

“Big Stakes” [1922] Directed by Clifford S. Efeldt starring J.B. Warner, Elinor Fair, Ses Bates, Willie May Carson, H.S. Karr, and Robert Grey.

This western comedy from the silent era was a true rarity until its recent video release rescued it from oblivion. *Big Stakes* is one of a series of Western’s directed by Efeldt (he is best known for directing *50,000 Dollar Reward* in 1924 starring Ken Maynard in his first lead role) In *Big Stakes*, J.B. Warner stars as a Texas gentleman who falls for a Mexican girl and tries to win her from a dashing rival, the Mexican General, in a contest involving Mexican jumping beans. When his new love rejects him, he returns home just in time to save his blonde hometown girl from a Ku Klux Klan leader who questions her “purity”.

This film’s somewhat liberal attitude toward race is in stark contrast to D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, 1915 and the exciting climax could have been intended as a subtle criticism of Griffith’s landmark epic. This movie is filled with action, romance, humor, all the staples of a good Western; bar fights, horse chases, and shoot outs.

Clifford S. Efeldt, former operator of a movie exchange, a director with Universal from 1916, and an associate of Sydney Chaplin. He then turned to the field of B-Westerns in the 1920’s, producing and directing a brief series starring J.B. Warner; and then later for poverty row mogul J. Charles Davis, creating Ken Maynard’s first Western vehicles.

Information on “Big Stakes” assembled by Hans J. Wollstein.

The Devil Music Ensemble, formed in Boston in 1999, is comprised of Brendon Wood on electric guitar, and synthesizer; Jonah Rapino on electric violin, harmonica, and synthesizer; and Tim Nylander on drums, and percussion. In its short history the DME has been a rock trio, an European folk band, a 40 piece modern orchestral ensemble, a house band for live theater, a country music review, and a multi-member ensemble performing live soundtracks for silent films.

“Devil Music Ensemble has established itself as one of the primary American groups composing and performing scores for silent films, and can be spoken of in the same breath as groups like The Alloy Orchestra and the Tin Hat Trio.”

Dylan Skolnick Director of Programming Cinema Arts Centre, NY

Devil Music has toured and performed “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari”, “Nosferatu”, and “Big Stakes” in movie theaters, museums, and colleges all over the country. The DME’s original score for “Big Stakes” is comprised of the sounds of classic country-western music harkening back to the times of Hank Williams and Bill Monroe. The score also reflects the film’s time spent over the border in Mexico with the group utilizing a number of Mexican folk melodies to paint the appropriate pictures. The DME has enjoyed performing for audiences that span from little children to silver foxes all in one venue; and looks forward to seeing you at the movies.