***Zigomar***

*Zigomar* was the criminal mastermind of French writer Léon Sazie’s eponymous serial novel, or *feuilleton*, which appeared in the newspaper *Le Matin* between 1909 and 1910. It was in 1911, however, when *Zigomar* and his Z-gang shot to worldwide fame through a cinematic adaptation in six episodes by the Éclair Film Company and its leading director, Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset. Serial detective fiction was certainly not new at the time, Éclair and Jasset led the way in 1908 with the famous *Nick Carter* series and multiple adaptations and imitations of Sherlock Holmes that had flooded the screens for years, but the elevation of a criminal figure was still a very recent phenomenon – with Danish precursors such as *Dr. Nikola* (Viggo Larsen, 1909), *Zigomar* helped pave the way for classics such as Louis Feuillade’s *Fantômas* series (1913-1914). Abel argues that Jasset’s *Zigomar*, played by Alexandre Arquillière, strengthened Sazie’s by transforming him into an immoral bourgeois gentleman, “a capitalist entrepreneur pushed to the point of excess” (Abel: 1998, 358). As such, *Zigomar* was one of the first modernist anti-heroes to grace the silver screen, an illustrious criminal who undermined bourgeois society by upsetting the social order and preying on its members – not coincidentally the cinema’s target audience.

**References and further reading:**

Dureau, G. (ed.) (1911) “Les Films en Sérié,” *Ciné-Journal* no. 159, p.3-4.

Turconi, D. (ed.) (1993) *Griffithiana, Journal of Film History no. 47: Lightning Images – Société Éclair 1907-1920*, Gemona: La Cineteca del Friuli.

Abel, R. (1998) *The Ciné Goes to Town – French Cinema 1896-1914*, Berkeley & London: University of California Press, p.358-362

**Selected Filmography**

*Zigomar* (1911)

*Zigomar, roi des voleurs* (1911)

*Zigomar contre Nick Carter* (1912)

*Zigomar, peau d’anguille – Épisode 1: La Résurrection de Zigomar* (1913)

*Zigomar, peau d’anguille – Épisode 2: L’éléphant Cambrioleur* (1913)

*Zigomar, peau d’anguille – Épisode 3: Le Brigand de l’Air* (1913)

**Paratextual Material**

- Look at original ads and read reviews of the Zigomar series via the Media History Digital Library’s Lantern search tool (http://lantern.mediahist.org/?utf8=✓&q=zigomar)

- A full filmography of director Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset can be found on the Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0419327/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1>)

- A poster of one of the Éclair Zigomar films can be found at Allo Ciné (<http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm-6852/photos/detail/?cmediafile=18870919>)

- Original covers of Léon Sazie’s Zigomar books (<http://leboudoirdezigomar.wordpress.com/2011/10/07/za-la-vie-za-la-mort/>)

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