



Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé

Symposium Pathé-Baby

From Pathé-Baby to 9.5mm: The Invention of Home Cinema

Call for Papers

Conference on 5 December and 6 December 2022

Pathé-Baby is 100!

In October 1922, Pathé launched a projector for home use. Designed for easy handling and family use, Pathé-Baby was the first in a range that introduced people "home cinema". It launched a new format with reduced production costs, 9.5mm, the development of which was inseparable from that of the projector. A catalogue of films was published, taken from the Pathé catalogue and those of many other producers. The films could be rented or sold, in a new version re-edited especially for that format.

The Pathé-Baby camera was marketed starting in July 1923. Using reversal film, it extended the practice of photography because it allowed individuals to immortalize their loved ones, their holidays, and the major events in their lives, and even to try their hand at fiction. Amateur filmmakers could operate it with a wide range of accessories and have their films developed at the factory.

A sign of success, the use of the Pathé-Baby went beyond the home and into associations and meeting places such as schools, community centres, and amateur clubs. Through a range of cameras, accessories, and popularization tools, a real 9.5mm community was created that went beyond French borders. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the 9.5mm market was dominated by Pathé, which tried to maintain its leadership in an increasingly competitive market, countered by camera and film manufacturers, including Kodak, which launched 16mm in 1923 and 8mm in 1932. Nevertheless, it was so successful that for more than 60 years the popularity of "9.5" exceeded that of the Pathé-Baby. It even became an emblem to be defended against the multiplicity of formats and manufacturers' brands after the Second World War.

The symposium is to be held at the Foundation on 5-6 December 2022 and at the INHA, and will address several aspects:

**1 - The design of the equipment, its technical aspects, and the creation and constitution of the catalogue:**

The choice of the 9.5mm format, with a central perforation, meets very specific handling criteria. Studying the specifications and going back over the reasons that led to the choice of the format will make it possible to question the use of 9.5mm and its place in relation to other formats. At Pathé and other manufacturers, what were the technical characteristics of this format, and its evolution? The particular case of stencil-coloured films offered in the catalogue between 1923 and 1923 is also a subject.

## 2 - Clubs and amateur practices

The 9.5mm format, far from being reserved for a restricted circle, brings together amateurs who exchange advice and organize sessions. How did these meetings take place? How did the amateurs appropriate the Pathé-Baby to the point where their ingenuity led to technical improvements? What were the practices in terms of sound? What was the use of colour? We will also look at family case studies where the use of 9.5mm film affects several generations.

## 3 - The development of the market and foreign customers:

Pathé grants manufacturing licences for foreign countries and has agreements with laboratories for the development of amateur films. In some countries, networks were set up on the basis of Pathé's former markets, while in others, a wealthy clientele exported the Pathé-Baby through their travels. The market drew a new map of the film trade, in parallel with the geography of 35mm.

## 4 – 9.5 and the competition, from 1922 to the 1970s:

The competitors of the French and foreign 9,5mm products were numerous from the 1930s onwards, and after the war the brands multiplied in the 1950s. For example, Nizo, Eurtier, Cinégel, and Bolex... How did the competitors distance themselves from Pathé's stranglehold on the market? What was the place of 9.5 in specialized magazines compared to other formats? What were the economic, commercial, and sociological choices of the amateur? How did the 9.5mm format find an extension among professionals?

## Selected Bibliography

- Anne Gourdet-Marès, « Un anniversaire: le Pathé-Baby et le format 9,5 mm (1922) », conference given at the Cinémathèque française in November 2012. <https://www.cinematheque.fr/video/226.html>
  - Anne Gourdet-Marès, « La caméra Pathé-Baby: le cinéma amateur à l'âge de l'expérimentation, in Benoît Turquétty et Valérie Vignaux, *L'amateur en cinéma, un autre paradigme ?* Paris, AFRHC, 2016
  - Jacques Kermabon, *Pathé premier empire du cinéma*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1994.
  - Patrick Moules, *The 9,5 mm Vintage Film Encyclopedia*, 2020.
  - Alexandra Schneider, "Time travel with Pathé Baby: The small-gauge film collection as historical archive", in *Film History*, Volume 19, pp. 353–360, 2007.
  - Elvira Shahmiri, « Le cinéma burlesque par le Pathé-Baby – la diffusion d'un genre cinématographique en format 9,5 mm durant l'entre-deux-guerres », Master dissertation, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne (online as part of Valérie Vignaux's research blog).
- Stéphanie Salmon, *Pathé à la conquête du cinéma - 1896-1929*, Paris, Taillandier, 2014.
- Valérie Vignaux, « Les animateurs français et le Pathé-Baby ou des usages privés des images cinématographiques dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres », *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* 59 | 2009, available online since 1 December 2012, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/1895/3919>

Coming Soon :

- Roxane Hamery, Simon Daniellou et Grégory Wallet (dir.), *De l'écran géant à l'espace domestique : histoire et esthétique des formats cinématographiques*, Rennes, PUR, coll. « Cinéma », to be published at the end of 2022.
- Elvira Shahmiri : « Les éditions en format réduit en France (1922-1939) : comment le Pathé-Baby écourtait et remontait les films », in François Thomas et Marie Frappat (dir.), *Le Film pluriel*, forthcoming.
- Rachael Stoeltje et Louis Pelletier (eds.), *Tales from the Vaults*, FIAF, to be published in the second half of 2022.
- Elvira's thesis, *Histoire des formats réduits Pathé, 1912-1939*, to be defended on 24 May 2022, will be available for consultation on the website from summer 2022.

#### Documentation online

- *La revue Le cinéma chez soi*, available on the Gallica platform : [https://gallica.bnf.fr/services/engine/search/sru?operation=searchRetrieve&version=1.2&collapsing=disabled&query=%28dc.title%20all%20%22Le%20Cin%C3%A9ma%20chez%20soi%22%29%20and%20arkPress%20all%20%22cb327423825\\_date%22&rk=21459;2](https://gallica.bnf.fr/services/engine/search/sru?operation=searchRetrieve&version=1.2&collapsing=disabled&query=%28dc.title%20all%20%22Le%20Cin%C3%A9ma%20chez%20soi%22%29%20and%20arkPress%20all%20%22cb327423825_date%22&rk=21459;2)
- *Filmathèque Pathé-Baby*, 1931, accessible online : <https://archive.org/details/filmatheque00path/mode/2up?view=theater>
- Annotated Mayer repertory, edited by Jacques Malthête and Anne Gourdet-Marès on the website of the Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé. <http://www.fondation-jeromeseydoux-pathe.com/dossiers>
- Valérie Vignaux's research blog: <https://cinedidac.hypotheses.org/>
- Pathé-Baby films digitized by Princeton University: <https://library.princeton.edu/pathebaby/films>

Sources :

The Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé Foundation holds a set of archives devoted to the development of the Pathé-Baby and its marketing, as well as the archives of the Société française de Pathé-Baby, created in 1924. Its collection of cameras, the inventory of which is online, is accompanied by user manuals and a large collection of film catalogues that have been digitized.

The Foundation's Collections database contains most of these documents. All of them can be consulted at the Pathé Foundation's research centre.

## Information

This conference is organized by the Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé Foundation and the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (HiCSA research unit, Cultural and Social History of Art), in partnership with the Research Unit "Arts: practices and poetics" of the University of Rennes 2, FIAF, the Inédits network, and the Cinémathèque Berne.

It will be held at the INHA (salle Vasari, 2 rue Vivienne – 75002 Paris) and at the Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé Foundation (73 avenue des Gobelins, 75013 Paris), on 5-6 December 2022.

Organizing Committee: Anne Gourdet-Marès, Roxane Hamery (University of Rennes 2), Elvira Shahmiri (Fondation Pathé), Dimitri Vezyroglou (University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne).

Proposals for papers, in French or English, of a maximum length of 2,000 characters, accompanied by a short biography and a bibliography, should be sent to [colloque@fondationpathe.com](mailto:colloque@fondationpathe.com) by 2 May 2022.

Papers will be delivered in French or English.

Presenters will be notified of the acceptance of their proposal by 30 May 2021.



Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé et Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne en collaboration avec :

