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THE HISTORY OF CINEMA: GEORGES MELIES

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Introduction:

The relevance of the essay is justified by the fact that films and the film industry are very interesting and depend on your creativity as well as profitability. In this essay, we will be talking about filmmaker George Melies. His approach to cinema and his record. My goal is to learn more about him and also to know his influence in modern films.

1. Who is Georges Melies?

Georges Melies, (born December 8, 1861, Paris, France—died January 21, 1938, Paris), early French experimenter with motion pictures, the first to film fictional narratives.

Georges Melies was a French illusionist and film director famous for leading many technical and narrative developments in the earliest days of cinema.

On December 28, 1895, he was a member of the first audience in the world to see the Lumiere brothers' Cinematographe.

He tried to buy Cinematographe equipment from the Lumieres but they refused to sell to him. He got into the film business by buying a projector from Robert W. Paul and buying a Bioscope camera.

His first films, like those of the Lumieres, were simple life scenes which he added to the program at his theatre, the Théâtre Robert-Houdin. He later filmed scenes of himself doing magic tricks.

Melies worked with two engineers at his theatre workshop to build a camera of his own. The first prototype weighed over 75 pounds.

While shooting one of his life scenes in the Place de l'Opera in Paris, the camera jammed. It took about a minute to clear the problem and resume shooting. When the film was processed and screened, Melies saw a bus suddenly turn into a hearse; people in the scene suddenly appeared or disappeared. This accident led to his discovery of stop motion trickery which became his first filmic special effects technique. This stop motion technique had previously been discovered and used by Thomas A. Edison, but Melies made extensive use of it in his short films.

His films include *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *Le voyage à travers l'impossible* (1904), both involving strange, surreal journeys somewhat in the style of Jules Verne, and are considered among the most important early science fiction films.

Melies died of cancer on 21 January 1938 at the age of 76.

In 2016, a Melies film long thought lost, *Match de prestidigitation* (1904), was discovered in a Czechoslovak film archive.

2. Innovation of George Melies

When the first genuine movies, made by the Lumière brothers, were shown in Paris in 1895, Melies, a professional magician and manager-director of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, was among the spectators. The films were scenes from real life having the novelty of motion, but Melies saw at once their further possibilities. He acquired a camera, built a glass-enclosed studio near Paris, wrote scripts, designed ingenious sets, and used actors to film stories. With a magician's intuition, he discovered and exploited the basic camera tricks: stop motion, slow motion, dissolve, fade-out, superimposition, and double exposure.

From 1899 to 1912 Melies made more than 400 films, the best of which combine illusion, comic burlesque, and pantomime to treat themes of fantasy in a playful and absurd fashion. He specialized in depicting extreme physical transformations of the human body (such as the dismemberment of heads and limbs) for comic effect. His films included pictures as diverse as *Cléopâtre* (1899; Cleopatra's Tomb), *Le Christ marchant sur les eaux* (1899; Christ Walking on Water), *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902; A Trip to the Moon), *Le Voyage à travers l'impossible* (1904; The Voyage Across the Impossible), and *Hamlet* (1908). He also filmed studio reconstructions of news events as an early kind of newsreel. It never occurred to him to move the camera for close-ups or long shots. The commercial growth of the industry forced him out of business in 1913, and he died in poverty.

Among these films, we would like to briefly talk about *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)

Motivated by the works of Jules Verne, the 16-minute film sees a group of Scientists invent and build a spaceship, and then fly to the Moon to explore the wonders of space but, once there, they encounter Alien-beings and have to escape to come home. Melies' film, presented on this Arrow Films limited edition release in black and white and colour, contains more expansive storytelling than many lower-quality films that are lauded for being no budget to this day.

3. The role of George Melies in the movie

Melies was an especially prolific innovator in the use of special effects, popularizing such techniques as substitution splices, multiple exposures, time-lapse photography, dissolves, and hand-painted color.

Melies wasn't just an early cinema pioneer, he was also an animator, magician and inventor who undoubtedly influenced so many methods you see today in filmmaking, across the genres and styles. While he did have the money to create such visions, you still need creativity and *Le Voyage dans la Lune* is packed to the rafters with originality.

Conclusion:

We have studied the stories of George Melies and his activities, and now we can say that Melies was a particularly prolific innovator in the use of special effects, who brought a lot of new things to cinema.

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