

Paris 1900

by Nicole Vedrès (1946)



Restoration by **Les Films du Panthéon**
in collaboration with **Les Films du Jeudi**
and the support of the **CNC**

LES FILMS DU PANTHEON

LES FILMS DU JEUDI



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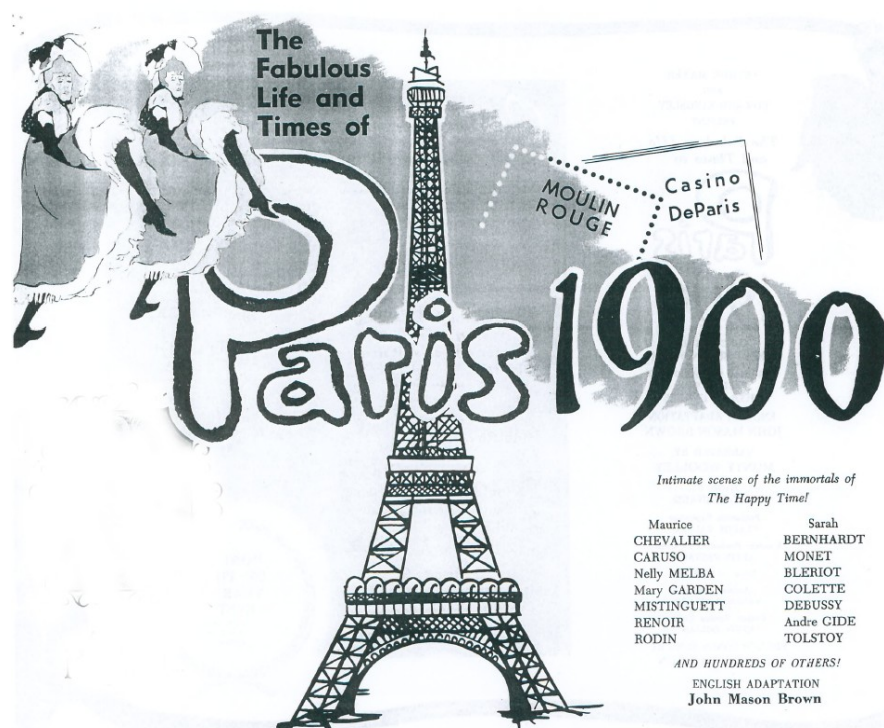
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CREDITS

Director	Nicole Vedrès
Producer	Pierre Braunberger (Les Films du Panthéon)
Screenplay	Nicole Vedrès on a Pierre Braunberger's concept
Commentary	By Nicole Vedrès said by Claude Dauphin
Editing	Myriam Assisted by Yannick Bellon
Music	Guy Bernard
Sound	Carrères
Production manager	Claude Hauser
Assistant director	Alain Resnais
Apprentice editor	S. Baruch
Sound and music documentation	J. Rais-Assa
Documentation assistant	Labrosse
Duration	82 min
Aspect ratio	1 : 37
Sound	Mono
Restoration	2K



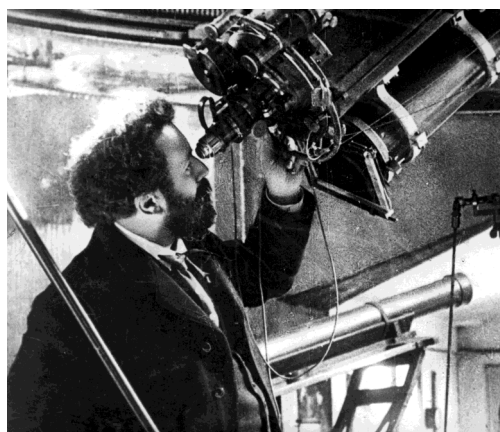


Before the movie...

Pierre Braunberger, for a long time, wanted to produce a documentary made of film archives, which, assembled together, would retrace a period in the past. He called on Nicole Vedrès who wrote an essay in 1943 entitled *Un siècle d'élégance française* (One century of French elegance). This essay was based already on assemblage of photographs and texts in counter-point. *Paris 1900* is directed in 1946 thanks to a substantial documentary work of collecting archives from more than seven hundred films essentially from the data base of the Cinémathèque française amassed by Henri Langlois, and from the Pathé newsreels stock. Images from some emblematic artists of “La Belle Époque” are mainly extracted from Sacha Guitry’s film *Those of Our Land* (*Ceux de chez nous*). Myriam was Sacha Guitry’s editor in the 1930s before working on *Paris 1900*. The movie also uses sound documents and photographs. This diversity of media creates a unique and protean document about the French society in the beginning of the 20th century. It received an award in 1947 by the prestigious Louis Delluc Prize. Because it introduced the genre of archives montage, or found footage, it later influences most of directors from Denise Tual and her movie *Days of Our Years* (*Ce siècle a cinquante ans*, 1950) to Chris Marker and *Le Fond de l’air est rouge* (*A Grain without a Cat*, 1977).

Summary

Chronic of “La Belle Époque”, *Paris 1900* is a precious testimony of the first generation men’s life immortalized by the cinema. It is related, not without nostalgia, to the witnesses of a society transformed by more than 40 years of History. The movie’s goal is to mix together documentaries and fiction in order to outline the portrait of a time marked by images and their reproduction. Because the movie doesn’t evocate directly the facts but rather evokes on the chronic mode, *Paris 1900* reaches to grasp the atmosphere of a society in mutation. Moreover, this is a brilliant homage to the cinema and its first plan role in the development of the modernity. Strengthened by the euphoria of the novelty, the taste of the new technologies, men live their last moments of peace, the shadow of the World War 1 prowls on this insouciance of the beginning of the century and the twilight of “La Belle Époque” comes...





Nicole Vedrès



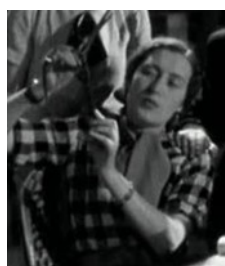
Born in 1911, Nicole Vedrès is an important figure of the cultural and artistic society of the second part of the 20th century. Her literary and cinematographic work distinguish itself by an original way of assembling visual elements and textual comments which appear from her first book *A Century of French elegance* in 1943 (*Un siècle d'élégance française*) but also in her two long features *Paris 1900* (1946) and *Life Begins Tomorrow* directed in 1950 (*La Vie commence demain*). She was a friend of Henri Langlois, founder of the Cinémathèque française, with whom she shared a strong taste for the archives. In the middle of the 1940s, Nicole Vedrès took part, to a large extent, in a movement to rediscover the beginning of the cinema, particularly thanks to her anthology *Images du cinéma français* published in 1945. At the end of her career, she was a commentator of the TV Show *Lectures pour tous* alongside Pierre Dumayet. She died in 1965 at the age of 54 years old and left behind her an incredibly rich work, as a journalist, writer and director.

Pierre Braunberger

Leading figure of French cinema history, Pierre Braunberger started his career as a producer in his 20s. During his life, he launched the career of some of the most famous names of the filmmaking industry. Less known are the movies in which he participated not only as a producer, but as a writer as well. Indeed, if Nicole Vedrès wrote the script and the commentary of *Paris 1900*, Pierre Braunberger had the original idea of a montage of fiction and documentaries to make a movie which could relate the story of a time. In 1951 he also co-directed with Myriam another movie of this genre entitled *Bullfight* (*La Course de taureaux*) about the history of the corrida.



Myriam



Myriam Borsoutzky, most called “Myriam” is a less known figure in spite of the role she played in cinema from 1930s to the end of the 1940s. She was the editor of around ten movies of Sacha Guitry before working with Max Ophüls for *Sarajevo* (*De Mayerling à Sarajevo*) in 1939. The film critic André Bazin, who was a fervent opponent to editing, coined about her work on *Bullfight* the term “néomontage” regarded by him as an aesthetic revolution which exceed the limits of the classical editing. The story tells that Myriam would actively encourage Alain Resnais, meet on *Paris 1900*, to subscribe to l’Idhec, the French cinema school, to learn the craft of director.



EXTRACT CHRIS MARKER'S INTRODUCTION TO THE CINÉMATHEQUE FRANÇAISE'S PROGRAMME FROM JANUARY, 7th TO FEBRUARY, 1st 1998

« I owe everything to Nicole Vedrès

To say that Nicole, in two films, taught me that cinema was not incompatible with intelligence could justly be said to sound incredibly pretentious. How should we take this statement? Was every other film idiotic? So let me clarify. It is not the intelligence of the filmmakers that is here in dispute, but the idea, quite uncommon at that time, that intelligence could serve as a basis, as the raw material on which to apply commentary and editing in order to extract from it an object called a film [...] This all sounds banal today. Before *Paris 1900* and *La vie commence demain* [Life Begins Tomorrow (1949)] it certainly was not. »

Quoted in Monica Dall'Asta, « Looking for Myriam, A Secret Genealogy of French Compilation Film », *Feminist Media Histories*, Vol. 2, Number 3, pps. 29–53





Paris 1900 (FRENCH—DOCUMENTARY)

Paris

Pantheon production and release. ten and directed by Nicole Vedres. idea by Pierre Braunberger; commences... Claude Dauphin; editors, Myrium, Yannick Bellon; music, Guy Bernard. At Pantheon, Paris. Running time, 95 MINS.

VARIETY

Pic invokes the carefree decade from 1900 to 1914. Drawing liberally on old newsreel and pic footage, film captures the nostalgia and essence of the period. Though the action and feeling are mostly Parisian, world appeal of the city gives the pic international scope and appeal. Brilliantly mounted, commented and scored, the film traverses the freedom and lushness of the early 1900's, and inexorably leads to the unrest and final death of an era in the outbreak of World War I. Pic would make a fine second feature on curio appeal and could stand on its own if strategically cued and promoted.

All the great stars and statesmen of the era parade by. The Eiffel Tower is built, fought against and finally accepted. There's a horrific moment as an inventor trying out a new-fangled parachute plunges to his death from the tower. Paris is flooded, and the new subway system is threatened. There are the grandiose balls and spectacles and the change of face and couture. After the charm of the period is savored, the unrest of the impoverished classes is felt. There follow strikes and uprisings and the early rumblings of World War I. Pic ends with the outbreak of the war and men going off to it in excitement.

The music is a fine counterpoint to the images. Gallic filmmakers seem to be paralleling their Hollywood counterparts with the recognition of the great sociological and curio appeal of well-mounted old film.

Mosk.

The Fabulous Life
and Times of

Paris 1900



CITIZEN-NEWS, Hollywood,

Happier Pre-War Days Seen in French Film

By WYLIE WILLIAMS

Can the past be brought to life again?

"Paris-1900" now screening at the Laurel Theater attempts this and succeeds admirably with a film chronicle of the French metropolis at the turn of the century.

Using newsreel films made in the pioneer stages of motion pictures, Nicole Vedres, the director, accomplishes a kaleidoscope view of the Parisian era of 1900 to 1914 known in France as La Belle Epoque (The Happy Time).

And it was indeed a happy time: the memories of the Franco-Prussian War were fading, the grim days of World War I were in an unforeseeable future. There was an exciting quality of new things—Bleriot was flying the Channel; the motor car was being developed; movies were being perfected. It was a rich period for the arts with Debussy composing, Gide beginning to write, Rodin sculpting.

The cast of "Paris-1900" includes all of these names and others of equal fame: Caruso, Sarah Bernhardt, Mistinguette, Leo Tolstoy, Buffalo Bill, Andrew Carnegie. And the people of Paris—the cab drivers, the children, the solid citizens, the boatmen, the rich and the poor.

Monty Woolley does a superb job of narrating the English version written with insight and a deft manner by John Mason Brown. Guy Bernard's musical score is excellent.

"Paris-1900" could have been made a maudlin, sentimental, "good old days" sort of thing. But it isn't. There is too much of the fabric of real life in it. Truly, a living history.

Saturday Review
of LITERATURE

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Paris 1900: Powerful, brilliantly edited compilation of early-century French fiction and newsreel films which illuminates our present through our past. Don't miss it.



THE RESTORATION

Éclair Laboratory digitalized for some shots in 2K dry scan and 2K wet gate scan the original cellulose nitrate picture negative which was extremely damaged. After an elaborate colour-grading to preserve the film's unity, the image has been restored in 2K in order to eliminate numerous defects (scratches, unsteadiness, mold growth, breathing, printers bars...). The challenge was to find a balance between restoring the defects caused by the film's degradation and preserving existing imperfections of the original archives.

Sound restoration has been done by **L.E. Diapason** from cellulose nitrate sound negative.

***Paris 1900* is available abroad in French version with English subtitles**



THE SELECTIVE AID OF THE CNC FOR THE DIGITALISATION OF CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORKS

Paris 1900 was digitalized and restored thanks to the selective aid of the CNC Directorate of film heritage for the digitalization of cinematographic works.

This financial support has three aims:

- make as many cinematic works as possible available to wide audiences through today's technologies and broadcasting systems;
- privilege the enrichment of legal French and European propositions online;
- guarantee the preservation and transmission of this heritage for future generations.

This concerns the works of silent and sound cinema, feature films and short films of any category that had theatrical distribution before 1st January 2000 having obtaining a visa, or that were screened theatrically before this visa was established. This addresses in particular works with a strong national heritage character, relating directly or indirectly to the history of French and European films for which the possibilities of a commercial release are very uncertain.

These grants are distributed selectively by the president of the CNC after examination of the dossier deposited by the applicant on advice from a panel of experts chaired by Gilles Jacob.





LES FILMS DU JEUDI



Les Films du Jeudi who owns the rights to *Paris 1900* is a company founded in 1964 by Pierre Braunberger (1905 – 1990). He was Jean Renoir's producer and he also produced the first films of Jean-Pierre Melville, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Jacques Rivette, François Reichenbach, Jean Rouch and Chris Marker, among many others.

After her father's death in 1991, Laurence Braunberger took over the management of the company, concentrating on the preservation, restoration and diffusion of what is now one of the major independent film catalogues in France (120 features and 250 shorts). She produces as sparingly as her father did abundantly.

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