

## Document Citation

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# Sunday

Buster Keaton's and Clyde Bruckman's The General (1926), from a screenplay by Al Boasberg and Charles Smith, with Keaton, Marian Mack, and Joe Keaton, is Keaton's most epic narrative and his most physically ambitious film. In its own way, *The General* is conceived on the same historical scale as D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, but with a unique combination of cool-eyed detail and satiric license. The complex saga of a two-way chase between Northern raiders and Keaton's solo champion of Southern honor reveals a director who could loosely improvise on location while tenaciously retaining his original theme. *The General* never really digresses from its examination of true heroism being subjected to the fortunes of war. The film unwinds with breathtaking visual grace in its intricate calculation, and the comedy must wait its turn until all the spectacle has been fit into place. One of the most pungent insights into the military mystique is planted toward the end in showing the dismay of a general who yells "Charge" with a sword that loses its blade. And *The General* also leaves us one of the most inspired auto-critiques in the history of cinema when Buster Keaton seats himself on the axle of a train as it begins rising and falling in accelerated speed. He is The Thinker of the machine age, as it were, in dynamic motion. (Co-feature: Keaton's *Steamboat Bill Jr.*) Thalia: 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30.