
Reply to a Questionary

Texte de Méliès en anglais (1930) en réponse à un questionnaire relatif au **Voyage dans la Lune**¹⁻³ qu'un certain Jean Le Roy lui avait adressé. Il s'agit probablement de l'inventeur américain (Jean-Aimé, dit) Acme Le Roy (1854-1944) qui réalisa avec Eugène Lauste la première projection publique de films en février 1894 à Clinton (New Jersey, U.S.A.)⁴. En ce qui concerne le coût du film, Méliès parlera 7 ans plus tard de 30000 francs⁵! Où est la vérité?

(Rappelons que le **Voyage dans la Lune** — 1902; 260 mètres, 13mn⁶ — est le 3e film de Méliès qui dépasse les 200 mètres, après **Jeanne d'Arc** — 1900; 250 mètres, 12mn30 — et **Barbe Bleue** — 1901; 210 mètres, 10mn30).

¹ Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film* (Teachers College Press, New York, 1968), p. 29.

² G. Sadoul, *Georges Méliès* (coll. Cinéma d'Aujourd'hui, Seghers, Paris, 1961), pp. 134-135.

³ M. Malthête-Méliès, *Méliès l'Enchanteur* (Hachette, Paris, 1973), pp. 267-268.

⁴ J. Mitry, *Histoire du Cinéma* (Ed. Universitaires, Paris, 1967), p. 63

⁵ in le journal *Ce soir* du 23 décembre 1937. Cité par G. Sadoul in *Histoire Générale du Cinéma*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁶ *Essai de Reconstitution de Catalogue Français de la Star-Film suivi d'une Analyse Catalographique des Films de Georges Méliès recensés en France* (publications du Service des Archives du Film du Centre National de la Cinématographie, France), pp. 107-112.



LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE (1902)

1. What year did you get the idea for TRIP TO THE MOON? The idea of TRIP TO THE MOON came to me from the book of Jules Verne, entitled: "From the earth to the moon and round the moon". In this work the human people could not attain the moon, turned round it, and came back to earth, having, in fact, missed their trip. I then imagined, in using the process of Jules Verne (gun and shell) to attain the moon, in order to be able to compose a number of original and amusing fairy pictures outside and inside the moon, and to show some monsters, inhabitants of the moon, in adding one or two artistical effects (women representing stars, comets, etc.) (snow effect, bottom of the sea, etc).

2. What year did you start the TRIP TO THE MOON? Month? Year? TRIP TO THE MOON was begun in May 1902.

3. When was the negative of TRIP TO THE MOON finished? The negative was finished in August 1902.

4. When were the first prints of TRIP TO THE MOON, released in France? The first prints were sold in France, the same month, August 1902.

5. When was the first released in the United States of America? I don't know exactly when they were sold in U.S.A. (probably one or two months after). As soon as the first pictures were forwarded to U.S.A., probably through commission agents, they were copied (countertyped) and sold in large number, by Edison and Lubin of Philadelphia, perhaps also by some others, for the number of copies sold in America was enormous relatively to the number printed in my laboratory.

6. What was the probable cost of the production? The cost was about 10.000 francs, sum relatively high for the time, caused specially by the mechanical sceneries and principally the cost of the cardboard and canvas costumes made for the selenites, or moon inhabitants, knees, heads, feet, all these articles being made specially and consequently expensive. I made myself the models, sculpted in terra cora, and the plaster moulding, and the costumes were made by a special masks manufacturer accustomed to mould cardboard.

7. Was this subject copyrighted in the U.S.A.? The subject was not copyrighted in U.S.A. It is why it was such copied everywhere, and it is also the reason why I open an office in N.Y. In order to have my following films copyrighted, and an agent (my brother) in U.S.A. for preventing, as much as possible, the piracy.

8. If so, please give date and number if possible? No dates, the film having not been copyrighted.

9. If possible name star or other notable features of TRIP TO THE MOON. When I made TRIP TO THE MOON, there was not yet "Stars" amongst the artists, their name was never known nor written on bills or advertisements. The film was named Starfilm, and the name Méliès, itself, did not appear on the screen though I performed the principal characters. The people employed in TRIP TO THE MOON was entirely acrobats, girls and singers coming from music halls, the theatrical actors having not yet accepted to play in cinema films, as they considered the motion picture as much as below the theatre. They came only later, when they knew that music hall people gained more money in performing films then themselves in playing in theatres for about 300 francs a month, and such was generally the case for most of them.

In the cinema, they could gain more than the double. 2 years after my office was, everynight, full of theatrical people coming for asking to be engaged. I remember that in TRIP TO THE MOON, the Moon (the woman in a crescent) was Bleurette Bernon, music hall singer, the stars were ballet girls, from théâtre du Châtelet and the men (principal ones) Victor André, of Cluny theatre, Delpierre, Farjaux, Kelm, Brunnet, music hall singers and myself, the Selenites were acrobates from Folies Bergère.

I think to have replied all what you want to know, will give more details of wanted by you.

Georges Méliès.