

[LINDSAY KEMBLE]

aka **Lindsay Kemble Cinematographed / Lindsay Kemble's Adelaide Escapades**

Year of release: 1915 • Scenario: Lindsay Kemble



In early January 1915 Lindsay Kemble, a 19 year-old man from Burra, South Australia, became infamous throughout much of Australia after being arrested in Adelaide dressed as a woman. According to coverage of the court case in local newspapers, a policeman had become suspicious of the identity of a young lady as early as 4 January and after some days of observation pursued the matter before making an arrest on Monday the 11th. With there being no law against masquerading in public as a member of the opposite sex Kemble was arrested on the rather obscure charge of being an idle and disorderly person. During his appearance at the Police Court the following day Kemble's lawyer maintained that his client had bet a friend that he could pass as a woman in the city for two months without being found out. According to the defendant he had almost won the bet by the time of his arrest. Newspaper reports also indicate that Kemble's testimony elicited much laughter in the court, especially when he outlined some of the incidents that had occurred during the previous seven weeks. Although the magistrate agreed that Kemble had not intended to profit or defraud during his Adelaide escapades, and considered gaol unnecessary, he nevertheless showed his disapproval by fining him £2 plus court costs of 15 shillings.¹

Lindsay Kemble "The Gay Deceiver," 1915

On 14 January, two days after becoming the most talked about person in South Australia, Kemble made his Adelaide debut at both the [King's Theatre](#) (under the management of [Brennan-Fuller](#)) and the Star Theatre (Powell and Coffey) despite having limited experience as an entertainer.² His King's Theatre appearances, for which he was billed as the "Man-Woman," were as a vaudeville headline, while the Star Theatre contract was a between-films engagement. Brennan-Fuller publicity indicates that Kemble's act involved a re-telling of his "hilarious experiences during the past month's reign as a Parisian beauty and captivator of Adelaide's well-known citizens."³ Eric Reade writes that the film "showed [Kemble] in a number of situations: at the theatre, out with the boys, at the Austral Gardens, spooning at the corner, his transformation, and being 'pinched'.⁴ Adelaide's *Daily Herald* records, too, that the scene outside the Star Theatre "was somewhat identical with that to be seen outside a theatre on the first night of the staging of a notable play. Kemble delighted [his] audience."⁵

After having secured Kemble to a contract Lou Powell and Fred Coffey immediately arranged for cinematographer Harry Krischock (1875-1940) to film him on the streets of Adelaide, again dressed as a woman.⁶ The *Port Pirie Recorder* reveals in mid-February that shooting

¹ For further details see for example "[In Women's Clothes.](#)" *Chronicle* (Adelaide) 16 Jan. 1915, 16-17.

² Adelaide's *Advertiser* records that Kemble had been "at Koorunga recently on a holiday... [and] was supposed to be connected with a vaudeville company." He also "used to sing at Koorunga in the evenings [and] had a feminine voice" ("[The Female Impersonator.](#)" 14 Jan. 1915, 6).

³ *Register* (Adelaide) 14 Jan. 1915, 2. Advertisement.

⁴ Eric Reade. *Australian Silent Films: A Pictorial History of Silent Films from 1896 to 1929*. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1970, 81.

⁵ "[Star Theatre.](#)" *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 15 Jan. 1915, 2. Powell and Coffey also arranged for Kemble to make select appearances at other Adelaide theatres during his first season in the city under their management.

⁶ Interestingly this was not the first time that Powell and Coffey had been involved in producing moving pictures. In March the previous year the pair had exhibited the film, *Nice Goings on at Henley Beach*. Featuring two comedians (as mashers) and a "bevy" of young "surfing sirens," the film had been shot by another local cinematographer, Leslie Keast.

Star Theatre
FINE NEW PICTURES.
Lindsay Kemble
THE BOY "GIRL."
PERSONALLY APPEARS TO-NIGHT
at 8.10 and 9.45 o'clock.
SPECIAL MATINEE
THIS (MONDAY) AFTERNOON, at 3.30.
6d. IT ONLY COSTS 3d.
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.
I, LINDSAY KEMBLE, hereby announce that I am under exclusive engagement to the STAR PICTURE PROPRIETORS. Any picture representing or supposed to represent my movements, unless issued by the aforesaid management, IS NOT LEGITIMATE.
The only picture of my adventures is now in course of preparation.
(Signed) LINDSAY KEMBLE.
BE THE ABOVE.
Any infringement on these rights will be rigidly dealt with according to law. This comedy can only be booked through us, and early application is advisable.
(Signed) COFFEY & POWELL,
Star Theatre.
Advertiser (Adelaide) 18 Jan. 1915, 2.

had taken place soon after his trial at the Adelaide Police Court (12 Jan.), the result being a film 1,000 feet in length that showed "many laughable and interesting episodes in connection with [Kemble's] astonishing escapades."⁷

Billed simply as *Lindsay Kemble*, the comedy film opened at the Star Theatre on 23 January to rave reviews:

Journal: The management of the Star Picture Palace in King William Street have shown considerable enterprise by having secured the reproduction in film form of certain features which are claimed to have occurred in connection with the escapade of Lindsay Kemble, the "boy-girl," in Adelaide recently. A local cinema operator is responsible for the picture, the general excellence of which in production reflects the utmost credit on the photographer's ability in his fascinating art. A more amusing comedy has seldom been shown here, and the fact of it being purely-local in origin and substance makes it all the more noteworthy. Vociferous laughter follows its exhibition. It is being shown day and night.⁸

Register: A more amusing comedy has seldom been produced. All the artists represent familiar faces Adelaide, and it is a tribute to those concerned to supply such a remarkably good picture. Lindsay's adventures provide ample scope for the actors and the operator's talents. This latest move by the Star proprietors should be successful. In addition an excellent new programme of films is offered.⁹

Daily Herald: That attractive and versatile performer Lindsay Kemble will again appear at the Star to-day, not in his original role as a variety artist, but as a moving picture star. His undoubted talent has full play in this splendid picture being produced today for the first time. The fact that all the performers and also the producer are local residents should add considerably to its attractiveness. A fine company of artists were engaged to secure this striking representation of Mr. Kemble's experiences, and the result is certainly surprising. The enterprise of the management will doubtless meet with its due reward. The fact that such an excellent picture was taken without resort to outside assistance marks a new era in motion plays in Adelaide, and demonstrates that local talent is quite equal to its competitors in other parts.¹⁰

Mail: The Star management are out again with a new series of pictures which are particularly attractive and interesting. The notorious Lindsay Kemble still continues to amuse and entertain large crowds of his admirers, and during his country tour he is well represented by an excellent picture of his adventures in our city. The rapid rise of this meteoric vaudeville star is indeed surprising, and his-representation of a masquerading, female is quite clever. The popularity gained by this novel film continues with remarkable consistency, and no sign of its withdrawal is insight. Coupled with Mr. Kemble's picture is a fine programme of motion plays combining amusement with instruction.¹¹

Advertiser: Today will see another change of programme at the Star, except that Mr. Lindsay Kemble, the female impersonator, continues to amuse and entertain large crowds. This excellent local film will occupy the screen for a few days longer.¹²

The film remained a major attraction at the King William Street theatre for several weeks and later toured some South Australian regional centres.



Journal (Adelaide)
23 Jan. 1915, 13.

⁷ "Amusements Tonight: The Lindsay Kemble Film." *Port Pirie Recorder* (SA) 11 Feb, 1915, 3.

⁸ "Star Theatre." *Journal* (Adelaide) 25 Jan. 1915, 2.

⁹ "Star Theatre." *Register* (Adelaide) 23 Jan. 1915, 11.

¹⁰ "Star Theatre." *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 23 Jan. 1915, 7.

¹¹ "Star Pictures: Local Film Scores." *Mail* (Adelaide) 30 Jan. 1915, 4.

¹² "Amusements: Star Theatre." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 30 Jan. 1915, 17.

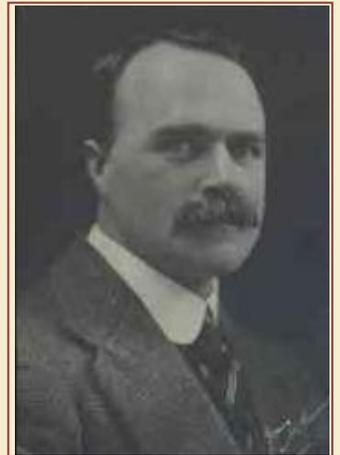
- 1915:** Star Theatre, Adelaide; 23 Jan. - ca. 5 Feb.
- 1,000 ft; black and white
- **Prod.** Lou Powell and Fred Coffey; **Dir/Dir of Ph.** Harry Krischock.
- **Cast** incl. Lindsay Kemble.

SEE ALSO

[Lindsay Kemble](#)

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. The earliest reference to the title "*Lindsay Kemble's Adelaide Escapades*" appears to be in Eric Reade's 1970 publication *Australian Silent Films*. Unfortunately Reade provides no citation for claiming this as the name of the film. A search of newspapers digitised in Trove has so far failed to locate any reference "Adelaide Escapades" in 1915. All advertisements identify the film as simply *Lindsay Kemble* (or sometimes as *Lindsay Kemble Cinematographed*).
2. Much public interest focused on the local men who fell for Kemble's feminine charms, and this aspect appears to have created much of the comedy in the film.
3. Powell and Coffey arranged for Kemble to undertake a short tour of regional South Australian cinemas during the first weeks of February 1915. They are believed to have also organised for the film to be later exhibited at many of these same venues. Kemble returned to the Star in late-February as a principle member of the Max Merry Comedy Company.
4. Adelaide-born Harry Krischock was employed as a clerk by Hutchison, Craker and Smith, publishers of *Quiz and the Lantern*, from at least 1897. By the early-1900s, however, he was advertising himself a photographer. Between 1903 and 1907 he was largely associated with the *Critic*, and from 1906 until 1909 with the *Australasian* and *Garden and Field* newspapers. In later years he was also a photographer for the *Advertiser*, *Express and Telegraph* and the *Chronicle*. Krischock began his career in cinematography in 1911 with the Wondergraph Company and continued shooting newsreels and documentaries for the firm through until the 1920s. He was also photographer for four South Australian feature films: *Remorse, a Story of the Red Plague* (1917), *Our Friends, the Hayseeds* (1917), *What Happened to Jean* (1918) and *Why Men Go Wrong* (1922).



Harry Krischock
Source: State Library of
South Australia

For further details on Krischock's life and career see: Joyce Gibberd. "[Krischock, Henry Ludwig Frank \(Harry\) \(1875–1940\)](#)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 15 (2000).