

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
September 1993

FACT SHEET

EXHIBITION **GAUMONT PRESENTS: A CENTURY OF FRENCH CINEMA**

DATES January 28 - April 14, 1994

ORGANIZATION Organized by Laurence Kardish, Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art, in collaboration with Edith Kramer, Director, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; Martine Offroy, Director, Gaumont Cinémathèque and Archives, Paris; Pierre Philippe, Artistic Consultant, Gaumont; and Rémi Jacquelin, Technical Advisor, Gaumont International and Centennial Coordinator.

CONTENT The history of French cinema is traced through a retrospective of films produced by the Gaumont studios, the world's oldest movie company, in celebration of its 100th anniversary in 1995. The series includes fifty programs of films from 1900 to the present and most are preceded by a selection of newsreels (*actualités*) from 1900 to 1934. All of the films are newly restored, and new prints have been made especially for the exhibition. All of the sound films feature new English subtitles as well.

Gaumont, founded in 1895 by Léon Gaumont to manufacture and sell photographic materials, began making motion pictures for public exhibition in 1896. Within ten years the company had the largest studio in existence, which made, distributed, and exhibited films. In 1910 Gaumont built the world's biggest movie theater, with 5,000 seats.

A major discovery of the series is the work of Alice Guy-Blaché, film's first woman producer and director. She began making films as early as 1896, and in 1906 experimented with sound, using popular singers of the day. Her film *La Barricade* (1906), about the Paris Commune, is featured in the series. Other important directors in the exhibition include Gaumont's earliest filmmakers: the pioneer animator and master of trick photography Emile Cohl; the surreal comic director Jean Durand; the inventive Louis Feuillade, who went on to make such classic serials as *Les Vampires* and *Judex*, which are shown in their entirety; and Léonce Perret, an outstanding narrative filmmaker.

Other highlights of **GAUMONT PRESENTS: A CENTURY OF FRENCH CINEMA** are Gaston Ravel's *Figaro* (1928), Jean Grémillon's *Dainah the Half Breed* (1931), Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934),

- more -

Sacha Guitry's *La Poison* (1951), Robert Bresson's *A Man Escaped* (1956), Eric Rohmer's *La Marquise d'O* (1975), Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* (1979), Alain Corneau's *Série Noire* (1979), Hans S. Syberberg's *Parsifal* (1982), Jean-Jacques Beineix's uncut version of *Betty Blue* (1986), and Luc Besson's *La Femme Nikita* (1990).

TRAVEL

After its New York showing, the exhibition travels to the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles; the Center for Film and Theater Research, Madison; the Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis; the George Eastman House, Rochester; and the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

* * *

No. 50

For further exhibition information or film stills, contact Barbara Marshall, film press representative, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9752.

For information regarding Gaumont, contact Mary Flanagan, account executive, Dennis Davidson Associates, Inc., 212/246-0500.