

While Harry Houdini didn't rise to fame as a screen actor, silent film makers of the day sought to capitalize on his fame. The Master Mystery was Houdini's first such attempt, and it was embraced by the viewing public, leading to other screen roles following. The hero (or superhero) is Quentin Locke, scientist, agent of the U.S. Justice Department, and not surprisingly, an escape artist extraordinaire. The Master Mystery follows agent Locke through many pitfalls, in true serial fashion, as he is tasked with uncovering a band of thugs and a peculiar metal robot (reportedly the first robot in film) with a brain, called an automaton, which has been robbing potential inventors of their patent rights. All in good fun by today's standards, we find our hero escaping a straightjacket, a diver's suit, and an electric chair to name but a few, and of course winning the hand of the daughter of one of the industrialists along the way.

(Summary by Roger Melin)

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