

IV. The Golden Age of Animation

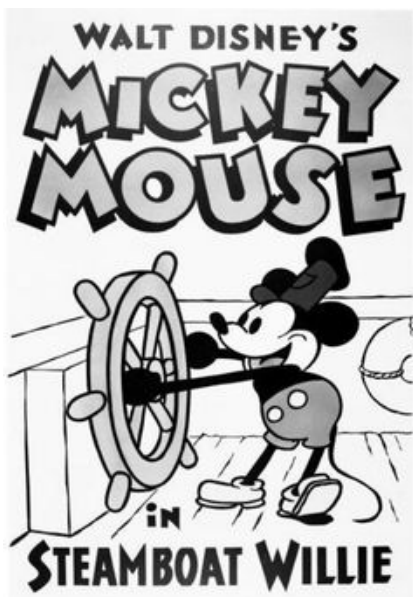
In the Golden Age of Animation, animation grows from an amusing trick to an art form (the old German word for animated film is trickfilm). This era, which lasts from roughly 1925 to just after WWII, is a period of fantastic growth in both the art and the science of animation. The craft reaches new technical heights in both short films and new feature length films and incorporates the latest technology from the motion picture industry. The artistic and entertainment values are exemplary.

The U.S. film industry leads the world with the animation industry following along. The great movie studios are willing to invest the time and the money needed to make this art form flourish, and it does. There are burgeoning studios in Europe, and in Japan animation is just in the incubation phase. Elsewhere in the world, there is no animation to speak of. This is the time when American culture and art are spread worldwide. All eyes are on Hollywood.

In 1926, "EL APOSTOL," the first feature-length animated film is created in Argentina. The film was written by Alfonso Laferrere and directed by Quirino Christiani. It was filmed at 14 frames per second and was 70 minutes long with over 58,000 frames. The film was a political satire and was a hit in Argentina at the time. There is no known copy that has survived. However, full-length feature films are usually considered to be longer than 75 minutes. Eastman Kodak produces the first 16mm film.

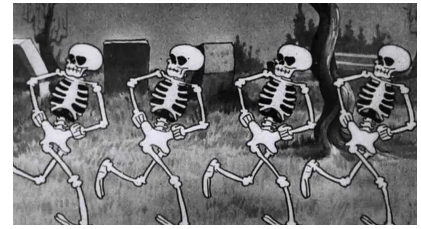


In 1927, Warner Brothers released the live-action movie, "THE JAZZ SINGER," which introduces combined sound and images.



In 1928, Walt Disney creates "STEAMBOAT WILLY" (see video 10) with synchronized sound. The movie features a mouse as the main character and is considered the forerunner of the famous mouse character. Disney's mouse cartoon was not the first sound film; Terry's animation was released on Sept. 1st (Disney saw it and said it was terrible). But Disney's was the first *successful* sound animated film; it made "the mouse" an international star, and launched the Disney studio of today. It also ushered in the new age of sound for animation.

In 1929, Walt Disney's "SKELETON DANCE" is the first Silly Symphony. Prerecorded music is used in this animation and leads to a very tight synchronization of sound and picture, which sets the standard in animation when using sound.



The Academy Awards is first given out for live action films. The ceremony takes 15 minutes and the cost for a ticket is \$5.

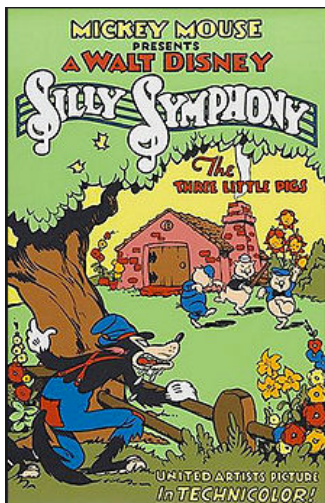
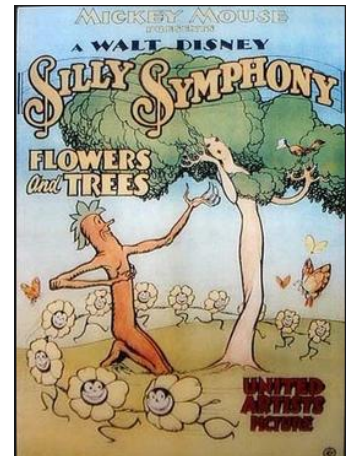
In 1930, the first color-sound cartoon was released by Ub Iwerks (see video 11)

"THE KING OF JAZZ" is produced by Universal (see video 12). In it is a short animated sequence done by Walter Lantz. It is the first animation done with the two-strip technicolor process.

The Warner Bros. Cartoons is born with Leon Schlesinger as the producer. A condition by the studio was for each short to contain a Warner Bros. song, which is why the word "tunes" is on the title page of their animations and not "toons." Schlesinger said, "Our policy has always been laughs, the more the better," and that becomes the Warner's philosophy.

In 1931, the first Academy Award for animation is given for movies produced in 1931. Warner Bros. introduces "MERRIE MELODIES" as one-shot shorts.

In 1932, Walt Disney wins his first Academy Award for "FLOWERS AND TREES" (video 13). This film was the first to use three-strip technicolor (full color) in animation. It is also the first animated film to win an award under the new Animation category.



In 1933, Walt Disney wins his second Academy Award for "THE THREE LITTLE PIGS."

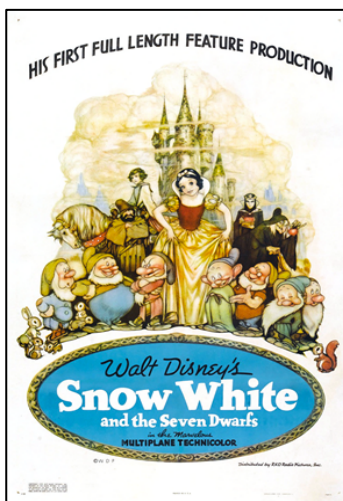
Masaoka releases the first Japanese anime with sound and a year later the first anime was made entirely using cell animation.

Max Fleischer animates "POPEYE" from Elzie Segar's comic strip, "POPEYE THE SAILOR." Jack Mercer's muttering voice was used later. While originally billed as a "Boop" cartoon character, in "Popeye the Sailor," Popeye is the main character.

In 1934, Walt Disney's "THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE" wins the Academy Award.

Walt Disney, in a four-hour staff meeting, lays out his vision for a full-feature length animation based on the fairy tale, "Snow White." Warner Bros. first cartoon is produced in color. The previous cartoons were animated in B&W. Much of these cartoons were re-filmed in color during the sixties by a Japanese studio. This required re-creating all of the cells as Warner Bros. had burnt all the original cells from this series to free up storage space.

In 1936, Warner Bros. produces Tex Avery's first film. Tex Avery learned animation working at Walter Lantz's studio from 1930 to 1935. Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett, and Bo Cannon also work at Warner Bros. They dub the animation unit "Termite Terrace." Carl Stalling joins the studio and sets the style of "cartoon music" going on to compose music for over six hundred films. Mel Blanc, the voice of many iconic characters, joins the studio as well.



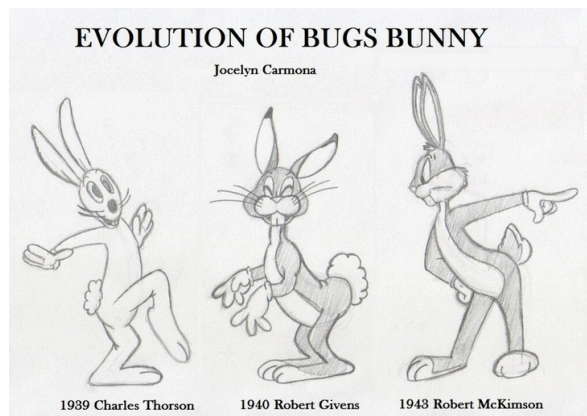
In 1937, Walt Disney produces "SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS," his first animated feature, which was set for general release in 1938. "Whistle While you Work" is one of the most popular songs of the day.

In 1939, Walt Disney's "THE UGLY DUCKLING" wins the Academy Award. It is also the last Silly Symphony produced at Disney Studios.

The Disney Studios begin their move to Burbank from Hyperion Ave. in Los Angeles.

In 1940, MGM's "THE MILKY WAY" wins the Academy Award. This is the first time since the awards started that the Disney Studios did not win it.

Tex Avery directs animations with "Bugs", the famous rabbit, for Warner Bros. where he defines the character's personality. There were three previous versions of this character, but this time he produces a film where the real character was born. This was the start of Warner Bros. supremacy in animated humour.

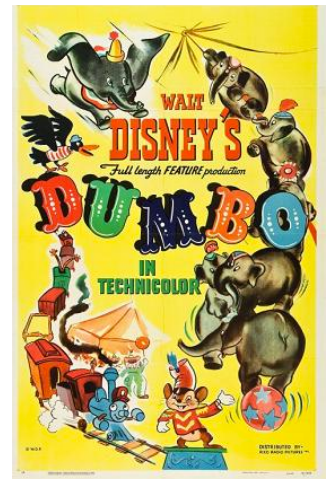




In 1941, the first Asian animation of notable length ever made is produced in China, "THE PRINCESS IRON FAN." In Japan, anti-American propaganda films are made where an "evil Mickey" attacks Japan.

Walt Disney releases "DUMBO." (see video 14)

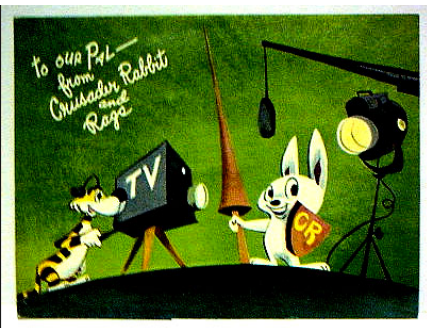
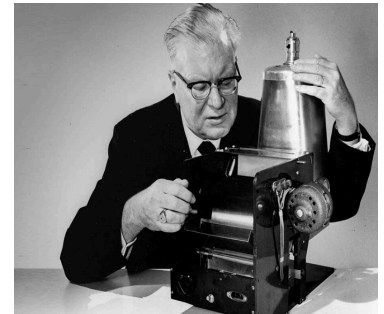
In 1942, Magnetic recording tape is invented.



"HELL BENT FOR ELECTION" (see video 15) is an independent short done for the Democrats for the 1944 presidential election. It was so effective that both political parties made an unwritten agreement not to use animation for election films.

Mitsuyo Seo's Japanese Navy wartime animated feature film is produced, "MOMOTARO'S GOD BLESSED SEA WARRIORS." It's Japan's first real feature-length animated film. In the film, the main character and his cute little bunny, monkey and elephant friends, happily clear an airstrip and oil machine guns, and fly their Zeroes to victory while singing happy songs.

In 1946, The Xerography process is invented. Around this time, new contracts are made for animators, which almost doubled their wages.



In 1949, "CRUSADER RABBIT," (see video 16) the first cartoon series made for TV is introduced on NBC. Done by Alex Anderson, nephew of Paul Terry. They were paid \$250.00 per five-minute episode. Looking like an illustrated radio show they were TV's first example of limited animation.



YOUR MISSION

1. What are the main changes occurring at this period?
2. Read the information about the GOLDEN AGE of creation and make a timeline for this period, including dates and pictures of famous animated movies. Your presentation must be appealing.