

Journey to the Beginning of Time

Czechoslovakia, 1955, 93 min

Director: Karel Zeman

Screenplay: Karel Zeman, J. A. Novotný

Camera: Václav Pazderník, Antonín Horák

Music: Emil František Burian

Cast: Vladimír Bejval, Peter Herrmann,
Josef Lukáš, Zdeněk Hustá



One of the best children's adventure films of world cinema. Its popularity is evidenced by its being put on general release in the USA (with an extended prologue and epilogue), following on from the phenomenal success of *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne*.

This nonfiction work, a form of docufiction if you will, tells the story of four schoolchildren who travel deep into the geological past up the river of time on a normal boat. Their exploitation of the mysterious past becomes a visual textbook of our planet's evolution, filled with scientifically-accurate paleontological information, all presented as an imaginative boyhood adventure. Several generations of children and adults got their first introduction to the true past of mankind through this popular evergreen. The imaginative handmade special effects used in this unique adventure have found their place in the directory of film makers' illusions.

Content

The decision to go back in time by the four boys is inspired by their finding a fossilized trilobite and the desire of little Jirka to see alive the exhibits that fascinate him in the museum. The narrator Petr, the chief of the expedition Jenda, the photographer Tony and the youngest Jirka decide to sail their small boat through the caves, in which Jirka first discovered the ancient fossil trilobite. Thus they start their journey back to prehistoric times, during which they see a lot more than just the Jirka's beloved mammoth...

The enterprising boys sail upriver against the flow of time as the landscape around them gradually changes. Their exciting encounters with prehistoric fauna and flora are carefully recorded in their expeditionary log. They visit caves with wall paintings painted by early man and, in one of the key episodes, witness a battle between mesozoic dinosaurs. Passing through a jungle of club mosses and horsetails, they finally reach the sea in the Paleozoic. There they find a living trilobite, whose modern-day fossil provided the motivation for their trip.

The Fabulous World of Jules Verne

Czechoslovakia, 1958, 78 min

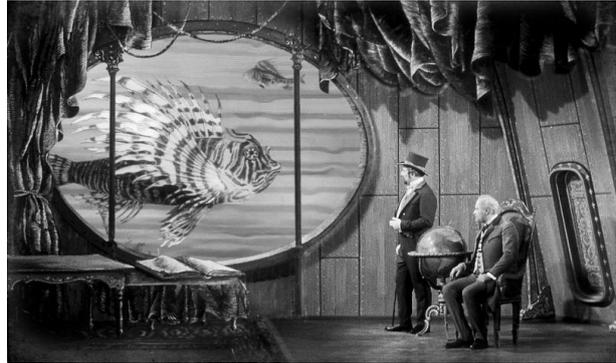
Director: Karel Zeman

Screenplay: František Hrubín (based on the book by Jules Verne)

Camera: Jiří Tarantík

Music: Zdeněk Liška

Starring: Lubor Tokoš, Arnošt Navrátil, František Šlégr, Miloslav Holub, Václav Kyzlink, Jana Zatloukalová, Felix le Breux, Otto Šimánek, Alena Kreuzmannová, František Řehák and others



The most successful Czechoslovak film in history, which became a global phenomenon in 1958. In New York alone it was screened simultaneously in 96 cinemas. This fantasy adventure won a number of prestigious awards, including the Grand Prix at EXPO 58 in Brussels.

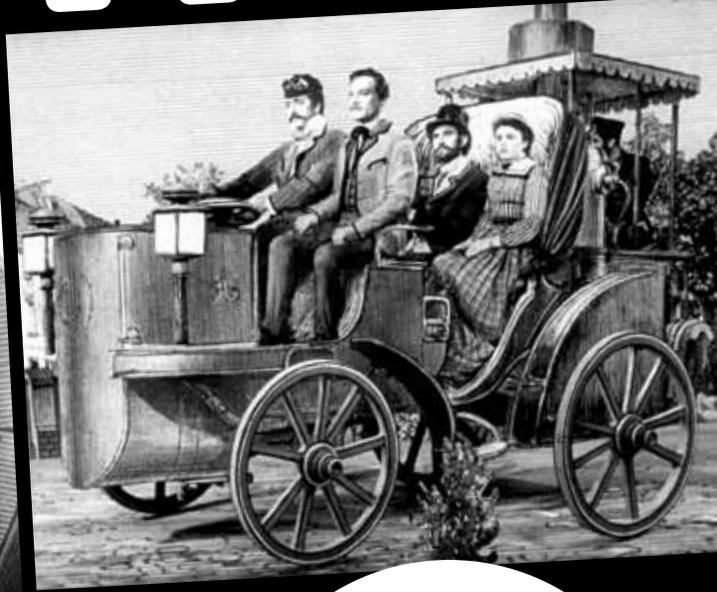
This is the first of Zeman's films to be inspired by Jules Verne, in which the director tries out a new style of art direction, which he was later to develop even further. The story-book sets, striking design and innovative music of Zdeněk Liška – all contribute to the unique appearance of this thrilling story with its antiwar subtext. The black and white narrative is deeply influenced by the classic engravings of Édouard Riou and Léon Bennett - the original illustrators of Verne's novels.

Content

The story of the engineer Simon Hart - as recorded in his diary - takes place at a time when humanity was driven by a belief in inevitable progress. New inventions emerged like mushrooms after the rain and attracted criminals to abuse them...

Hart, along with his mentor, Professor Roch are kidnapped by the rogue Count Artigas. This alleged benefactor of the professor's research is in fact the cynical boss of a band of pirates, who deliberately sink merchant ships to steal their cargo. The trusting Roch is for a long time completely unaware that Artigas wants to exploit his new explosive to gain world domination. Hart, cut off from the old scientist in a makeshift shack, tries to thwart the plans of the villains and inform the world outside of their real intentions. Meanwhile he meets the young beauty Jane, who was rescued during one of the pirate attacks. With some difficulty, he manages to send a message from the villain's lair on the island of Back Cup, a high-tech base hidden inside what looks to the outside world like a smoldering volcano. But it is not easy to attack overwhelmingly powerful enemies who possess the deadly submarine Nautilus and an array of deadly inventions...

Invention for Destruction

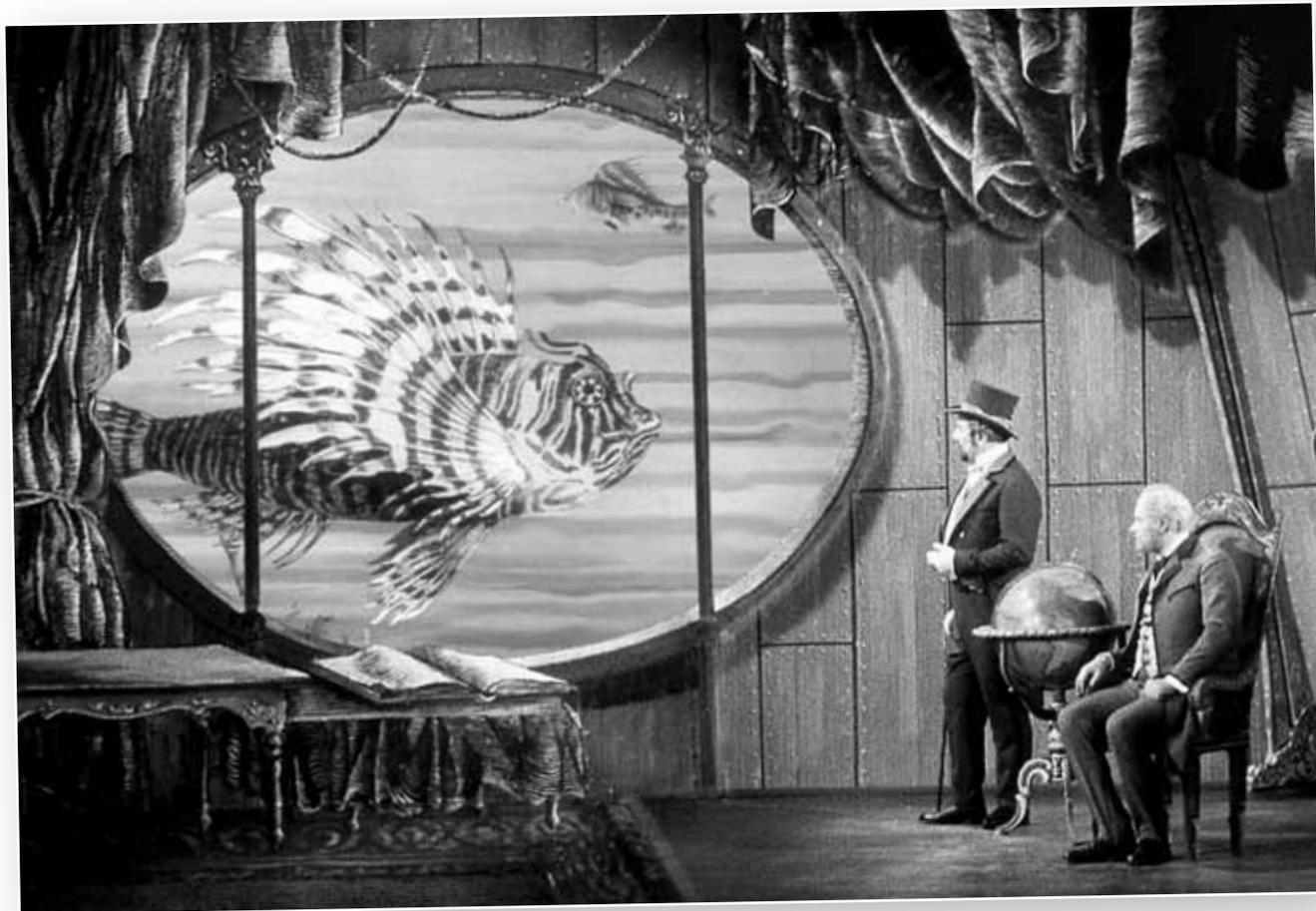


“Man has created a grandiose world of technology, of which dread and fear are often the result... Fortunately, events in the world and our way of life are not determined by technology alone.”

Karel Zeman



Invention for Destruction



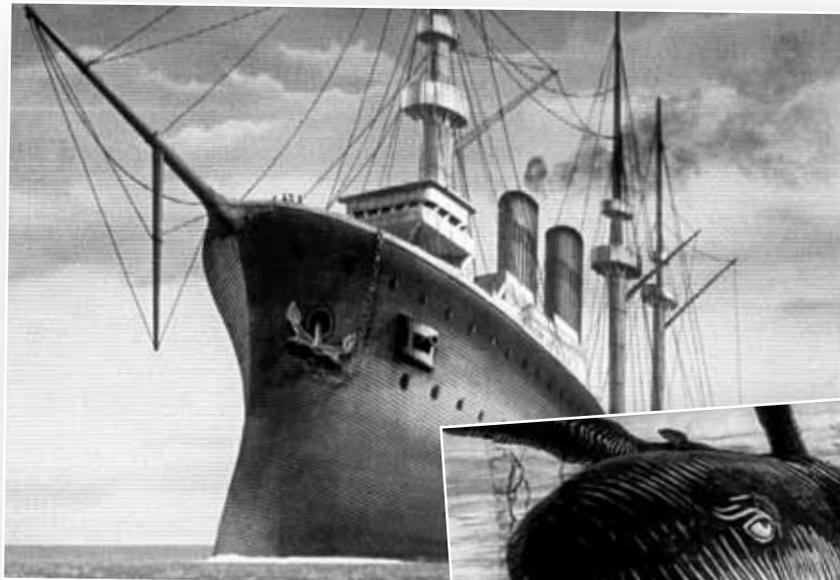
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and others

Czechoslovakia, 1958, 78 min
Genre - animation / Sci-Fi
Types of copies - DCP, Blu-ray
Screen Format - 16:9
Audio - Czech
Subtitles - Czech, English

Invention for Destruction has been restored thanks to the project Čistíme svět fantazie / Restoring the World of Fantasy, a joint project of the Czech Film Foundation, the Karel Zeman Museum and Czech Television in cooperation with Universal Production Partners (UPP) and with the support of the Ministry of Culture and the State Fund for Cinematography of the Czech Republic.

Annotation

In 1958, this film literally circled the globe. It was showered with prizes and became one of the most significant films of the 20th century. Among its many awards, it won the Grand Prix at the World Exposition EXPO 58 in Brussels. It is the first of several Zeman films inspired by the works of Jules Verne. In it, the director tried a new artistic style to bring to life the black and white engravings made by the first illustrators of the Jules Verne books, Édouard Riou and Leon Bennett. Throughout his life Zeman continued to develop this new style, using it to create his visionary worlds. Together, Verne's timeless story of an exploited inventor whose work falls into the hands of criminals, threatening the entire world, along with the paper look of the scenes and dramatic stylization of the whole film, all contribute to the unique appearance and original atmosphere of this masterwork of cinematic art.



Synopsis

The story of the engineer Simon Hart - as recorded in his diary - takes place at a time when humanity was driven by a belief in inevitable progress. New inventions emerged like mushrooms after the rain and attracted criminals to abuse them...

Hart, along with his mentor, Professor Roch are kidnapped by the rogue Count Artigas.

This alleged benefactor of the professor's research is in fact the cynical boss of a band of pirates, who deliberately sink merchant ships to steal their cargo. The trusting Roch is for a long time completely unaware that Artigas wants to exploit his new explosive to gain world domination. Hart, cut off from the old scientist in a makeshift shack, tries to thwart the plans of the villains and inform the world outside of their real intentions. Meanwhile he meets the young beauty Jane, who was rescued during one of the pirate attacks. With some difficulty, he manages to send a message from the villain's lair on the island of Back Cup, a high-tech base hidden inside what looks to the outside world like a smoldering volcano. But it is not easy to attack overwhelmingly powerful enemies who possess the deadly submarine Nautilus and an array of deadly inventions...



About the film

The most successful Czechoslovak film in history, it became a global phenomenon in 1958. In New York alone it was screened simultaneously in 96 cinemas. This fantasy adventure won a number of prestigious awards, including the Grand Prix at EXPO 58 in Brussels.

This is the first of Zeman's films to be inspired by Jules Verne, in which the director tries out a new style of art direction, which he was later to develop further. The story-book sets, striking design and innovative music of Zdeněk Liška - all contribute to the unique feel of this thrilling story with its antiwar subtext. The black and white narrative is deeply influenced by the classic engravings of Édouard Riou and Léon Bennett - the original illustrators of Verne's novels.

Invention for Destruction has been digitally restored as part of Čistíme svět fantazie / Restoring the World of Fantasy, a joint project of the Karel Zeman Museum, the Czech Film Foundation and Czech Television. The aim of the project is to digitally restore selected films by Karel Zeman at the highest possible quality over a period of three years, bringing them back to cinema screens and rejuvenating interest in them.

The project also aims to raise awareness of the importance of digital restoration.

Guarantor of the digital restoration of Karel Zeman's films is American expert James Mockoski. The restoration is under the direction of head restorer Ivo Marak in Universal Production Partners (UPP), with audio restoration of the film provided by Soundsquare, led by Pavel Rejholec.





Awards

- World Film Festival at EXPO '58 Brussels - Grand Prix in the International Film Festival (Grand Prix du Mondial du Film a l'Unanimité du Jury)
- 1st International Showing of Winning Films from Five Festivals (Mexico City, 1958) - Award „The Invention for Destruction is the discovery of the show“ - in the form of the head of the Mayan king of Palenque
- Trofeo „Jalisco“ Primer Festival Internacional De Cine En Guadalajara, Mexico (Pecime Circuito „Luis R. Montes“)
- Film Audience Award: Best Film of the Year (1958)
- Czechoslovak Film Critics Award for 1958
- International Grand Prix of the French Film Academy (1959) - The Crystal Star
- French Film Critics' Award (1959) - Prix Jean-Georges Auriol
- In a Japanese film criticism survey, the film was among the top 20 international films in 1959
- 1st Banská Bystrica Festival of Czechoslovak Films (1959)
- State Prize for the Director (1959) - Czechoslovak Prize for Peace
- 2nd Congress of UNIATEC Prague (1960) - 1st prize



Karel Zeman - Biography

A true successor to Georges Méliès and a wizard of the big screen, as he was often called, Karel Zeman was born in Ostroměř near Nová Paka in northern Bohemia. A brilliant pioneer of special effects in film, he is still one of the few Czech directors to be universally recognized in the world of cinema.

Ever since his childhood he had adored puppets and performed plays with them in a puppet theater. Despite his artistic talent, his parents insisted he study business at high school in Kolín. At the age of 17, responding to advertisement in a newspaper, he went to Aix-en-Provence in the south of France, where he studied advertising design. While in France, he frequently visited the cinema, and became especially interested in animated movies.

He was to put this knowledge to good use in his own first attempt at animation - an advertisement for soap.

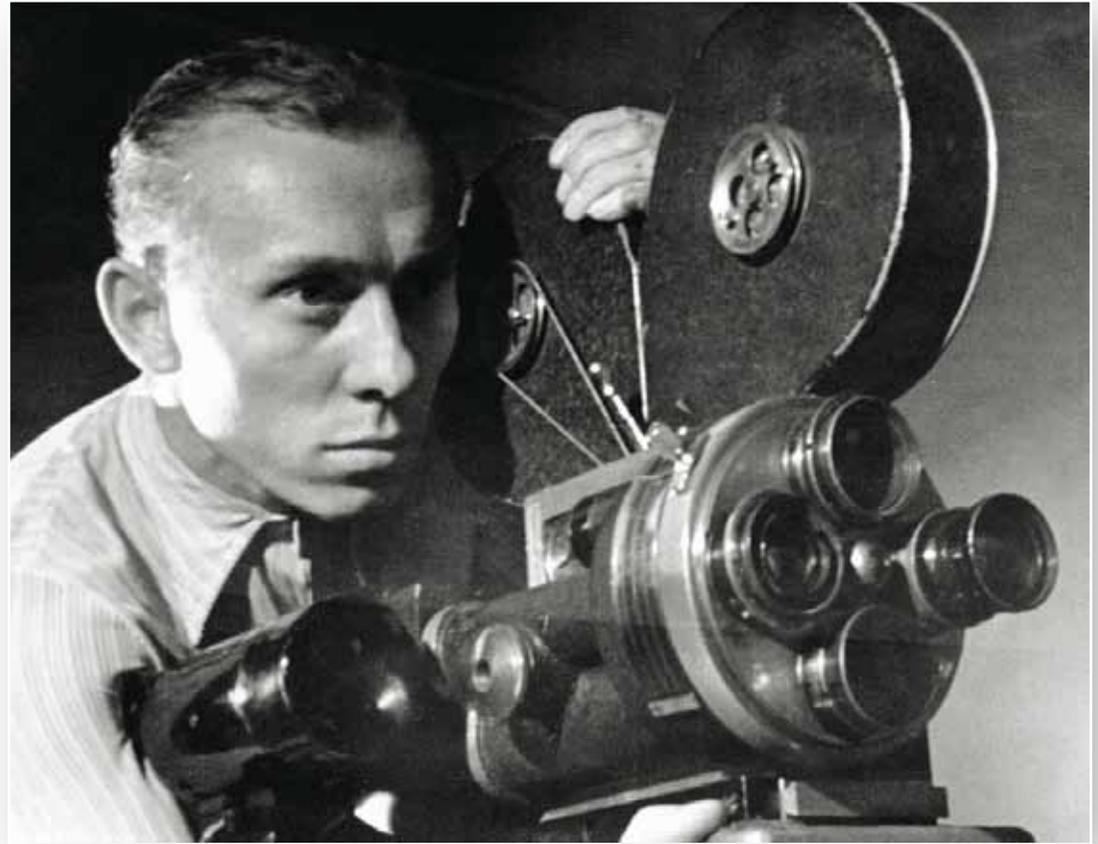
He traveled widely in his youth, hiking in Morocco, Egypt, Yugoslavia and Greece. After his military service he returned to work in advertising, and, in 1939, was about to make an extended trip to Casablanca in Morocco, as a representative of the Bába shoe company, but failed to get the necessary papers from the then Protectorate authorities in time and in the end he had to stay put.

He then began working as head of the advertising section of a department store in Brno. In 1943, the film director Elmar Klos was sent to make a report about a window-dressing competition which Zeman had recently won. Klos was so taken by Zeman's work that he immediately offered him a job at the Bába Film Studios, in the Kudlov suburb of Zlín. Thus began the professional career of this later world famous film director and production designer.

Zeman often had to struggle against difficult conditions in the technically ill-equipped Kudlov Studios. Many of the workers with whom he started had no particular experience of filming. They, like Zeman himself, had to learn everything on the job. Gradually a coordinated creative team emerged.

Journey to the Beginning of Time released in 1955 became Zeman's breakthrough film, his first to combine live action, animation and puppetry.

Four years later, Invention for Destruction saw him shoot to world-wide success. The film was immediately sold to 72 countries and became the most successful Czech film of all time.



"I was and still remain a great admirer of the works of Jules Verne. He was the writer of my youth, and I think he will still be the writer of my grandchildren."

Karel Zeman

Zeman continued to develop his highly successful use of special effects in *The Fabulous Baron Munchausen* and the two Jules Verne adaptations that followed. In the 1970's, partly motivated by his love for children and the desire to create films specially for them - but also in part because of the difficulty of shooting live action movies - Zeman returned to making strictly animated films.

Among Zeman's close associates were the composer Zdeněk Liška, animator Arnošt Kupčák, production manager Karel Hutčeka and his daughter Ludmila, co-creator of his films from *The Adventures of Sinbad the Sailor* onwards.



In the late 70's Zeman was threatened with the loss of his sight, but overcame the disease and continued working. In the final stages of his life he suffered from heart problems. Karel Zeman died in Zlín on April 5, 1989.

Director's Filmography

- 1945 Vánoční sen - The Christmas Dream
- 1946 Pan Prokouk: Podkova pro štěstí - Mr. Prokouk: A Horseshoe for Luck
- 1946 Křeček - The Hamster
- 1947 Zatopená zahrádka - The Deluge of the Animals
- 1947 Pan Prokouk v pokušení - Mr. Prokouk in Temptation
- 1947 Pan Prokouk ouřaduje - Mr. Prokouk, The Office Clerk
- 1947 Pan Prokouk na brigádě - Mr. Prokouk, The Volunteer
- 1948 Pan Prokouk filmuje - Mr. Prokouk, The Filmmaker
- 1949 Pan Prokouk vynálezcem - Mr. Prokouk, The Inventor
- 1949 Inspirace - Inspiration
- 1950 Král Lávro - King Lavra
- 1952 Poklad Ptačího ostrova - The Treasure of Bird Island
- 1955 Pan Prokouk, přítel zvířátek - Mr. Prokouk, The Animal Lover
- 1955 Cesta do pravěku - Journey to the Beginning of Time
- 1957 Pan Prokouk detektivem - Mr. Prokouk, The Detective
- 1958 Černý dým - The Black Diamond
- 1958 Vynález zkázy - Invention for Destruction
- 1959 Pan Prokouk akrobatem - Mr. Prokouk, The Acrobat
- 1960 Laterna magika II - The Magic Lantern II
- 1961 Baron Prášil - The Fabulous Baron Munchausen
- 1962 Kouzelný svět Karla Zemana - The Magical World of Karel Zeman
- 1964 Bláznova kronika - A Jester's Tale
- 1964 Bez pasu a bez víza z Kudlova do San Franciska - From Kudlov to San Francisco with no Passport and no Visa
- 1966 Ukradená vzducholoď - The Stolen Airship
- 1970 Na kometě - On the Comet
- 1974 Pohádky tisíce a jedné noci - The Adventures of Sinbad the Sailor
- 1977 Čarodějův učeň - The Sorcerer's Apprentice
- 1980 Pohádka o Honzíkovi a Mařence - The Tale of John and Mary
- 1980 Karel Zeman dětem - Karel Zeman for Children

What they said about Karel Zeman's films and their digital restoration

"It's amazing that modern technology makes it possible to rebuild and preserve any form of artwork in the world to once again shine and bring aesthetic and artistic experiences to humanity as their originals did many years ago. The films of my father, Karel Zeman, represent the originality and fantasy of a Czech artist. It is vital that his work is not completely lost, so I'm a fan of this project. In particular I admire the Restoring the World of Fantasy project, because my father's famous films are among the world's works of art."

Ludmila Zemanová (filmmaker, graphic designer, illustrator and daughter of Karel Zeman)

"It's a rare feeling to see something that has so much energy! Zeman's films are really great, hand-made, personal and beautiful."

Tim Burton (American film director and artist)



"I honestly think that Zeman's films didn't require or need dialogue. They were narrated visually, that's amazing. And I think that's the key to them - everyone in the world understands them. „

„When you begin to deal with fantasy and fiction, even in Zeman's version of Jules Verne with a giant cannon, he is also a dreamer, a scientist who is a scientist. But once the realist, the Count, takes control and misuses the cannon for his purposes, then something must happen. So I think it's always about this type of story. There will always be a struggle between fantasy and reality, facts, and fiction. And Zeman's films, like mine, are always a struggle between these two aspects. And that's what makes them interesting. His influence is on me unending. That's all I can say."

Terry Gilliam (American film director and artist)



"It is not always possible to carry out the prime objective of a project the size of the digital restoration of three films by Karel Zeman. It all started with a short mail from the representatives of the Karel Zeman Museum asking for a financial contribution. Coincidentally, at a time when the Foundation was working with Czech Television to support the digital restoration of old Czech films for children and youth. Zeman's films are loved by almost all children, regardless of age, and so it did not take long to decide, and the Restoring the World of Fantasy Project was born. We now see that our efforts, time and money have been spent on the right thing. Thanks to the great work of UPP experts, we managed to return to the cinemas, and thus to other generations of viewers, two of three exceptional films by Karel Zeman."

Petr Šikoš (co-founder and chairman of the Czech Film Foundation)

"Zeman's work is exceptional. The force of his fantasy, craftsmanship, and the stories that he tells is extraordinary. Under conditions quite different from perfectly equipped large foreign studios, Karel Zeman proved able to create films that today, even in an environment of modern technological possibilities, reach out to a world audience. And this includes children who are traditionally the most critical of viewers. I am pleased that Czech Television is behind a project that returns Karel Zeman's films where they belong - to festivals, cinemas and film fans."

Petr Dvořák (CEO of CT)

"As a kid I loved Karel Zeman's films and lived through his incredible adventures at least in my imagination. Now that I can now be so close to them, it is a great joy and honor for me and for the whole of UPP. We are really glad that our studio has restored the films Invention for Destruction and The Fabulous Baron Muchausen, and Journey to the Beginning of Time. These films will never stop being loved and it is really good that our kids and their children will see them in great shape thanks to the work of our skilled UPP specialists."

Vit Komrží (Head of UPP)



Partners in the project Restoring the World of Fantasy

The Czech Film Foundation

The project Restoring the World of Fantasy is a joint project of The Czech Film Foundation, Karel Zeman Museum and Czech Television. The aim of the project is within three years to digitally restore selected films produced by Karel Zeman to the finest quality, to screen them in cinemas and to rejuvenate interest in them. The aim of the project is also to inform the public about the importance of digital restoration.



Funding for the restoration was secured by the Czech Film Foundation with contributions from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. All lovers of the films of Karel Zeman can contribute to the digital restoration of his other films, either by making a deposit to the Transparent Account of the Restoring a World of Fantasy project on the Czech Film Foundation web pages or by pledging CZK 30 by sending the SMS: DMS BIJAKY to the number 87 777. You can also contribute regularly throughout the year by sending the SMS: DMS ROK BIJAKY, again to the number 87 777. All information you can find on www.thechechfilmfoundation.com.

The American expert James Mockoski will act as the supervisor of the digital restoration of these Karel Zeman films. The restoration is being led by the chief restorer Ivo Marák at Universal Production Partners (UPP). The reconstruction of the audio portion of the films is taking place in Soundsquare under the direction of Pavel Rejholec. Ludmila Zemanová is also an integral part of the restoration process.



After



Before

The Karel Zeman Museum

The Karel Zeman Museum is a non-profit organization - a registered institution - which takes care of the preservation, promotion and development of the legacy of the filmmaker Karel Zeman and which presents his life and work to the public. It emphasizes the development of the Czech cinematic special effects and animation in the context of European and world cinema.

The main activity of the institution is the preparation and presentation of exhibitions and archive activities. The core of its activity consists of the interactive exhibition at the Karel Zeman Museum in Prague's Lesser Quarter mapping the life and work of Karel Zeman. A co-founder of the museum is the director's daughter Ludmila Zemanová.

In addition to digitally restoring the three most important of Zeman's films within the Restoring the World of Fantasy project, the museum digitizes and produces Zeman's film on DVD and Blu-ray on an on-going basis. There are 7 films to date in its Karel Zeman Film Club series.

Other activities of the institution include the mapping of, theoretical reflections on and promotion of Czech cinematic special effects and animation in particular through documentary and theoretical works (film, publishing activities) in the context of Karel Zeman. It is a respected institution whose socio-cultural outreach goes beyond that of Zeman's own work, an important institution in the European and world context.

Czech Television

Czech Television fulfills the mission of a public institution not only by making broadcasts of its balanced and varied programming, but also by giving support to many charitable and non-profit activities and cultural projects. Among its core tasks is the preservation and development of a significant part of the national cultural heritage in the fields of film and television.

Czech Television acts as a guarantor of traditional and original drama, documentary and animated films and simultaneously creates space for future developments. In addition, it is also the largest film co-producer in the Czech Republic, which makes it a solid pillar of Czech national cinema.

An inseparable part of the mission of public service television is the development of general education and the upbringing of the young generation. In this regard the status of public television is completely irreplaceable, and therefore it is not surprising that high-quality programs for children and youth are still the most popular formats produced by Czech TV among all our viewers at home and abroad.

Besides its original work, Czech Television plays an important role in the digitization and restoration of Czech films and cartoons, which deserve to be preserved for future generations for their unique qualities.



After



Before

UPP (Universal Production Partners, a.s.)

UPP is one of the leading post-production studios in Central Europe focused on complete image post-production. It has played a vital role creating visual effects for feature films, television productions and advertising for more than twenty years.

It also offers a complete cutting-edge technology chain for restoring archive materials and documents. UPP has carried out the restoration of a number of foreign films; of Czech films we like to recall the films of Karel Zeman: *Invention for Destruction* and *The Fabulous Baron Prášil* as well as other restored premieres at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival: *Markéta Lazarová*, *Hoří, má panenko*, *Closely Observed Trains*, *Všichni dobří rodáci* and this year's *Intimní osvětlení*.

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