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A 58' documentary

Directed by Serge Bromberg and Eric Lange

Produced by ARTE GEIE



The Méliès Mystery



Synopsis

Georges Méliès has been hailed as the inventor of special effects. He shot more than 500 amazing films between 1896 and 1913. By 1923 he was bankrupt and burned his enrapturing works... Thanks to international archives and the negatives, discover his movies in their original beauty. First we delightfully uncover the personality of Georges Méliès, to learn how he came to this spectacular sacrifice. Then we begin a frantic search for his films in cellars and attics, until the recent discovery of an incredible treasure... A feat thought impossible!

In a gesture of despair, the director of *A Trip to the Moon* and *The Conquest of the Pole* burned the 520 original negatives of all his films, one by one, and all the copies of his films that had built his fame. In 1929, there were only 8 films by Georges Méliès still in circulation, three of which were incomplete – the last remnants of a work he had wanted to be ephemeral.

Méliès the magician had unknowingly played one last trick on us in his own way. And as lost and forgotten as they may have seemed, these negatives – which had actually gone up in smoke – reappeared across the world.

Hats off, sir Méliès.





Biography

Georges Méliès (1861-1938) was passionate about magic. In 1888, he bought the theater of the famous Robert-Houdin, located on the Grand Boulevards. In 1895, his career was turned upside down by the first projection of the Lumière brothers' cinematograph, which he attended. From then on, he devoted himself to mixing magic images, fairy tales and various tricks that he invented at a frantic pace, in films that quickly became legendary. *A Trip to the Moon*, *The Impossible Voyage*, *Under the Seas*, *The Dreyfus Affair*, *Joan of Arc*... Between 1896 and 1913, he shot more than 520 films in which demons and shooting stars competed with the most fantastic or nightmarish creatures.

His most famous film, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), was restored by Lobster Films, the Gan Foundation for Cinema and the Technicolor Foundation in a colorized version miraculously found in Barcelona, and opened the 2011 Cannes Film Festival.

He stopped filming in 1913, and passed away in 1938 after having been celebrated by the emerging film libraries around the world.





About the authors

Serge Bromberg and **Eric Lange** have been running Lobster Films for over 30 years. They love to find and restore rare films, but above all to tell cinema stories together. From the restoration of *A Trip to the Moon* (made in 2011), told in the movie *Le Voyage Extraordinaire*, to *la Naissance de Charlot*, the invention of sound and color in cinema (in two documentaries in progress) or in their monthly magazine *Retour de Flamme* (Cine+, 90 minutes chaque mois), they like to tell romantic and authentic adventures in which cinema is the main theme.

Drawing from the stock of images they have built up together, they are now telling the story of their latest international restoration adventure, in which the largest French (CNC, Cinémathèque française) and American (Library of Congress, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) archives are actively participating.

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