



THE WIZARD OF OZ
VICTOR FLEMING



RINGU
HIDEO NAKATA



BONNIE AND CLYDE
ARTHUR PENN



PULP FICTION
QUENTIN TARANTINO



RASHOMON
AKIRA KUROSAWA

BOYHOOD
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THE MOVIE BOOK

BIG IDEAS SIMPLY EXPLAINED



THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION
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THE SEVENTH SEAL
INGMAR BERGMAN



METROPOLIS
FRITZ LANG

SUNSET BOULEVARD
BILLY WILDER



DR. STRANGELOVE
STANLEY KUBRICK



IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE
FRANK CAPRA



SOME LIKE IT HOT
BILLY WILDER

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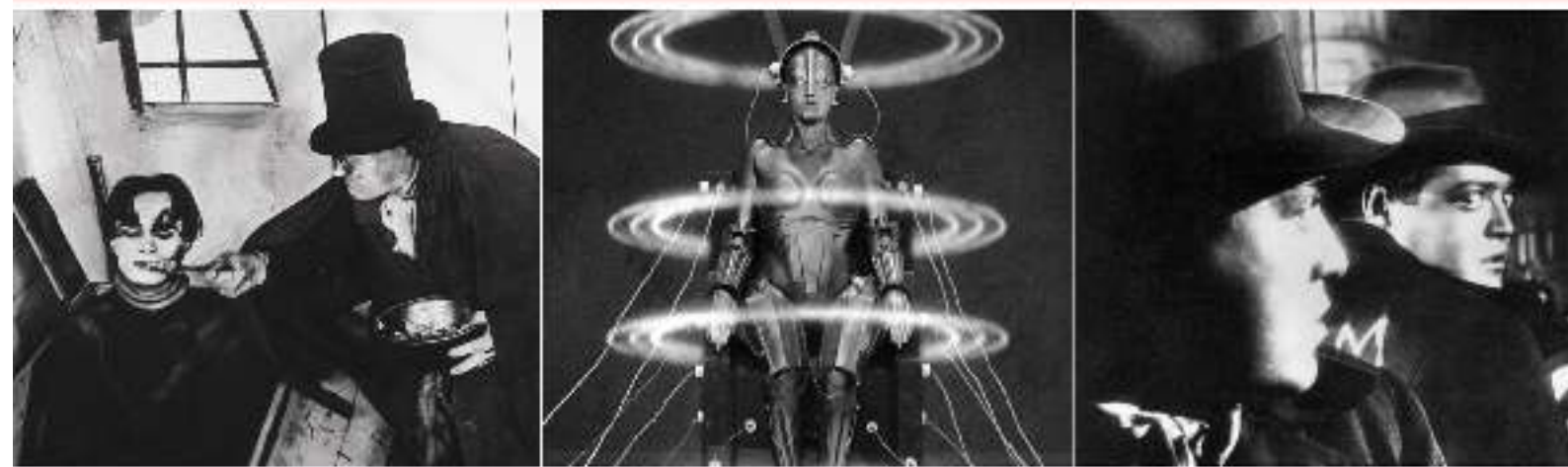
DIRECTORY

CONTRIBUTORS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

This guide describes, discusses, and pays tribute to some of the movies that best capture the wonder of cinema. The movies gathered here are those that the authors feel, in the imprecise way of these things, to have had the most seismic impact on both cinema and the world.

The journey starts in 1902, when Parisian showman Georges Méliès unveiled the latest in the series of short silent movies with which he had been entertaining his countrymen. It was a romp through space called *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le voyage dans la lune*), and it was a huge and instant success—not just in France but across the world. (Sadly for Méliès, much of that success was due to the movie being incessantly pirated by rivals.) Its popularity did more than any other movie of the time to secure the movie as the premier art form of the age. None before it had been as spectacular; none had such an intricate storyline.

"No matter where the cinema goes, we cannot afford to lose sight of its beginnings."

Martin Scorsese

Trains, panic, and hype

By the time Méliès was making his lunar adventure, cinema had already been established as a slightly disreputable pastime, to be enjoyed at theaters and fairgrounds. To find its true beginnings, it is necessary to step back further—to Paris again, but this time with two showmen in the spotlight. The pair, brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière, had their moment in 1896. That was when, after holding large-scale screenings of their movies the year before, they first showed the French public *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*—also known as *The Arrival of a Train*. It was a mere 50 seconds of footage in which, as the title suggests, a steam train entered La Ciotat station, shot from the adjacent platform. The sight sent all those watching fleeing in panic, convinced they were about to be mowed down by the speeding locomotive—or at least that's the story that circulated after the event. The exact truth has been lost to time, but either the Lumières had quickly mastered the new art form's ability to make the screen feel like life, or they had a stunning knack for promotional hype. Perhaps it doesn't matter either way—both those skills have a central place in the story of cinema.

But it may be necessary to step back further still. After all, before the Lumière brothers sent their audience bolting in terror, plenty of others had pioneered movies. There should be a tip of the hat to US inventor Thomas Edison, who had screened movies of boxing cats and men sneezing to individual customers a couple of years before the Lumières, and to English photographer Eadweard Muybridge,

whose 1880s studies of humans and animals in motion were a vital preface to the moving picture.

“I don’t know yet **what I’m going to tell them.** It’ll be pretty **close to the truth.**”

Philip Marlowe / *The Big Sleep*



Telling stories

In fact, the story of movie arguably stretches back to prehistoric times, to human ancestors hunched around a fire as one among them used the light to cast shadows on the wall and illustrate tales of fearsome beasts or unlikely heroism. When the audience settle into their seats for an insanely expensive, effects-fueled blockbuster on a towering IMAX screen, they’re back around that fire. Movie in the 21st century is still a telling of stories with words and images, bringing those images to believable life.

This guide is an attempt to build a narrative of movie history out of the movies themselves, taking a tour of a hundred or so movies from Méliès on through the next century and beyond. Each entry discusses where a movie came from, maps its inspiration and how it was made, documents the men and women whose talent shaped it, and details the ripples of influence it sent out.

It is a story that crosses time. In the silent age, the first men and women explored the possibilities of moving pictures. From there, the story slips into the 1930s and 1940s, the gilded years when cinemas stood on every main street and movies were beloved slabs of mass appeal; the age of movie stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, and James Stewart. In the 1950s, filmmakers from Europe, India, and Japan created a string of masterpieces that still receive acclaim to this day; this was the time of Henri-Georges Clouzot, Akira Kurosawa, Yasujirô Ozu, Nicholas Ray, and Satyajit Ray. A new generation took hold in the 1960s and 1970s, and broke the established molds. And then the story of cinema arrives in the present, where movies are made with technology that would have been the stuff of science fiction even 10 years ago, whole worlds spun into being at the push of a button.

“I live now in **a world of ghosts,** a prisoner in **my dreams.**”

Antonius Block / *The Seventh Seal*

Blissful immersion

The beauty of movies is that every individual has a different way of looking at them, and a different route into loving them. As a writer and movie journalist, this book's consultant has spent much of his adult life in cinemas seeking out movies that can give him that feeling of blissful immersion he was hooked on as a child: "I sit while the lights dim and I'm the seven-year-old who yelped with laughter at Harpo Marx on a rigged-up screen at a friend's birthday party; or who escaped a family Christmas at 10 to switch on the old TV set upstairs, and found that *Citizen Kane* was playing; or whose mind was comprehensively blown at 14 by the dark, unnerving movies of David Lynch. Those moments live on every time I see a film."

A couple of decades after *A Trip to the Moon*, with a luckless Méliès soon to find himself selling trinkets at Montparnasse train station, the youthful medium was given a nickname that still fits today: the "Seventh Art," after architecture, painting, music, sculpture, dance, and poetry. Its author was Ricciotto Canudo, an Italian scholar. To Canudo, the power of the movies was that they brought each of the great art forms of the past together into one—to watch movies was to experience all six of the older art forms at once.



Movies evolve

So many years later, the sheer sensory rush of the movies is still enough to overwhelm the audience, in the very best sense of the word. It's hard to imagine the creak and crackle of cinema's early years drawing a viewer into the screen the way a movie does now—but as the Lumières' train movie shows, movies could make audiences take them as real from the start.

Charting how the movies have evolved as an art form is one of the great joys of being a movie lover. Sometimes the advances may be obvious: the momentous lurches from silence to sound, and from black and white to color. Elsewhere, the revolutions were subtler, as the crafts of filmmaking—cinematography, editing—took on lives of their own.

The wider historical context in which movies were made also needs to be considered—when you talk about movies, you're never *just* talking about movies. Once you dive into the history of movies, you can't help dealing with history in general. Look at the last century of movies and you see real life running through it like the rings of a tree. Purely as cinema, it is hard to overstate the impact of

Godzilla, the movie monster who terrorized Tokyo Bay in 1954—and what was Godzilla but Japan’s nuclear trauma made scaly flesh? You don’t need to be a movie lover to quote a line from *Some Like Hot* (“Nobody’s perfect!”)—but how different a movie would it have been had its Austrian-born director, Billy Wilder, not been forced, like so many other European filmmakers, to flee to the US as the Nazis took power? The Russian Revolution, the Cold War, the hippie era, feminism, the computer age—every major moment in world history is up there on screen somewhere.

All this in a medium that began in the fairground, one step from the circus, and has spent much of its existence as an excuse for young couples to sit together in the dark. That what was happening on the screen ascended to such glorious entertainment was unlikely enough. That it became art is perhaps even more extraordinary.

“If we’re looking for a shark, we’re not gonna find him on the land.”

Hooper / Jaws

“We can’t help identifying with the protagonist. It’s coded in our movie-going DNA.”

Roger Eber

A communal experience

In many ways, it is their contradictions that make the movies what they are. How else to explain the effect they have on their audiences? When a viewer falls for a movie, it can feel like it has been made for them and them alone, like a hand extending from the screen. And yet, if you have ever watched a really great comedy in the middle of a packed cinema, or flinched to a horror alongside two hundred others doing exactly the same, you will know that movies are meant to be watched in a crowd, that cinema grew up as an experience to be shared with others.

Over the years, movies have been viewed in many different ways. At first, they were novelties, cheap dollops of sensation. Then they were impossibly glamorous moments of escapism whose stars glittered in pristine black and white. They evolved into profound accounts of the human condition, made by great auteurs. Today, they are often vastly expensive spectacles designed to make still more money for studios and corporations. They make you feel that you’ve slipped behind the eyes of the people on screen, the whole thing not unlike a dream or an act of hypnosis, until you stumble back out into the light, maybe understanding something new about yourself, maybe just aching from laughing so hard.

“Art, that’s special. What can you bring to it that nobody else can?”

Mr. Turlington / Boyhood



A world of choice

Some of the movies in this guide were adored by critics; others were pure crowd-pleasers. Quite a few were neither, flops that later generations then realized were masterpieces. Genre doesn't come into it. Thrillers rub shoulders with Westerns, romance with neorealism, and they all have to make room for the occasional musical.

Language and nationality are no concern either. Hollywood is well represented—although many see it as a dirty word, the true movie lover knows how many good things Tinseltown has produced over the years. But there has always been a big world beyond Beverly Hills, and no worthwhile book about movies could ignore that. *The White Ribbon* (2009) deserves its place every bit as much as *Jaws* (1975).

There will, of course, be both omissions and inclusions that will puzzle each reader. Part of the beauty of cinema is that no two opinions on movies are ever quite the same. If this were just a list of the favorites of the consultant and authors, it would deviate in places from the list that follows. You might think the job of selection would get easier if the criterion were “greatness,” but really, that's just as subjective. Rather, this guide chooses its movies as an atlas of influence, a collection of landmarks, and the hope is that, if a reader's own best-loved movie is missing, there will be others that make up for it. And also that there will be at least one movie that readers will choose to watch for the first time.

"When you clean them up, when you make movies respectable, you kill them."

Pauline Ka



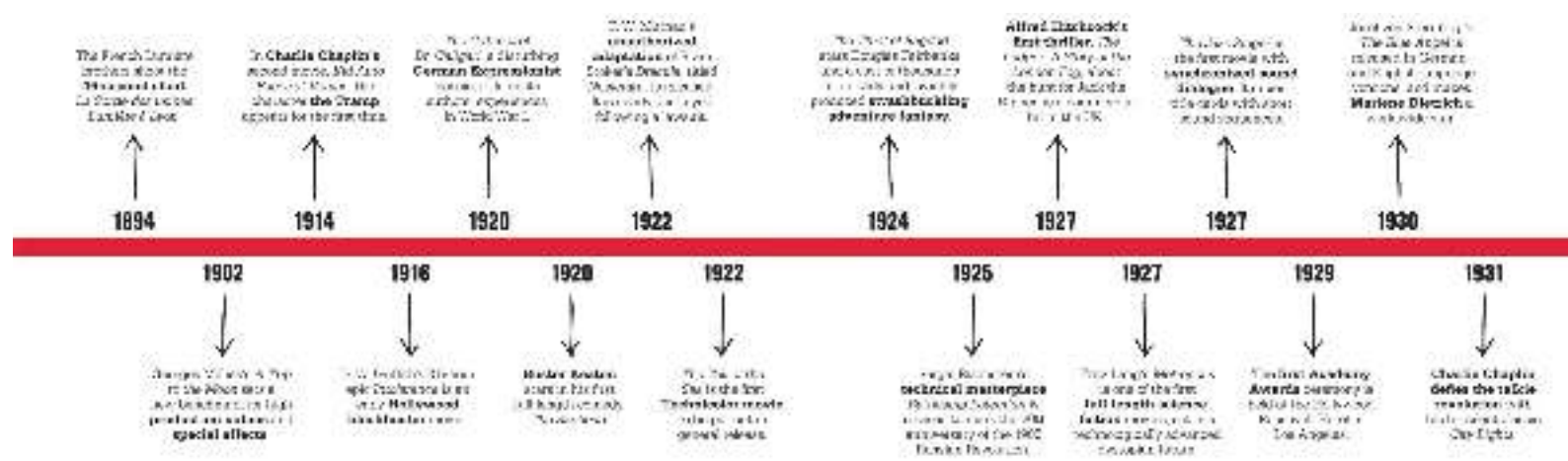
VISIONARIES

1902–1931



INTRODUCTION

Movies are so much a part of today's culture that it is hard to imagine a time when they weren't there at all. It's hard, too, to appreciate the awe felt by the public of the 1890s at seeing moving pictures for the first time, as ghostly figures came to life before their eyes. From a 21st-century viewpoint, however, the real shock is how far those "movies" changed in the next three decades—quickly evolving into gorgeously vivid feature movies.



Magic on screen

For the early filmmakers, there were no masters to learn from. Some had a background in theater, others in photography. Either way, they were breaking new ground, and none more so than Georges Méliès. As soon as this sometime magician had begun entertaining the French public with movies, he looked for ways to make them more splendid and spectacular. In America, too, visionaries were at work. There, cinema thrived thanks to the likes of Edwin S. Porter, a former electrician who ended his 1903 feature *The Great Train Robbery* with a gunman turning toward the camera and appearing to fire at the audience.

Other filmmakers had grander plans. A few years later, Porter was approached by a fledgling playwright who hoped to sell him a script. Porter turned down the script, but hired the young man as an actor—and that same young man, the gifted and still controversial D. W. Griffith, later became a director himself, helping to father the modern blockbuster.

Movies as art

Although the pioneers clustered in France and America, it was in Germany that the movies first became art. In the aftermath of World War I, a country mired in political and economic chaos gave rise to a string of masterpieces whose influence still echoes today. The silent era was filled with some of the most glorious, pristine filmmaking that cinema would ever know: the works of Robert Wiene, F. W. Murnau, and Fritz Lang. Yet even then, it wasn't just directors who deserved the credit—take the giant Karl Freund, a huge man with an equally vast knowledge of cameras, who would become a master cinematographer, strapping the camera to his body and setting it on bicycles to revolutionize how a movie could look.

Painters were also drawn to the screen, and in 1929, the famed Surrealist Salvador Dalí worked with young movie fanatic named Luis Buñuel on the eternally strange *Un Chien Andalou*; Dalí then stepped away from movies, but Buñuel continued making iconoclastic movies into the 1970s. There were revolutionaries of the political kind, too. In the Soviet Union, cinema was embraced as *the* art form of the people. Movies became key to the global battle for hearts and minds.

Hollywood begins

Back in America, the cinematic hustlers became the first studio bosses of Hollywood. They built their businesses on stars such as Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks, and Greta Garbo.

The biggest stars were clowns, and of all the wonders of the silent age, it is the comedies that most reliably delight today. In Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, Hollywood found two true geniuses who had honed their craft in American vaudeville and British music hall and now worked their magic on camera. Masters of mime, slapstick, and pathos, they could make audiences laugh just by looking at them. They were also meticulous filmmakers with a taste for innovation.

If one person defined the early movies, it was the phenomenally famous and endlessly ambitious Chaplin. By the end of this era, sound arrived—it was 1927 when Al Jolson declared in *The Jazz Singer*: “You ain’t heard nothing yet!” But Chaplin’s love for silent movies was such that he kept making them, and in 1931, with *City Lights*, he made one of the very greatest. By then, he had already helped the movies claim their rightful place, where they still are today—in the center of people’s lives.

"Charlie Chaplin and I would have a friendly contest: Who could do the feature film with the least subtitles?"

Buster Keaton



LABOR OMNIA VINCIT

A TRIP TO THE MOON / 1902

IN CONTEXT

GENRE

Science fiction, fantasy

DIRECTOR

Georges Méliès

WRITERS

Georges Méliès, from novels by Jules Verne and H. G. Wells (all uncredited)

STARS

Georges Méliès, Bleurette Bernon, François Lallement, Henri Delannoy

BEFORE

1896 Méliès's short movie *Le Manoir du Diable* (*The Devil's Castle*) is often credited as the first horror movie.

1899 *Cinderella* is the first of Méliès's movies to use multiple scenes to tell a story.

AFTER

1904 Méliès adapts another Jules Verne story with *Whirling the Worlds*, a fantasy about a group of scientists who fly a steam train into the sun.

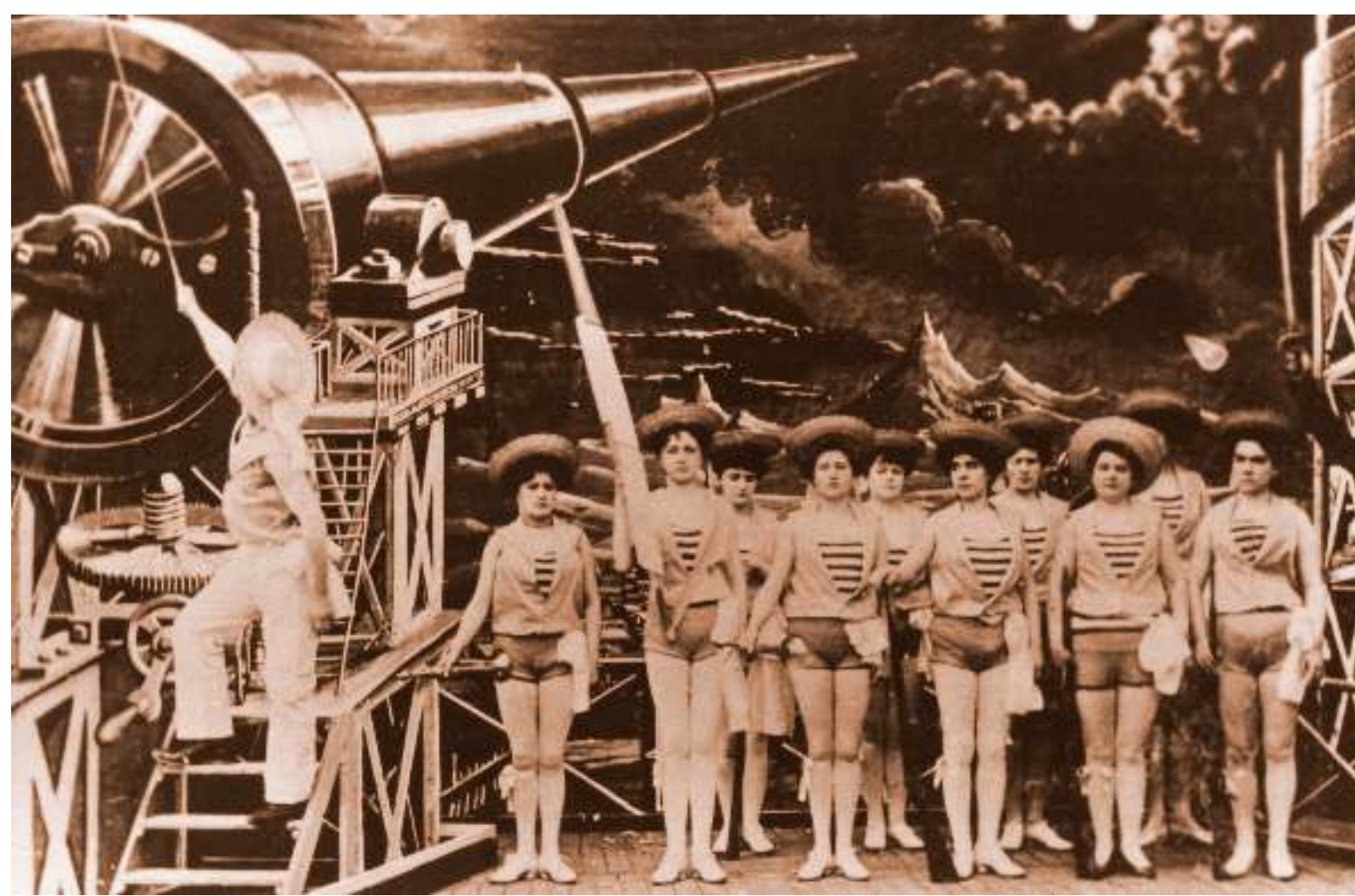
As its title suggests, the 12-minute-long movie *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*) is a fantastical account of a lunar expedition. A group of scientists meets, a huge gun is constructed, and astronauts are blasted to the moon, where they fall into the hands of the moon-dwelling Selenites. They are brought before the King of the Selenites, but manage to escape. They return to Earth, where a parade is held in their honor and an alien is put on display.

Magic tricks

Some pioneers of the cinema, such as the French Lumière Brothers, saw the new medium as a scientific breakthrough, a means of documenting reality. Frenchman Georges Méliès, the director of *Trip to the Moon*, however, recognized it as a new way of performing magic tricks.

Méliès's short movies were simply entertainments, created for the sensation seekers who roamed the

boulevards of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Filled with chorus girls, ghosts, and Mephistophelian devils, the movies started out as recordings of simple magic acts and evolved into fanciful stories realized through innovative and audacious camera trickery—cinema’s fledgling special effects. By 1902, Méliès was ready to pull off his biggest illusion: to take his audiences to the moon and back.

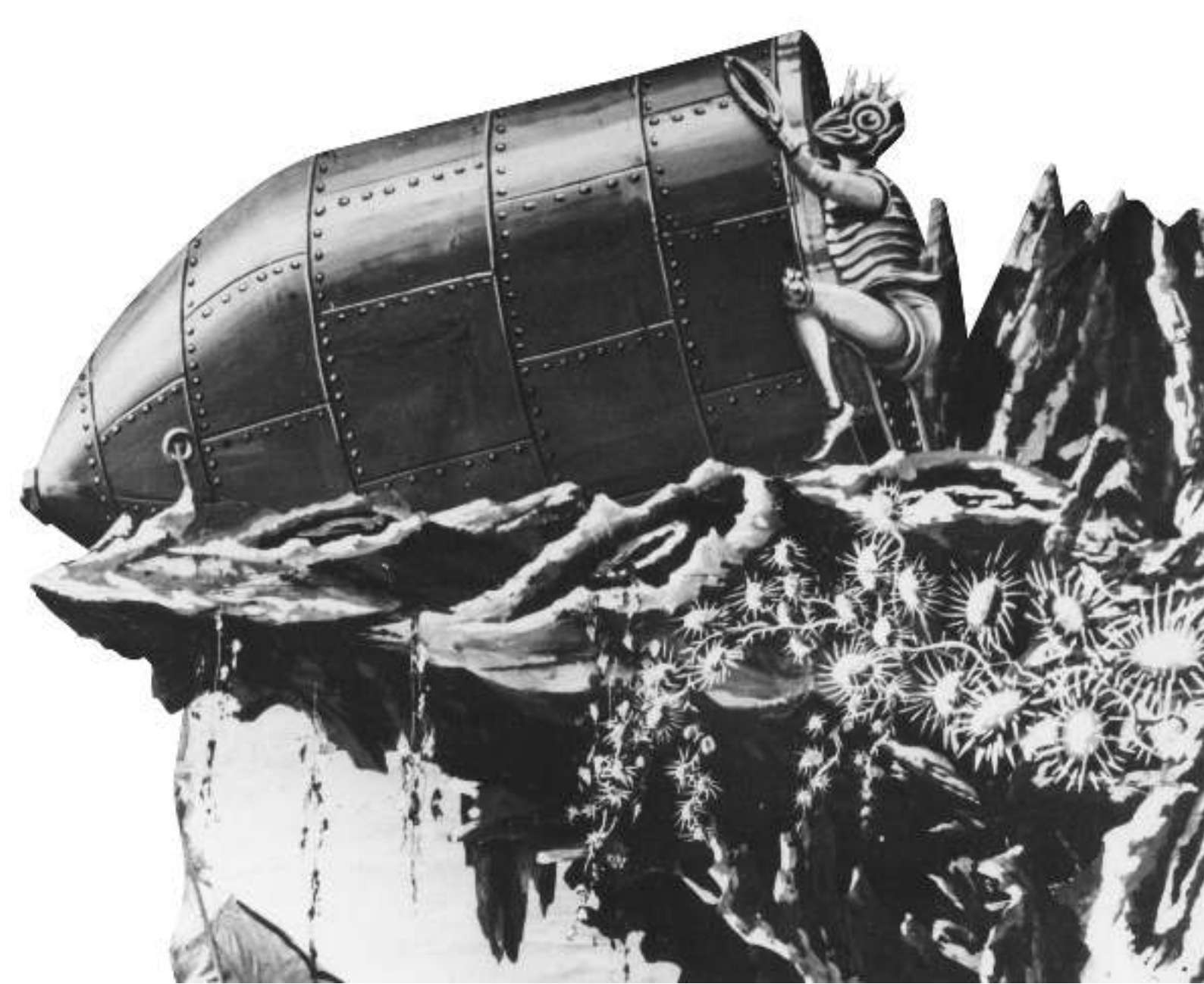


Chorus girls line up to fire the Monster Gun that will blast a spaceship to the moon. Méliès’s overblown theatrical style keeps the action more absurd than heroic.

Sci-fi and satire

A Trip to the Moon was the first movie to be inspired by the popular “scientific romances” of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, and is widely acknowledged as the world’s first science-fiction movie. But while it is true that Méliès conjured up the basic iconography of sci-fi cinema—the sleek rocket ship, the moon hurtling toward the camera, and the little green men—the director did not set out to invent genre. His aim was to present a mischievous satire of Victorian values, a boisterous comedy lampooning the reckless industrial revolutionaries of Western Europe.

In Méliès’s hands, men of science are destructive fools. Led by Professor Barbenfouillis (played by Méliès himself), they squabble and jump up and down like unruly children, and when they land on the lunar surface, their rocket stabs the Man in the Moon in his eye. They cause chaos in the kingdom of the Selenites—whom they treat as mindless savages—and they only make it home by accident. A statue of Barbenfouillis appears in the final scene—a caricature of a pompous old man, resembling one of Méliès’s political cartoons. Its inscription reads “*Labor omnia vincit*” (Work conquers all), which, in light of the chaos that has preceded it, takes on a decidedly ironic tone.



When they reach the moon, the scientists discover a strange land. Their arrogant attitude toward the moon people has led the movie to be seen as an anti-imperialist satire.

GEORGES MÉLIÈS Director



Méliès's early short movies experimented with the theatrical techniques and special effects he had mastered as a stage magician. He used the camera to make people and objects disappear, reappear, or transform completely, and devised countless technical innovations. Méliès wrote, directed, and starred in more than 500 motion pictures, pioneering the genres of science fiction, horror, and suspense.

Key movies

1896 *The Devil's Castle*

1902 *A Trip to the Moon*

1904 *Whirling the Worlds*

1912 *The Conquest of the Pole*

What else to watch: *The Man with the Rubber Head* (1901) • *A Trip to Mars* (1910) • [Metropolis](#) (1927) • *The Invisible Man* (1933) • *First Men in the Moon* (1964) • *Hugo* (2011)



OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

INTOLERANCE / 1916

IN CONTEXT

GENRE

Historical epic

DIRECTOR

D. W. Griffith

WRITERS

D. W. Griffith, Anita Loos

STARS

Vera Lewis, Ralph Lewis, Constance Talmadge, Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Robert Harron

BEFORE

1914 Italian director Giovanni Pastrone makes *Cabiria*, an early feature-length epic.

1915 Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* is the first US feature movie, but sparks controversy with its racist content.

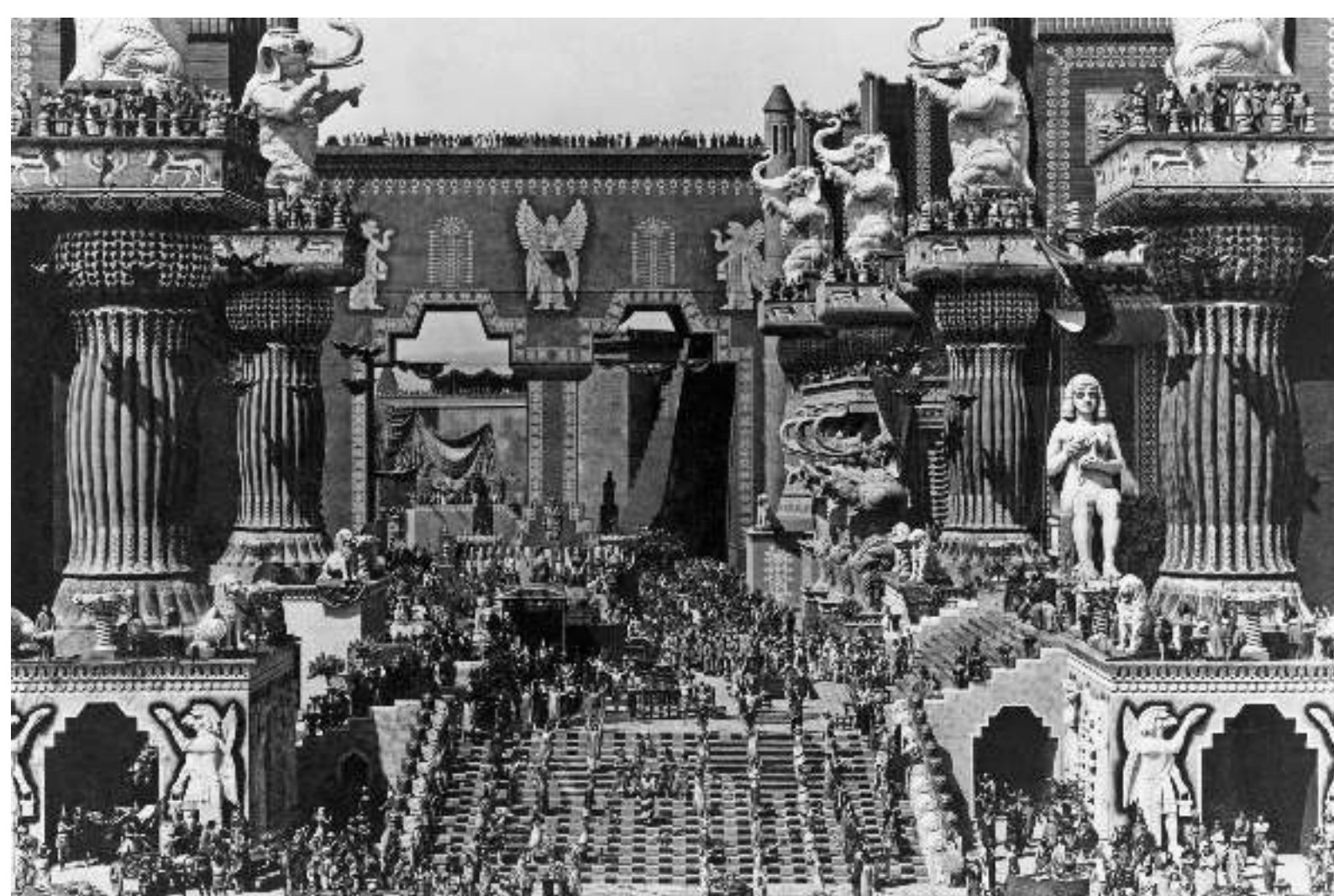
AFTER

1931 Griffith's final movie, *The Struggle* (his second sound feature), is a box-office failure. It is a semiautobiographical tale of a battle with alcoholism.

One of the most influential movies ever made, *Intolerance* is truly epic in its scope, with elaborate sets and countless extras. It was not the first movie to use techniques such as camera tracking and close-ups, but director D. W. Griffith used them with such mastery that many regard him as the father of modern moviemaking.

The movie was born in controversy. Griffith's previous movie in 1915, *The Clansman*, came to be called *The Birth of a Nation* and was the first full-length feature movie made in the US. Its innovative techniques foreshadowed those used in *Intolerance*. It was a hit, but was condemned by many for its overt racism, glorifying slavery and the Ku Klux Klan.

Its commercial success, however, bankrolled the cast of thousands required to make *Intolerance*, which lost as much at the box office as *The Clansman* had made. Some critics describe *Intolerance* as an apology for the earlier movie, but there is nothing apologetic in its ambition and scale.



The central courtyard in Babylon was recreated with a life-size set. More than 3,000 extras were employed for Belshazzar's lavish feast.

Four-part drama

Four stories of intolerance, spanning three millennia, interweave through the movie, each with a different film tint. They are linked by the ever-present image of a mother, played by Lillian Gish, rocking a cradle to symbolize the passing generations. Captioned “Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,” it suggests that nothing changes.

The first of the four stories focuses on the conflict at the fall of ancient Babylon, fueled by the intolerant devotees of two warring religions. The second tells how, after the wedding at Cana, Christ driven to his death by intolerance. The third tale depicts the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacres in France in 1572, when Catholics massacred the Protestant Huguenots. The final story is of two young lovers who are caught up in a conflict between ruthless capitalists and moralistic striking workers. Griffith is clearly on the side of the lovers, who are hounded by the type of social reformers he clearly equates with those who protested against *The Clansman*.

The four stories are intercut with increasing rapidity as the movie approaches its climax. Racing chariots in one story cut into speeding trains and cars in another; this effect was achieved almost entirely in the edit, since Griffith shot the sections chronologically. To some critics, the effect is almost symphonic, while others find it tiresome. But there is no doubt that this crosscutting and use of the edit was to prove hugely influential.

Other technical innovations we now take for granted include dissolves between scenes and the fade-out. Most significant of all, perhaps, was the close-up. The full-length shots of earlier movies called for an exaggerated, pantomime style of acting to convey the story. But as Griffith said, “The close-up enabled us to reach real acting, restraint, acting that is a duplicate of real life.”



Jesus drags his cross through jeering crowds in the movie's biblical story.

D. W. GRIFFITH Director



Born on a farm in Kentucky in 1875, David Llewelyn Wark Griffith was 1 when his father died, leaving the family in poverty. After several years of stage work, he got an acting job for a movie company in 1908, and was soon making his own movies, some of the first ever made in Hollywood. He set up his own company to make *The Birth of a Nation*, whose racism caused protests and riots. Griffith made about 500 movies in total, but his career entered into a downward spiral after *Intolerance*. He died in 1948.

Key movies

1909 *A Corner of Wheat*

1915 *The Birth of a Nation*

1916 *Intolerance*

1919 *Broken Blossoms*

What else to watch: *Cleopatra* (1917) • *Broken Blossoms* (1919) • *Sunrise* (1927) • *Metropolis* (1927) • *Modern Times* (1936) • *Gone with the Wind* (1939) • *Ben-Hur* (1959)



I MUST BECOME CALIGARI!

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI / 1920

IN CONTEXT

GENRE

Horror

DIRECTOR

Robert Wiene

WRITERS

Hans Janowitz, Carl Mayer

STARS

Werner Krauss, Conrad Veidt, Friedrich Fehér, Hans Heinrich von Twardowski, Lil Dagover

BEFORE

1913 *The Weapons of Youth* is Wiene's first movie, now lost.

AFTER

1924 *The Hands of Orlac*, an Expressionist movie by Wiene, is later remade twice and inspires many horror movies.

1925 Wiene directs a silent movie of Richard Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. Strauss conducts a live orchestra for the premiere, but a tour of the US is canceled with the arrival of sound movie.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari has been described as the first feature-length horror movie, and it is easy to see its legacy in modern cinema, but not for the obvious reasons. Its ingenious set design—still avant-garde in its use of palpably unreal, theatrical environments—is the most striking of its features. Yet it is other, more subtle elements of Robert Wiene's groundbreaking psychological thriller that have become fixtures of movie storytelling.

The “unreliable narrator” had long been a staple of literature, since the time of the ancient Greek dramatist Aristophanes, but it had yet to be used in cinema. *Caligari* pioneers the use of this device in the character of Francis (Friedrich Fehér). The story Francis tells starts, innocently enough, with a love triangle, as two friends compete for the affections of the same woman—but of course, all is not as it seems.

The movie's screenwriters, Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer, originally wrote the story as an

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