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## FEATURES

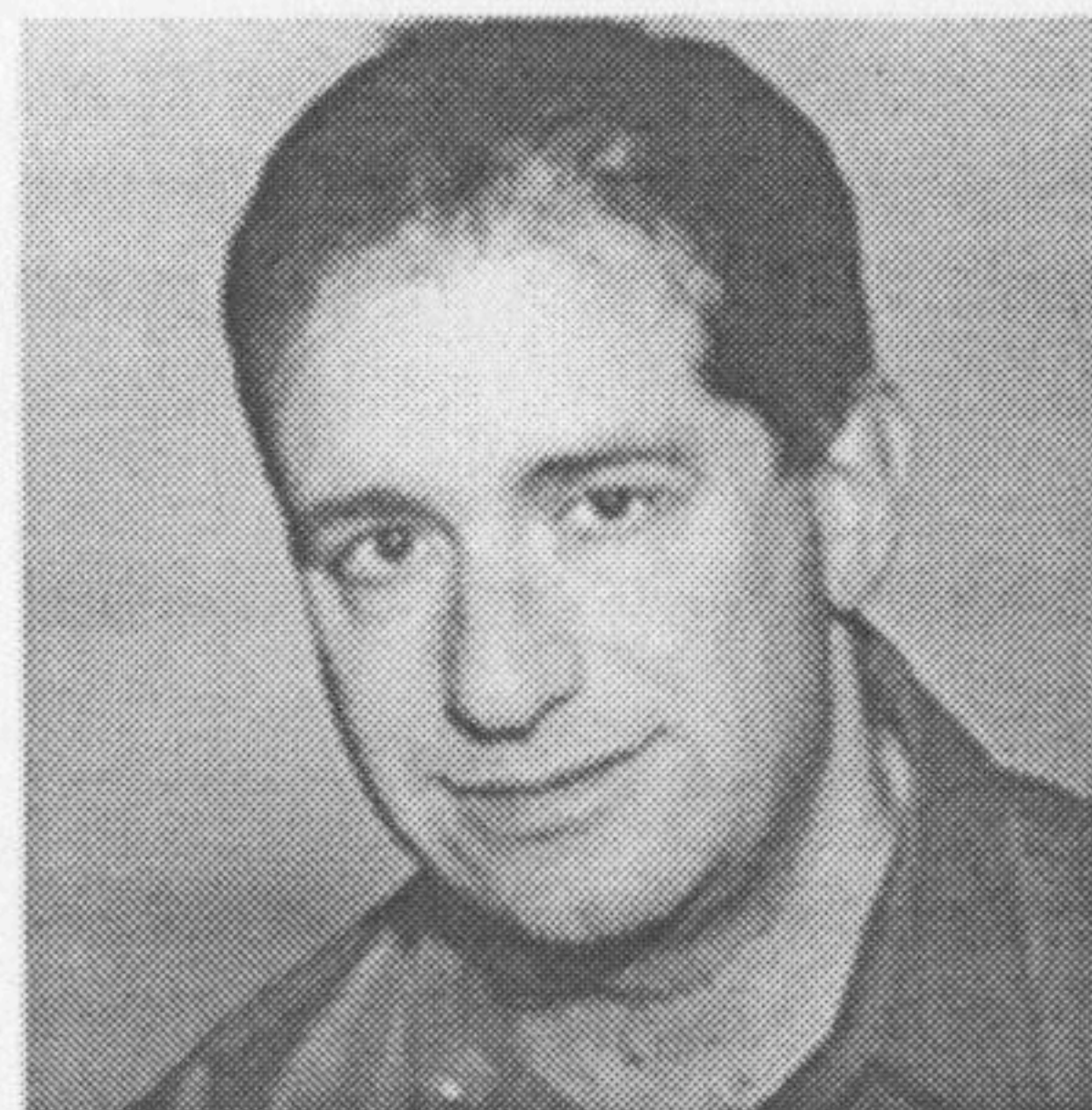
### The Real Best of Detroit 2006: Cultural Enlightenment

By RDW

Mar 22, 2006, 23:15

### Best Film Series: Detroit Film Theatre

by Robert del Valle



**Real Detroit: Dave Drazin — Silent Film Photoplay Pianist.** *Now that's what I call an interesting business card. What sort of background would such a performer have?*

**Dave Drazin:** My background is jazz and improv, and I can read music better than average. It was my goal since age four to be a jazz musician. I've got a Bachelor's degree in music from Ohio State. Except for a few short interludes, playing the piano is the only job I've ever had.

My day job is accompanying ballet classes five days a week. I'm in two bands, a rocker with a blues side, and a ten-piece ballroom band.

**RD:** *Each season you work at the Detroit Film Theatre and accompany silent films with your piano work. How many films have you tickled the ivories for now?*

**DD:** Playing for silent films is my favorite thing to do, and I've lost count of how many films I've had the opportunity to accompany ... I invent original scores pretty much on the spot, but they can incorporate period

For comedies, I like to include traditional jazz numbers and blues played in Harlem Stride, though dramatic films often have a "hot" spot in which people are



dancing.

For super productions like Wings or The Big Parade, I feel I must include genuine songs or compositions that were used in the original score, if I have access to them, though negotiating composed excerpts while watching the screen is pretty tough.

**RD: Have you a favorite silent film or silent film star?**

**DD:** Buster Keaton is my favorite. His films have all been recorded too, in some cases many times, but that's not the main idea. I never imagined having so many chances to play for his films. There are many "world" films that are beautiful, and amazingly more are being discovered.

I've had the opportunity to accompany all the existing silent films by Yasujiro Ozu and found myself becoming a big fan of Japanese actors like Tatsuo Saito and Takeshi Sakamoto! Keaton is a childhood favorite and I'll never get tired of seeing him.

**RD: Gloria Swanson has this marvelous line in Sunset Boulevard: "We had faces then!" If video killed the radio star, did sound kill something unique to the cinema?**

**DD:** Sound hasn't killed anything. We're in a unique time now, in which we have access to everything at once. Silent films are a choice, thank goodness, and hopefully one we can keep. |RDW

*For more info about David Drazin, jazz, ballet and silent film pianist please visit: [www.kendavies.net/daviddrazin/](http://www.kendavies.net/daviddrazin/)*

*Dave will be accompanying the silent film The Wedding March at the DFT on March 26, 7 p.m.*