

LA WEEKLY

# calendar

OCTOBER 4-10, 2005

retro

## UNSEEN CINEMA

In Billy Bitzer's New York Subway, a static camera mounted on one train steadily chugs along behind another, moving through a series of tunnels in a single five-minute take. However, the prosaic train ride gradually slips away, replaced by a kaleidoscopic, enveloping passage through moving graphic art. Squares within squares pulse forward as we are thrust into the darkness, which is only intermittently illuminated by a single light. At one point, the curve of the tunnel is revealed as a lush, rounded shape that you can almost feel. Throughout, the flat screen dissolves into unfathomable depth and we glide ever forward through patterns of high-contrast black-and-white. The fact that this film was shot in 1905 may be surprising, given its exquisite visceral depiction of movement through space. However, according to curator Bruce Posner, that's just one example demonstrating that most of us have an extremely limited understanding of early cinema, partly because so much of it has remained inaccessible. "Unseen Cinema" is Posner's attempt to rectify that limited history. The seven-disc DVD compilation includes 155 films made between 1894 and 1941 and offers an amazing surfeit of avant-garde material, from acknowledged (but hard-to-find) classics to more obscure gems. Fernand Leger and Dudley Murphy's cubist masterpiece Ballet Mécanique, for example, which is often shown with awful piano music, is presented here synched to the cacophonous and exhilarating score by George Antheil, replete with sirens and whistles. The compilation also includes James Sibley Watson and Melville Webber's The Fall of the House of Usher, a disjunctive adaptation of the Edgar Allan Poe story that features expressionist set design to great effect, as well as films by Man Ray, Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp. The screening, hosted by Posner and the project's producer, silent-film scholar David Shepard, will offer audiences a sampling of movies from the exhaustive DVD set. Filmforum at the Egyptian, 6712 Hollywood Blvd.; Sun., Oct. 16, 7 p.m. California Institute of the Arts Bijou Cinema, 2400 MacBean Parkway, Valencia; Tues., Oct. 18, 7 p.m. USC School of Cinema-Television Lucas 108, 850 W. 34th St.; Thurs., Oct. 20, 7 p.m. Hollywood Entertainment Museum, 7021 Hollywood Blvd.; Sat., Oct. 22, 2:30 p.m.

[www.unseen-cinema.com](http://www.unseen-cinema.com).

— Holly Willis