

First Light

The Birth of Cinema, 1894 - 1901

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Northwest Film Forum

Presented by The Sprocket Society
Seattle, WA

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the films of Max Skladanowsky will not be shown this evening as had been previously announced. We deeply regret this change to the program, and the omission of these historically important films.

All films this evening are presented from 16mm prints.

Titles [in brackets] are provisional, attributed to films with no known official title.

Thomas A. Edison began thinking about the development of motion pictures in 1888 after studying the successful motion-sequence still photographic experiments of Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey. By early 1889, Edison had conceived the ambitious notion that it must be possible to record motion as perceived by the human eye and play it back in real time. His idea was to go beyond his predecessors, who had adapted the existing photographic equipment of the day to record brief sequences of motion, and invent an entirely new technology to do “for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear.”

To turn his new invention into reality, Edison assigned responsibility for day-to-day development to one of his best assistants, a young Englishman named W. K. L. Dickson. By June of 1891, Dickson produced a series of successful experimental motion pictures that were shown to visiting groups at the Edison laboratory in New Jersey.

Over the next two years Dickson worked to perfect the two basic machines required for successful motion pictures: a device to record moving images, which he and Edison called the Kinetograph; and a machine to view the results, which they called the Kinetoscope. A major problem that slowed Dickson's work in the beginning was the nonexistence in the commercial marketplace of another essential invention – motion picture film stock. After Eastman Kodak began supplying quantities of reliable film stock in the fall of 1893, the road to commercial development of the movies was opened.

“A Sneeze Caught On Film” [n.d.]

American Treasures of the Library of Congress, Library of Congress
(<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr018.html>)

This Evening's Program

A Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze (1894)

aka *Fred Ott's Sneeze*, aka *The Sneeze*

Edison Manufacturing Company

Cameraman: William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson

Filed at some point between January 2-7, 1894 in Edison's "Black Maria" studio at West Orange, NJ. It is the earliest surviving copyrighted film, printed on a long strip of paper and received by the Library of Congress on January 9, 1894.

It was shot strictly as a promotion for use with an article in *Harper's Magazine*. It was never officially released for exhibition as a film.

Magic Lantern Movie (1976)

Produced, Directed, and Edited by Maxine Haleff

Written by Maxine Haleff and Cecile Starr

(Regrettably, this rare print is missing the opening titles; full original running time is 9 min.)

A short documentary tracing the development of magic lanterns. The collection of Nat Myers, Jr. is shown and demonstrations are made of early colorful images and movement patterns. Early toy movie projector are also seen. Narrated, with a music box soundtrack. Includes an excerpt from the Georges Méliès film, *The Magic Lantern* (1903).

Films of the 1890s (aka An Edison Album) (1894-1899)

Edison Manufacturing Company

Approx. 14 min.

Music: excerpts from *Mass in C* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; plus "Raks Baladi Hag Ibrahim (Country Dance)" by the Mozmar Cairo Orchestra (ca. 1920)

A collection of Kinetoscope and other films. The slow motion effect is due to the fact that the earliest Edison films were shot at a very high frame rate (40 frames per second or more), and the original duplicates of these from the 1950s were copied as-is and not time-corrected.

Film Titles:

Chinese Laundry (aka [Robetta and Doretto no. 2]) (1894) — Directed by William Kennedy Laurie Dickson. Cast: Robetta and Phil Doretto (Phil Lauter). Filmed in the Black Maria studio in New Jersey. From the Maguire & Baucus catalogue: "The pursuit of Hop Lee by an irate policeman."

The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots (1895) — Directed by Alfred Clark. Photographed by William Heise. Cast: Robert Thomae (as Mary, Queen of Scots). From the Maguire & Baucus catalogue: "Representing the beheading of Mary, Queen of Scots. A realistic reproduction of an historic scene."

Quite possibly the very first trick film, in which a live actor portraying the doomed Mary is swapped out (by stop-action) for a dummy that then gets its head chopped off with an axe. The effect is actually nearly seamless (pardon the expression) and still prompts gasps from modern audiences. One cannot help but wonder if perhaps this was the true inspiration for Georges Méliès, rather than the legendary jammed camera accidentally “transforming” a common horse cart into a hearse.

[Dickson Experimental Sound Film] (silent print) (ca. fall 1894 – spring 1895) — The first attempt at synchronizing sound and film; a laboratory experiment never publicly released.

Irwin-Rice Kiss (aka *The Kiss*, *The May Irwin Kiss*, *The Widow Jones*) (1896) — Directed by William Kennedy Laurie Dickson. Cast: May Irwin (Beatrice Byke), John C. Rice (Billy Bilke). From Maguire & Baucus catalogue: “An osculatory performance by May Irwin and John Rice. The most popular subject ever shown.” A legendary film depicting a scene (a moment, really) from an exceptionally popular stage show of the day. The film was one of the first bona fide smash hits of cinema, so much so that it even saved the job of the male actor, whom the producers felt was too old to continue in the role. *The Kiss* caused a scandal due its “lascivious” content, causing it to be banned in a number of cities.

Feeding the Doves (aka *Feeding Pigeons*) (1896) — Produced by James H. White, photographed by William Heise. A film imitating another by the Lumière Brothers. From the Maguire & Baucus catalogue: “A farm yard picture, showing a young girl and her baby sister scattering grain to the doves and chickens. The fluttering birds and excited fowls give an abundance of action to the scene, which is one of the prettiest, clearest and most attractive ever taken.”

A Morning Bath (1896) — Produced by James White, photographed by William Heise. A black woman bathing her baby, who’s clearly unhappy about the experience, causing mom to unsuccessfully stifle her laughter. From the Maguire & Baucus catalogue (summary edited to remove offensive words): “This scene presents a[n]... African mother in the act of giving her struggling [child] a bath in a tub of suds. This is a clear and distinct picture in which the contrast between the complexion of the bather and the white soapsuds is strongly marked. A very amusing and popular subject.”

The Burning Stable (1896) — Produced by James White, photographed by William Heise. From the Maguire & Baucus catalogue: “Shows a barn actually in flames, from which four horses and a burning wagon are rescued by firemen and stable hands. The scene is exciting, full of action from beginning to end, and all its details are clearly and sharply defined. Thick volumes of smoke pouring from the doors and windows of the stable add greatly to the realistic effect.”

The Black Diamond Express (1896) — Directed and photographed by James H. White and William Heise. Shot near Wysox, Pennsylvania, on 1 December 1896, it was intended to compete against American Mutoscope’s *The Empire State Express* (1896). Rail workers hammering spikes have to run out of the way when the Express comes racing through. From the Maguire & Baucus catalogue supplement: “This scene presents the famous Lehigh Valley ‘flyer’ emerging from a wood in the distance and approaching the camera under full head of steam. A section gang in the foreground, engaged in repairing track, wave their hats to the engineer, who is leaning out of the cab window. The snowy linen which the porters wave from the platform of the dining car adds to the effect produced. The ‘Black Diamond’ is undoubtedly the handsomest and one of the fastest trains in America, and the subject is the only one in existence showing an express train making seventy miles an hour.”

[New York Street Scenes] (1896-98) — Several early actuality films stitched together, primarily shots of the elevated train system.

Fatima (aka *Fatima’s Dance* and *Fatima’s Coochee-Coochee Dance*) (1896, original and censored versions) — From *The Phonoscope* (1899): “This is the lady whose graceful interpretations of the poetry of motion has made this dance so popular of recent years.” Fatima was a widely-known

performer at the time, part of a fad for “exotic dances” that followed the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893. Ironically, the film also became one of the first cases of cinema censorship because of Chicago. In 1907, by order of a Chicago censorship committee, a grid-like pattern was printed on the film to partially obscure parts of Fatima’s bust and hips. In fact, in the first two or three years of production, some 25 percent of the Edison Company’s films shot were “coochee coochee” dance numbers. But as Charles Musser has noted, “Significantly, few of these films were ever listed in Edison catalogues – and then only long after their production. This suggests that a body of Edison films were circulated more or less clandestinely.” And yet the numbers show these films were extremely popular. An 1896 letter from an Edison distributor to an exhibitor said, “A man in Buffalo has one of these films and informs us that he frequently has forty or fifty men waiting in line to see it.”

A Wringing Good Joke (1899) — Photographed by Edwin S. Porter. A child pranks his snoozing father by hooking his tie into mom’s laundry wringer when she’s not looking. She cranks away until pop falls back and the entire wood laundry tub falls smack on his head.

Dewar’s Scotch Whiskey (aka, *Dewar’s: Its Scotch*) (1897) — One of the very first commercials, albeit with no evident mention of the product, and a ridiculously racist one at that. It consists entirely of three men in vaguely “Scottish” kilts, regalia, and very fake beards dancing with ridiculous uproar. This film was originally projected on an outdoor billboard.

Lumière’s First Picture Show (1895-1897)

Lumière Company

Directed by Auguste and Louis Lumière

Approx. 16 min.

Music: selected French cylinder recordings, 1898-1907

Contrary to the title, this anthology gathers selected first films by the Lumière brothers, shown during their first two years as filmmakers, although it does include a few films shown at their December 28, 1895 public premiere at the Salon Indien du Grand Café, a café in Paris at the Place de l’Opéra. Famously, only 30 people attended that screening. Within a few weeks, they were grossing thousands of francs a week.

There had been a number of private demonstration screenings prior to that premiere. The first on March 22, 1895 at a meeting of the Société d’Encouragement de l’Industrie Nationale, and presented the only film they had at the time: *La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon*. This was then followed by demonstrations on April 17 at the Sorbonne, June 10 at the Congrès des Sociétés Françaises de Photographie, and several others.

The originals of the particular prints in this anthology were discovered in November, 1972 in the archives of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. The nitrate originals were then copied to 35mm safety film using a Cinématographe in his own collection. Fittingly, the machine had been used to project the Lumière films US debut at Keith’s Union Square Theater in New York City on June 29th, 1896. His son Karl also went on to be a notable film historian and restorationist.

Film Titles:

La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon (Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory in Lyon aka Exiting the Factory) 1895 – there are actually three different versions of this film, shot at different times. They are known as the “one horse”, “two horse”, and “no horse” versions.

Démolition d'un mur (Demolition of a Wall) 1896 – Lumière film no. 40.

Bataille de boules de neige (Snowball Fight) Premiered Feb. 7, 1897 – shot at Monplaisir, Cours Gambetta (now Cours Albert Thomas) in Lyon, France. Lumière film no. 101.

[Firemen drill]

Le Déjeuner de bébé (The Baby's Lunch, official title: Le Repas (de bébé), aka Le Goûter de bébé aka Feeding the Baby) 1895 – Filmed in the spring at the Lumière family home in Montplaisir. Lumière film no. 88.

Enfants aux jouets (Children at Play) 1895

Bal d'enfants (Children's Ball) 1897

Partie d'écarté (aka Card Game aka The Messers) 1895

L'Arroseur arrosé (aka Le Jardinier aka The Waterer Watered aka The Sprinkler Sprinkled) 1895

Joueurs de cartes arrosés 1896 – Shot in April 1896, released Oct. 18, 1896. Lumière film no. 115.

Bataille de femmes (deux femmes seulement) 1896

L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat (The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat) 1896

Basse-cour (Poultry Yard) 1896

Querelle enfantine (Childish Quarrel) 1896

Embarquement d'une chaudière (Loading a boiler) 1896 – Lumière film no. 20.

Enfants pêchant des crevettes (Children digging for clams) 1896 – Lumière film no. 45

La Mer (Baignade en mer) (aka A Dip in the Sea aka Swimming in the Sea) 1895 – shot at Clos-des-Plages at La Ciotat. Lumière film no. 11

The actual original program first shown at the Salon Indien was as follows:

- *La Sortie des Ouvriers de L'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895)
- *La Voltige* (1895) (*Horse Trick Riders*)
- *La Pêche aux Poissons Rouges* (1895) (*Fishing for Goldfish*)
- *Le Débarquement du Congrès de Photographie à Lyon* (1895) (*The Disembarkment of the Congress of Photographers in Lyon*)
- *Les Forgerons* (1895) (*Blacksmiths*)
- *Le Jardinier (l'Arroseur Arrosé)* (1895)
- *Le Repas (de Bébé)* (1895)
- *Le Saut à la Couverture* (1895) (*Jumping onto the Blanket*)
- *La Place des Cordeliers à Lyon* (1895) (*Cordeliers Square in Lyon*)
- *La Mer (Baignade en Mer)* (1895)

Cinématographe Souvenirs of America (1896-1897)

Lumière Company

Cameramen: Jean Alexandre Louis Promio, Félix Mesguich

Approx. 11 min.

Music: selected recordings of John Philip Sousa conducting his own compositions (dates unknown)

Following their debut in Paris, the Lumière films s toured the world showing their films, and this included several cities in North America. In each city scenes were filmed which were then shown to the local audiences (sometimes the same day), which was an obvious draw but also provided material for later stops in the tour.

Lumière camera operator Alexandre Promio was tasked with the job, arriving in September 1896 and ultimately travelling to New York, Washington DC, Chicago, and elsewhere as well as several stops in Canada, including Montreal. He returned again in the spring of 1897 to film McKinley's inauguration.

The Inauguration of William McKinley as President of the United States, March 4, 1897

Chicago défilé de policemen (aka Chicago Review of Policemen aka Chicago Police Parade), 1896

Washington, DC Review National Guard, Review Artillery of Washington, DC, circa Jan.-Feb. 1897

[Portraits of New York] – various films, including *New York, Broadway At Union Square, 1896*

New York, Descente des voyageurs du pont de Brooklyn (Passengers descending from the Brooklyn Bridge), 1897 – Lumière film no. 324

Klondike Gold Rush Scrapbook (1898-1901)

Edison Manufacturing Company

Cameraman: Robert K. Bonine

Approx. 8 min.

Music: selections from *The Days of '49: Songs of the Gold Rush* (Folkways Records, 1957) performed by Logan English

All but two of these films are known to have been shot by Bonine, who worked as a cameraman Edison for a number of years travelling across the country and abroad shooting actualities, including post-earthquake San Francisco, Yellowstone, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal.

Horses Loading for Klondike, no. 9 (© Oct. 27, 1897) – Shot on the Seattle waterfront. From Edison films catalog: “The wharf is crowded with live stock, and the huge derrick slowly drops the large box or sling into the bunch. Into this cradle a horse is led, and is slowly hoisted and swung over to the deck of the steamer. This picture is taken ten minutes before sailing time.”

Loading Baggage for Klondike, no. 6 (© Oct. 27, 1897) –Shot on the Seattle waterfront. From Edison films catalog: “This was the first ship sailing for the Klondike from Seattle during the gold rush of 1897. The picture shows the excitement and enthusiasm that attended the great Klondike exodus. Crowds of anxious gold seekers watch the loading of their outfits, clothing, kits and provisions into

the hole of the ‘Williamette.’” According to film scholar Charles Musser, the ship is actually the S.S. Queen. The coach that passes is from the Rainie Grand Hotel

Poker at Dawson City (© Feb. 17, 1899) – Four people are sitting around a table made by placing a flat board on top of a barrel. They are playing cards and cheating. A fight ensues. The film speed indicates that the film was actually made in New Jersey at Edison’s Black Maria studio.

Packers on the Trail (© May 24, 1901) –Filmed in the Klondike. Across wooded terrain with heavily packed snow, a team of dogs passes the camera followed by a dozen men with laden with digging equipment. In a second shot, the same group returns in the opposite direction.

Pack Train on Chilcoot Pass (© May 6, 1901) –Filmed at Chilkoot Pass, B.C., Canada. A mule train plods past us.

Rocking Gold in the Klondike (1901) –Filmed in the Yukon Territory. Gold miners operate sluice boxes somewhere in the Klondike gold fields, probably above the Hunker Valley.

Panoramic View of the White Pass Railroad (© May 6, 1901) – Filmed in 1899, the cameraman is not recorded but it was probably Bonine. With the camera mounted on the front of the train, we ride up the mountain through tunnels, over bridges, and past deep precipices. Today a railroad still operates on this route, offering excursions with vintage cars and even a steam engine for tourists.

Magic and Color: Early Films by Georges Méliès (1899)

Star Films

Directed by Georges Méliès

Approx. 2 min.

The legendary creator of *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) was originally a stage magician, selling his stock in the family’s lucrative shoe manufacturing business to finance his purchase of the famous (but slightly threadbare) Théâtre Robert-Houdin. After attending the Lumière premiere at the Salon Indien, he begged them to sell a camera, but they refused. He obtained one instead from British inventor Robert W. Paul, who had created his own camera (by copying an Edison model). Méliès later built his own cameras, and ultimately made over 500 films

L’Illusioniste fin-de-siècle (aka *L’Impressionniste fin-de-siècle* aka *The Conjurer*)

Star Films catalogue no. 183

Many of Méliès’ earliest films were actualities and representations of his stage magic act enhanced with simple stop-motion replacement effects. This film is very similar to earlier ones that have survived: *Escamotage d’une dame chez Robert-Houdin* (*The Vanishing Lady*, 1896) and *Le Magicien* (*The Magician*, 1898) – and undoubtedly many more.

La Danse du feu (aka *La Colonne de feu* aka *Pillar of Fire*)

Star Films catalogue no. 188

By 1899, Méliès was enough of a success that extravaganzas such as this could be sustained. While little more than an elaborate stage presentation enhanced with a little stop-action, the tinting and hand-coloring make this a spectacular example of his earliest work. Méliès would later employ a small army of women, formerly magic lantern slide painters, who meticulously hand-painted selected titles which were then sold at a premium.

Fire! (1901)

Williamson Kinematograph Company
Directed by James Williamson

Approx 5 min

Music: selected rags by Scott Joplin, performed by the composer.

James Williamson's *Fire!* dramatises the work of his local fire service (Hove Fire Station is clearly identifiable) in five tableaux: the raising of the alarm, the fire brigade leaping into action, the horse-drawn fire engines rushing to the scene, and two longer shots of the fire rescue as shown from inside and outside the building (the derelict Ivy Lodge in Hove).

Along with Williamson's earlier *Attack on a China Mission* (1900), *Fire!* was one of the very first films to make use of multiple shots edited together to create a chronological sequence propelling a coherent narrative along. Williamson also creates suspense by showing the audience the extent of the fire in the first shot, which heightens the sense of urgency as the fire crew (who lack this privileged information) leave the station and rush to put it out.

Though the action itself lacks the sophisticated staging and construction of later films such as *Desperate Poaching Affray* (d. William Haggart, 1903) or *Daring Daylight Burglary* (d. Frank Mottershaw, 1903), *Fire!* shares with those two films the distinction of being a major influence on a pioneering American film, Edwin S. Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903), which borrowed Williamson's narrative model and developed it further by introducing close-ups.

– Michael Brooke, *BFI Screenonline* (n.d.)

The First Flickers (1969)

Produced by WRC-TV/NBC (Washington, DC) for the series, *Perspective*.

Directed by Charles Stopak
Written and produced by Bill Leonard
Photographed by Robert Gelenter
Supervising editor: Milton Sink
Narrated by Willard Scott

Sound, 27 min.

Prior to 1912, motion picture films themselves could not be copyrighted. To get around this legal quirk, paper reproductions of films were printed on long strips and registered with the Library of Congress (a practice invented by W.K.L. Dickson and the Edison Company's lawyers). Some companies submitted entire films, while others submitted only representative sequences.

This documentary covers films from the Library of Congress paper print collection. Includes numerous excerpts and whole films, footage shot in the archive and depicting the restoration process, as well as a brief interview with LOC archivist John Kuyper.

Sources and Suggested Reading

- Richard Balzer, *Peepshows: A Visual History* (Abrams, 1998) – A lavishly illustrated image-history of pre-cinema peepshows and visual entertainments from the 1700s to the end of the 1800s.
- Emmanuelle Toulet (trans. Susan Emanuel), *Birth of the Motion Picture* (Abrams, 1995; orig. Gallimard/Reunion des Musee Nationaux, 1988) – Part of Abrams' delightful *Discoveries* series of books, this slim pocket-sized edition packs a great deal of history, profuse B&W and color illustrations (many quite rare), and reprinted original sources into a tiny package that happily evokes the 1970s heyday of educational publishing. Recommended for all audiences, novice to expert.
- William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson & Antonia Dickson, *History Of The Kinetograph, Kinetoscope And Kinetophonograph* (Albert Dunn, 1895; facsimile ed.: Museum of Modern Art [NY], 2000) – Dickson's memoir of creating motion pictures while working for Edison, written just as he was leaving the company. He then went to work for the Latham Company, where he helped invent the "Latham loop" and would later co-found the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.
- Stephen Herbert & Luke McKernan (eds.), *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema: A Worldwide Survey* (British Film Institute, 1996) – An absolutely essential and invaluable work, now tragically out-of-print and fetching exorbitant prices in the collector's market. Thankfully, all of its content (plus some additional material) can be found for free online at <http://www.victorian-cinema.net/>
- Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (MacMillan Publishing Co., 1990; republished by Univ. of California Press, 1994 as vol. 1 of the *History of American Cinema* series) – The authoritative work on the subject, copiously illustrated throughout, and very highly recommended (as is the entire UofC series). Still in print.
- John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England 1894-1901* (University of Exeter Press, 1997-1998; 2001). Volume 1: 1894-1896. Volume 2: 1897. Volume 3: 1898. Volume 4: 1899. Volume 5: 1900. Originally issued 1976-1992 by various publishers; some volumes subsequently revised and expanded. – A peerless study of the emergence and early evolution of a national cinema, all the more valuable because Britain's achievements during the period are largely and unjustly ignored.
- John Frazer, *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of Georges Méliès* (G.K. Hall & Co., 1979) – Hands-down the single best, but quite rare, study and annotated filmography in English of Méliès and his work. A copy resides in the University of Washington library.
- Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: An Introduction* (British Film Institute, 2000), a revised and expanded edition of *Una Passione Inflammabile: Guida Allo Studio Del Cinema Muto* (UTET, 1991) translated as *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema* (BFI, 1994) – A phenomenal book for cognoscenti, super-nerds, and even the merely curious; exploring the evolution of early film technology, preservation, and archiving. Illustrations include color plates. Outstanding.
- Richard Koszarski, *Fort Lee: The Film Town* (John Libbey Publishing, 2004) – While covering a period antedating this program (the teens), this wonderful anthology of contemporary press clippings and modern essays is an engrossing and heavily illustrated history of the "first Hollywood" in New Jersey.
- Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (McFarland & Co., 1992/2000) – An excellent look behind the screen at the history and politics of film preservation (including its failures).
- The Bioscope*, blog at <http://bioscopic.wordpress.com/> – Probably the single best online resource for silent film information, new developments, and general scholarship. Written and edited by Luke McKernan, co-editor of *Who's Who in Victorian Cinema*. Superlative, and very entertaining.
- Ken Weissman, "The Library of Congress Unlocks The Ultimate Archive System," *Creative COW Magazine* (March/April, 2010), archived online at <http://magazine.creativecow.net/article/the-library-of-congress-unlocks-the-ultimate-archive-system> – The supervisor of the Library of Congress Film Preservation Laboratory discusses the efforts they are taking to preserve and store films using the latest technology, including their paper print collection.

Kemp Niver, ed. by Bebe Bergsten, *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (Library of Congress, 1985) – A thorough catalog of said films, with details and synopses for each. A revised and expanded version of 1967 catalog compiled by Bergsten.

Home Video

Lumière Brothers' First Films (Kino Video) VHS (1997?), DVD (1999) – A short documentary followed by true-speed transfers of 85 early Lumière films, 1895-1897. The VHS edition is narrated by film scholar Bernard Tavernier; the DVD also includes alternate audio tracks of piano accompaniment and narration *en Français* by Thierry Fremaux. Out of print; the DVD now fetches outrageous prices on the collector market. Scarecrow Video has the VHS edition for rent, but you must ask for it at the counter as it is held in their basement archive of infrequently-rented films.

Edison: The Invention of the Movies (Kino Video, 2005) 4 DVD box set – An essential collection of films and the rarest early experiments from 1891-1918, plus commentaries by and interviews with film historians such as Charles Musser, Patrick Loughney, Eileen Bowser and others; program notes by Musser. DVD-ROM extras include reproductions of stills, interoffice memos, and other ephemera. Still in print.

Georges Méliès: First Wizard of Cinema (1896–1913) (Flicker Alley, 2008) 5 DVD + booklet, and *Georges Méliès Encore: New Discoveries (1896-1911)* (Flicker Alley, 2010) DVD – Combined, these two releases gather 201 films by Méliès from 1896 to 1913, nearly every surviving one (sadly excluding the hand-colored version of *A Trip to the Moon* that was only recently discovered and restored). In addition to his many trick films, they include a number of his early actualities and “re-enacted newsreels” and proto-docudramas.

More Treasures from American Film Archives: 1894-1931 (National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004) 3-DVD box set + large illus. book – Every edition of this series of box sets is worthwhile, but this particular volume (the second) includes a high number of mutoscopes and films from the early 1900s, by Dickson, Porter, and unknown others. Of the rest, many are from 1903-1915 and only one (Jay Leyda's *Bronx Morning*) antedates the silent era...and it is a silent film.

A Trick of Light (Die Gebrüder Skladanowsky, aka A Trick of the Light) (1996) – This feature film by Wim Wenders explores the pioneering cinema work of Max Skladanowsky and his brothers Eugen and Emil, whose Bioskop was used to project films nearly two months before the Lumières' in Paris. Most of the film was shot silent with a hand-cranked camera from the '20s, and several of the Bioskop loops are also recreated. Also includes an interview with a very engaging 91-year-old Lucie Skladanowsky, daughter of Max. The US DVD is available only in the 8-disc box set, *The Wim Wenders Collection, Vol. 2* (Anchor Bay, 2006).

Crazy Cinématographe. Europäisches Jahrmarktkino 1896-1916 (Crazy Cinématographe. European Fair Cinema 1896-1916) (Edition Filmmuseum, 2007) 2-disc PAL DVD (Region 2) + illus. booklet – An exhilarating collection of rare European films from the “cinema of attractions”: a mad cavalcade of short films shown at fairgrounds and in travelling cinemas, ranging from dog acts to scientific novelties to trick films to actualities and everything in between. A true representation of the earliest movie-going experience. Available online via <http://www.edition-filmmuseum.com/>

R.W. Paul: The Collected Films 1895-1908 (British Film Institute, 2006) PAL DVD (Region 2) + booklet – Nearly two and a half hours of 62 exceptionally rare, excellently restored films by a very important cinema pioneer and trick filmmaker perhaps best known for *The ‘?’ Motorist* (1906). With commentary and a booklet by Ian Christie. Available online via <http://filmstore.bfi.org.uk/>

Early Cinema: Primitives and Pioneers (British Film Institute, 2005) 2-disc PAL DVD (Region 2) + booklet – Includes rare films by Birt Acres, James Williamson, the Hepworth Company's legendary *Rescued by Rover*, Lumière films shown in Britain, and many others.