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Author(s)	Lee Amazonas
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General, The

Directed by [Buster Keaton](#) [Clyde Bruckman](#)

A model of serenity and grace, Buster Keaton is the silent movie clown who best resonates with modern audiences. His supreme physical gifts, timing and genius for confounding viewer expectations rarely fail to astonish. A Civil War comedy with a Confederate hero, **The General** was a risky and costly project. The creative freedom Keaton had at that time produced an enormously funny and exciting masterpiece that's a mainstay on most all-time best film lists. Railroad engineer Johnny Gray attempts to enlist to win the love of Annabelle Lee, whose claim on his heart equals that of the locomotive he runs, the General. Spies from the North soon infiltrate, and the hair-raising and uproarious chase by rail begins. The comedy is part of the narrative's fabric, wasting no action or sight gag. A hole in a tablecloth delivers wit, suspense and sentiment in rapid succession. There are numerous perilous stunts, which Keaton performed himself. Even the plucky heroine tangles with a bear trap and drives a locomotive. Based on a Union veteran's account of a wartime incident, **The General's** war is hell. The most spectacular scene—possibly the most expensive single shot in silent film—is both a thrilling and a sobering moment. The action on the rails and the battlefield have the historical detail of a reenactment (but don't look for the war's politics). **The General's** brisk pace, evocative setting and beautiful Oregon locations call for the full Castro Theatre experience and a dazzling new score by Festival favorite the Alloy Orchestra. This opportunity should not be missed.

—Lee Amazonas

Additional Notes

Total running time 79 min. at 24 frames per second. Silent with live musical accompaniment. Presented in association with the San Francisco Silent Film Festival.

Show Times

4/20 CAS 7:00 GENE20C

Country

USA

Year

1927

Run Time

Cast

Buster Keaton, Marion Mack, Charles Smith, Richard Allen

Producer

Buster Keaton, Joseph M. Schenck

Editor

Buster Keaton, Sherman Kell

Music

Alloy Orchestra

Cinematographer

Bert Haines, Dev Jennings

Screenwriter

Al Boasberg, Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman

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