

## *La Jetée* (1962)

**Written and directed by:**  
Chris Marker

**Cast:** Jean Negrone,  
Etienne Becker, Davos  
Hanich, Jacques Ledoux,  
Hélène Chatelain

**Awards:** Prix Jean Vigo,  
1963



*La Jetée*, the award-winning short film that inspired Terry Gilliam's *Twelve Monkeys*, explores both time and memory in a world created by the imagination of Marker. Influenced by the rapid proliferation of nuclear technology during the Cold War, *La Jetée* is set in Paris in the near future. Earth has barely survived an all encompassing nuclear holocaust, which has driven the remnants of humanity underground. The division between victor and vanquished is rather meaningless under these circumstances, yet there are those who subjugate others. With minimal resources, scientists entombed beneath the ruins of Paris are searching for salvation through the single avenue left open - Time.

The prisoner chosen to take part in the experiments lives his life haunted by a childhood memory: glimpsing a woman at Orly airport moments before witnessing a man die. He is sent to the past several times in succession where he finds this same woman from his childhood. After one voyage to the future he is allowed to search out his new companion. The art of Marker's technique in this film lies in his brilliant use of still images and sparse narration to construct a story which is both compelling and haunting.

"In part this effect is achieved through the choice of superlative black & white photographs; these are grainy enough and shot in such a way that the immediate impression is of wartime photojournalism while the events captured suggest far more than they illustrate. By altering the time for which each shot is held (at times a quick succession of similar images approximates to film) a tight grasp of pace and a certain level of suspense is achieved. Interestingly, perhaps the most significant result of *La Jetée* is that the basic structures utilized in cinema are stripped bare and revealed unadorned." (Damian Cannon, [www.film.u-net.com](http://www.film.u-net.com))

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