

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Sprocket Society and the Northwest Film Forum proudly present:

Georges Méliès: Impossible Voyager Special Effects Epics from 1901–1913

Featuring Rare Film Prints accompanied by Weird and Unusual Music
Plus special guests **Climax Golden Twins** on dueling Victrolas
Journey Through Time to Distant and Fantastic Worlds! A Splendid Time is Guaranteed for All!

Thursday, May 15, 2008 at 8:00 PM – one show only!

Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Avenue (between Pike and Pine) – 206-329-2629

Tickets: \$8.50 / \$5.00 for NWFF members / \$6.00 for children under 12 and seniors

Advance tickets available online at BrownPaperTickets.com

Spectacular sci-fi and fantasy epics made between 1901-1913 by the father of special effects, accompanied by unusual musical selections including early electronic music, avant garde jazz, and the Master Musicians of Jajouka. One film will be shown with a rare performance of the original 1905 narration, accompanied by live Victrola DJing by Climax Golden Twins.

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Long before *Star Wars*, *King Kong*, or even *Birth of a Nation* there was the greatest and most influential film illusionist of all time: a puckish French magician named Georges Méliès. One hundred years later, the whimsical “trick films” made by Monsieur Méliès include some of the most iconic images in film history and continue to amaze and delight with their jaw-dropping creativity and vision.

On May 15 at 8:00 PM, the Northwest Film Forum and The Sprocket Society join to celebrate the magic of Georges Méliès with a program of his greatest sci-fi, fantasy, and adventure mini-epics made between 1901 and 1913. Included are well-known favorites like *A Trip to the Moon* and *Conquest of the Pole*, as well as rarely-shown delights such as *The Merry Frolics of Satan*, *Palace of the Arabian Nights*, and others.

As a special treat, 1905’s *The Impossible Voyage* will be presented with a rare live performance (in English) of the original narration penned by Méliès himself. The musical accompaniment will be provided by the experimental group **Climax Golden Twins**, who will DJ rare 78 RPM records from their vast collection of rarities, played on real Victrolas right there in the theater.

The remaining program includes two tinted and hand-colored prints, a rare extended version of *A Trip to the Moon*, and an equally rare “complete” print of *The Kingdom of the Fairies*. The musical selections chosen for these are as adventurous as the imagery they accompany, and include:

- A special remix of The Residents’ *Eskimo*, prepared by Seattle producer **Scott Colburn**
- The Master Musicians of Jajouka
- Free jazz by Chicago’s legendary Hal Russell NRG Ensemble
- Dada scat jazz by Fred Lane

A brief introductory talk about Georges Méliès and his work will precede the films.

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## About Georges Méliès

Georges Méliès was cinema's first true artist and the most prolific technical innovator of the early years; a pioneer in recognizing the possibilities of the medium for narrative and spectacle. The most successful (and pirated) filmmaker of his day, Méliès created the basic vocabulary of special effects and built the first proper movie studio in Europe. Meanwhile he pushed the envelope of movie story-telling, crafting 20 minute narrative epics at a time when nearly all other films were static real-world affairs lasting 3 minutes at most.

Méliès was born in 1862 as the youngest son of a wealthy Parisian family with a boot-making contract for the French army. While working abroad in London during his early 20s, he discovered the world of stage magic and pantomime spectaculars and never looked back. Selling his shares in the family boot business, Méliès bought the theater founded by the legendary magician Robert Houdin. There he began to craft his own stage illusions and make a name for himself as a respected prestidigitator, often ending his shows with complex magic lantern projections.

In December 1895, Méliès was among the handful of people who witnessed the history-making film screening by the Lumière brothers at the Grand Café. Within two months, he obtained his own camera and began to make his first primitive films – “actualities” well under a minute long and patterned after similar movies by the Lumières, Edison, Birt Acres, and the few other pioneers working then. One day in late 1896, his camera jammed while filming a street scene. After a few moments, Méliès got it rolling again. When he watched the developed film, a bus seemed to transform into a hearse and men into women. The magician’s imagination was immediately fired, and the world of cinema was never to be the same again.

Over the next 17 years, Méliès made more than 500 films that combined ever-more sophisticated camera trickery with Paris’ best theatrical illusions (the most accomplished in the world at the time) and his own special brand of anti-authoritarian satire. Méliès’ innovations included multiple exposures, stop-motion photography, models, forced perspective, mattes, and more – frequently used in conjunction. His actors included acrobats and major stars from the Folies Bergère and other world-famous theaters mere blocks from his own, where Méliès showed his films with live narration he performed himself, and sometimes even with specially written music – an unheard-of practice in those early years. Soon, his Star Films company was one of the most successful and prolific the world. In 1903, his brother Gaston opened a branch office in the United States and, soon, began producing his own films in the Southwest. By 1908 Méliès was so prominent, Edison cultivated him as a founding member of the Motion Picture Patents Company (aka the Edison Trust), which sought to control film production around the world.

Despite this success, by the end of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Méliès’ fortunes began to turn and he sold a controlling interest in Star Films to Pathé Frères. This allowed him to continue making movies, despite ongoing interference from Pathé’s producers. However, Méliès’ resolutely stage-bound aesthetic did not keep pace with the rapidly evolving film grammar of the time. By 1913 his work appeared increasingly quaint to audiences – that his films were often edited without his involvement surely did not help matters. That year, Méliès called it quits. Within just a few years he was bankrupt and ruined. In a fit of despair, he burned all of the prints and negatives he had in his possession. Penniless, he married his actress and long-time mistress Jehanne d'Alcy and then...vanished into obscurity. By 1923, the world famous cinema magician had been all but forgotten.

More than a decade later, during the early 1930s, an observant fan discovered Méliès selling toys from a small stand in the Paris train station. By this time, his films had been extolled by the Surrealists and others who recognized their great imaginative power and anti-authoritarian prankster spirit. Méliès was finally feted by French film society, his surviving films excavated and shown to cheering crowds. He was awarded a small pension and a place in a home for cinema pioneers at the Chateau d'Orly. There he wrote his memoirs and lived out his final days with his beloved wife and grand daughter. Georges Méliès died in 1938.

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## About Climax Golden Twins

<http://www.ClimaxGoldenTwins.com>

For 15 years, Seattle's Climax Golden Twins (Robert Millis, Jeffrey Taylor, and occasional other co-conspirators) have defied categorization with their diverse explorations of sound and music. Their most recent release is *Victrola Favorites: Artifacts from Bygone Days* (Dust to Digital), a 2-CD compilation of rare 78 RPM recordings from Burma, China, Persia, Ireland, Appalachia, the American South, and many other elsewheres packaged in a deluxe 144-page clothbound, full-color book of illustrations. Their own works have run the gamut from delicate environmental and musique concrète assemblage to free improv to avant rock splurg and beyond. Their works for film include an original soundtrack for *Session 9* (2001) and a collage of 78 RPM records for *Grass* (1925), shown at the Experience Music Project and the Grand Illusion Cinema. They have also created scores and sound environments for installations, art exhibits and dance. Additionally, Robert Millis has produced and directed *Phi Ta Khon: Ghosts of Isan* (Sublime Frequencies, 2006), a documentary about the Buddhist ghost-festival held yearly in Thailand's Isan province.

## About Scott Colburn

<http://www.ScottColburn.com>

Seattle-based producer/engineer and sound designer Scott Colburn has been performing audio wizardry since 1982, when he was a central figure in the Indiana punk scene. For more than 25 years, he has helped realize some of the most adventurous and respected music in the world for albums, film, radio, and live performances spanning every conceivable genre. Just some of the artists Colburn has worked with include: John Fahey, Harmony Korine, Sun City Girls, Animal Collective, Arcade Fire, Cerberus Shoal, Decemberists, IQU, Elizabeth Falconer, Mudhoney, Eyvind Kang, Amy Denio, Caroliner, Adrienne Barbeau, Charlton Heston, Sidney Sheldon, and of course Climax Golden Twins, which he was a member of for several years. His audio restoration work includes the Grammy Award-winning Charlie Patton box set *Screamin' and Hollerin' the Blues*, Revanant's landmark Captain Beefheart box set *Grow Fins*, as well as recordings by Cecil Taylor, The Sonics, Betty Davis, Albert Ayler, and the Tolowa Indian Tribe.

## About The Sprocket Society

<http://www.SprocketSociety.org>

The Sprocket Society seeks to cultivate the love of the mechanical cinema, its arts and sciences, and to encourage film preservation by bringing film and its history to the public through screenings, educational activities, and our own archival efforts. Starting from a series of backyard movie parties, the Society has begun programming public events. Their presentation of the rare early sound science fiction film *The Mysterious Island* (1929) showed at the Northwest Film Forum in March. In April, the Society hosted Los Angeles experimental filmmaker Ross Lipman in a special multimedia event at the Jewel Box Theater.

## About The Northwest Film Forum

<http://www.NWFilmForum.org>

Founded in 1995, Northwest Film Forum (NWFF) is a Seattle-based non-profit organization dedicated to becoming the nation's leading center for film artists. NWFF programs a true cinematheque, embracing film production as well as film exhibition, with two cinemas, film production and post-production facilities and equipment, educational workshop space, filmmaker offices, a film vault containing over 1,000 titles, and an extensive filmmaking library.