasonable access to preserved films they should not be required to pay for the preservation of them.

Films were made to be viewed by the masses. Let's please remember and honor that idea.

Should the great paintings of the world be locked away forever? Should films be read about in history class but never seen? Someone had better decide soon.

Sincerely,



FRED OLEN RAY

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AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION