



Films of Norma Shearer

Jack Jacobs, Myron Braum

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As the superstar of her day, Norma Shearer reigned supreme in the Hollywood hierarchy. A native of Canada, she emigrated to New York early in 1920 with the intent to enter show business. Failing to get a job on the stage because Flo Ziegfeld, the legendary Broadway producer, was unimpressed with her, Norma decided to try her luck in films. She began as an extra. Shortly thereafter, she was seen fleetingly in *Way Down East*, directed by D.W. Griffith, whom she greatly admired. Griffith saw no future for her as a screen actress, but she was too determined to let this discourage her, and she continued to look for work in motion pictures. In between, she modeled for noted illustrators and played the piano in cheap movie theaters. Finally she met agent Edward Small (later himself an important independent producer) who got her small roles in *Torchy's Millions* and *The Leather Pushers*. This led to some featured parts in several films. Small's biggest coup, however, was getting Norma a handsome salary after she signed a temporary contract with Louis B. Mayer. Irving Thalberg proceeded to groom her for a screen career, and eventually made her a star, as well as his wife. Miss Shearer soon became First Lady of MGM. Norma had a patrician kind of beauty, a special charm, and a certain vivaciousness that seemed to belong to the past. Once she was cast in romantic period dramas, like *Smilin' Through*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Marie Antoinette*, she emerged as a compelling and touching actress. But as the modern young girl who defied conventions in *The Divorcee*, *Strangers May Kiss*, and *A Free Soul*, she was equally in her element, for as the sophisticate imbued with a genteel quality that was indelible in all her portrayals, Norma Shearer had no peer. This is her story, a story of a Hollywood that was golden. The book includes a complete index to her films, film synopses, general credits, and rare and beautiful illustrations highlighting her career.

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