

History of Communications Media

Class 5

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What We Will Cover Today

- The Movies
 - Origins
 - The Emergence of Hollywood
 - The Impact of Talking Pictures
 - The Studio System
 - What Hollywood Did to Us
 - What Television Did to Hollywood

Motion Pictures

- Motion pictures are based on the illusion of continuous motion. This results from:
 - The persistence of vision
 - The Phi phenomena
- Because of persistence of vision, we do not see the dark interface areas of a projection print as it moves through the projector

Motion pictures or the illusion of continuous motion are dependent on:

- The persistence of vision (a characteristic of human perception whereby the brain retains images cast upon the retina of the eye for approximately $1/20^{\text{th}}$ to $1/5^{\text{th}}$ of a second beyond their actual removal from the field of vision), and
- The Phi phenomena (the phenomenon which causes us to see the individual blades of a rotating fan as a unitary circular form or the different colors of a spinning color wheel as a single homogeneous color)

Persistence of vision prevents us from seeing the dark interface areas of a projection print and the phi phenomenon or “stroboscopic effect” creates apparent movement from frame to frame.

Origin of Motion Pictures

- Thomas Edison & W.K.L. Dickson devised their kinetoscope in 1893
 - It cast separate still photos on a screen one after the other so rapidly that the pictures seemed to be moving
 - Used the celluloid roll film produced by George Eastman in an endless loop
 - It was designed for its film to be viewed individually through the window of a cabinet housing its components

Edison's kinetoscope – Edison's kinetoscope was a device for viewing through a magnifying lens a sequence of pictures on an endless band of film moved continuously over a light source and a rapidly rotating shutter that creates an illusion of motion. It was designed for films to be viewed individually through the window of a cabinet housing its components. Early kinetoscope films were 50' long and lasted roughly 15 seconds.

Origin of Motion Pictures - 2

- 1895 - Thomas Armat and Charles Francis Jenkins invented the first film projector – the Vitascope
 - The Film Projector allowed motion picture film to be shown in a dark room to a moderately large audience
 - This became the standard method by which people viewed motion pictures
 - The kinetoscope with its individual viewing survived not in theaters but in establishments that catered to persons interested in porn

Projector - The projector was based on intermittent motion for the film combined with a period of rest and illumination as the film moved frame by frame.

Large screen - The transformation of these hole-in-the-corner affairs into large-screen exposures was the work, not of Edison, but of little-known inventor and realtor Thomas Armat of Washington. Edison's backers knew that the new invention would have more appeal to the public if it carried Edison's name. Accordingly, when the Amazing Vitascope was shown to the press on April 3, 1896, it was described as "Thomas A. Edison's latest marvel." Armat was initially quite content to forgo the credit and take the cash. This [prototype](#) of modern [film](#) projectors cast images onto a wall or screen for a moderately large audience. William Dickson filmed the *Empire State Express*, and, when his show opened at Hammerstein's Theater on October 12., 1896, the sight of the great train hurtling along was so realistic that the alarmed audience stampeded for the exits

Movies – Two Concepts - 1

- Motion Pictures as a documentary medium
 - Edison and the Lumiere brothers adopted this approach
 - They filmed actual scenes or events, recording noteworthy persons, scenes, and events
 - Early documentaries consisted of a 15- to 20-minute potpourri of unconnected scenes

Unconnected scenes – A program might include dancing women, a scene of a tourist attraction, a speeding locomotive, the raising of an American flag in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, and two lovers kissing.

Edison – 1900 Clip

**Scene from the
Elevator Ascending
Eiffel Tower**

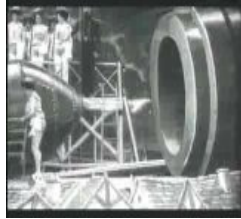
**©August 9, 1900
Thomas A. Edison**

Movies – Two Concepts - 2

- Motion Pictures as a narrative or storytelling medium
 - George Meliès, Edwin S. Porter, and D.W. Griffith adopted this approach
 - George Meliès was the first to see that editing could manipulate time and space to make the MOPIC film a narrative or storytelling medium
 - Meliès originated the fade-in, fade-out, dissolve, and stop-motion shot, multiple exposure, and time-lapse shots
 - His most famous film was *A Trip to the Moon*

Melies - In 1902 he produced the influential 30-scene narrative *Le Voyage dans la lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*). Adapted from a novel by [Jules Verne](#), it was nearly one reel in length (about 825 feet [251 meters], or 14 minutes). It was the first film to achieve international distribution (mainly through piracy), *A Trip to the Moon* was an enormous popular success. It helped to establish the fiction film as the cinema's mainstream product. In both respects Méliès dethroned the Lumières' cinema of actuality. Despite his innovations, Méliès's productions remained essentially filmed stage plays. He conceived them quite literally as successions of living pictures or, as he termed them, "artificially arranged scenes." From his earliest trick films through his last successful fantasy, *La Conquête du pôle* ("The Conquest of the Pole," 1912), Méliès treated the frame of the film as the proscenium arch of a theatre stage, never once moving his camera or changing its position within a scene.

Melies – A Trip to the Moon



Movies as a Storytelling Medium

- Subsequent Innovations
 - Edwin S. Porter in *The Great Train Robbery* combined stock footage with newly-filmed staged scenes and the use of intercuts depicting parallel actions to create a narrative fictional story from recordings of real events
 - D.W. Griffith in *Birth of a Nation* pioneered the full-length feature film and was the first to make use of the close-up, cutaways, parallel action shots, and the re-creation of historical events

Birth of a Nation

- *Birth of a Nation* did the following:
 - Created the historical epic as a film genre
 - Established the motion picture as an artistic medium and inspired subsequent directors and filmmakers
 - Distorted history by providing a militantly white-supremacist perspective on the Civil War, Reconstruction, and African-Americans
 - Filled with factual distortions and racist stereotypes
 - Led to the origin and growth of the Ku Klux Klan

Moving images are as powerful as photos, if not more so. Like photographs, they appeal to emotion and can be read in competing ways. Yet moving images change so rapidly and so often that they arrest our attention and task the brain's ability to absorb what we are seeing. They are becoming a ubiquitous presence in public and private life—so much so that Camille Paglia, an astute critic of images, has called our world “a media starscape of explosive but evanescent images.”

Movies - Emergence of Hollywood

- Prior to WWI, France and Italy regularly surpassed the U.S. in film exports
- WWI shut down the European film industry as celluloid film production was diverted to the production of explosives
- Hollywood emerged as the center of U.S. film production for two reasons
 - Sunny California climate
 - Lower wage rates in non-unionized LA
 - Desire of independent film producers to get away from the Motion Picture Patents Company

Pre-WWI film industry - Hollywood's ascendancy to domination of movie-making was not preordained. Before World War I, both the French and the Italian movie industries regularly surpassed the U.S. in film exports

WWI and European film - WWI destroyed the ability of European cinema to compete commercially with Hollywood. British, French, and Italian production was curtailed or suspended during the war; and post-war reconstruction demands left little money to finance large-scale moviemaking.

Emergence of Hollywood - Hollywood became the epicenter of U.S. film production for two major reasons -- the temperate sunny climate which permitted outside camera shooting throughout the year and the fact that Los Angeles, as the country's principal non-unionized city, had lower wage rates than East Coast cities. (p65) [Puttnam]

Emergence of Hollywood - 1

- Motion Picture Patents Company (“Edison Trust”)
 - Formed to resolve litigation over patents
 - Charged exhibitors a uniform price per foot of film shown
 - Limited its members to one- and two-reelers
 - Made Eastman Kodak the sole source of raw film with Kodak selling only to licensed members
 - Aim was to control competition and shift profits from the distributors and exhibitors back to the producers and patent holders

Motion Picture Patents Company - By 1908 there were about 20 motion-picture production companies operating in the United States. They were constantly at war with one another but feared their fragmentation would cause them to lose control of the industry to the two new sectors of distribution and exhibition. The most powerful among them, including Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph and the American branches of foreign film companies therefore entered into a collusive [trade agreement](#) to ensure their continued dominance. On September 9, 1908, these companies formed the [Motion Picture Patents Company](#) (MPPC), pooling the 16 most significant U.S. patents for motion-picture technology and entering into an exclusive contract with the [Eastman Kodak Company](#) for raw film stock. The MPPC sought to control every segment of the industry. They set up a licensing system for assessing royalties and granted use of its patents only to licensed equipment manufacturers; film stock could be sold only to licensed producers; licensed producers and importers were required to fix rental prices at a minimum level and to set quotas for foreign footage; Patents Company films could be sold only to licensed distributors, who could lease them only to licensed exhibitors; and only licensed exhibitors could use Patents Company projectors and rent company films. Although it was clearly monopolistic in practice and intent, the MPPC helped to stabilize the [American film](#) industry by standardizing exhibition practice, increasing the efficiency of distribution, and regularizing pricing. Its collusive nature, however, provoked a reaction that ultimately destroyed it.

Emergence of Hollywood - 2

- Precipitated a battle with independent producers and theater exhibitors
 - Led to a lot of litigation with many independents relocating to the West Coast
 - The Independents imported films from foreign producers excluded by the trust, obtained raw film stock from abroad, and made their own pictures.
 - By 1910, they made two-thirds as many reels of film as the trust's licensed companies and served 30% of the nation's 10,000 motion picture theaters.

Distributors & Exhibitors React - In a sense, the MPPC's ironclad efforts to eliminate competition merely fostered it. Almost from the outset there was widespread resistance to the Patents Company on the part of independent distributors (numbering 10 or more in early 1909) and exhibitors (estimated at 2,000 to 2,500).

Emergence of Hollywood - 3

- Edison Trust failed for two basic reasons:
 - It lost an anti-trust suit
 - It made some erroneous decisions and assumptions
 - Setting a uniform price per foot of film eliminated any incentive to invest in elaborate and costly productions
 - Limiting films to one- or two-reelers prevented trust producers from making “feature films” that appealed to upscale audiences
 - Trust members refused to publicize their stars

Anti-Trust Suit - In August 1912, the U.S. Justice Department brought suit against the MPPC for “restraint of trade” in violation of the [Sherman Antitrust Act](#). Delayed by countersuits and by [World War I](#), the government’s case was eventually won and the MPPC formally dissolved in 1918.

Feature Films - The multiple-reel or feature film—so called from the vaudeville sense of a headline attraction—achieved popularity with the smashing success of Louis Mercanton’s three-and-one-half-reel *La Reine Elisabeth* (*Queen Elizabeth*, 1912) with Sarah Bernhardt. In 1912 Enrico Guazzoni’s nine-reel Italian superspectacle [Quo Vadis?](#) was road-shown in theatres across the country at a top admission price of one dollar (\$21.11 in 2009 prices), and the feature craze was on. Exhibitors quickly learned that features could command higher admission prices and longer runs; single-title packages were also cheaper and easier to advertise than programs of multiple titles. As for manufacturing, producers found that the higher expenditure for features was readily amortized by high volume sales to distributors, who in turn were eager to share in the higher admission returns from the theatres. The whole industry soon reorganized itself around the economics of the multiple-reel film, and the effects of this restructuring did much to give motion pictures their characteristic modern form.

Emergence of Hollywood - 4

- The Feature Film revolutionized the movie industry
 - Allowed motion pictures to appeal to the middle class
 - Format was similar to that of the legitimate theater
 - Format allowed for adaptation of middle-class appealing novels and plays
 - Inspired exhibitors to replace storefronts with new movie palaces
 - Led producers to create and publicize stars in order to promote their films

Appeal of Feature Films - Feature films appealed to the middle class since they provided a format that was analogous to the legitimate theatre and permitted the adaptation of middle-class novels and plays. This new audience had more demanding standards than the older working-class one, and producers readily increased their budgets to provide high technical quality and elaborate productions. The new viewers also had a more refined sense of comfort, which exhibitors quickly accommodated by replacing their storefronts with large, elegant, new theatres in major urban centers. Known as “dream palaces” because of the luxuriance of their interiors, these houses had to show features rather than a program of shorts to attract large audiences at premium prices. By 1916 there were more than 21,000 movie palaces in the United States. Their advent marked the end of the nickelodeon era and foretold the rise of the Hollywood studio system, which dominated urban exhibition from the 1920s to the '50s.

Star System - Borrowed from the theatre industry, this system involves the creation and management of publicity about key performers, or stars, to stimulate demand for their films. In 1910 Carl Laemmle of Independent Motion Pictures (IMP) promoted Florence Lawrence into national stardom through a series of media stunts in St. Louis, Missouri.

Emergence of Hollywood - 5

- Results – The independent opponents of the Trust (and Hollywood) won out
 - The independents went on to found the major Hollywood studios:
 - William Fox (20th Century Fox)
 - Carl Laemmle (Universal Pictures)
 - Adolph Zukor (Paramount)
 - Only one of the Edison Trust companies lasted beyond 1920
 - Vitagraph – died in 1925

Emergence of Hollywood - 6

- Reasons –
 - The Motion Picture Patents group were people who either invented, modified, or bankrolled movie hardware – cameras, projectors, etc
 - The independents were people who either ran theaters or came from fashion-conscious industries
 - They had much better awareness of what the public wanted – Feature Films & Motion Picture Palaces

Feature Films - The multiple-reel film—which came to be called a “feature,” in the vaudevillian sense of a headline attraction—achieved general acceptance with the smashing success of Louis Mercanton’s three-and-one-half-reel *La Reine Elisabeth* (*Queen Elizabeth*, 1912), which starred [Sarah Bernhardt](#) and was imported by Zukor (who founded the independent Famous Players production company with its profits). In 1912 Enrico Guazzoni’s nine-reel Italian superspectacle *Quo Vadis?* (“Whither Are You Going?”) was road-shown in legitimate theatres across the country at a top admission price of one dollar, and the feature craze was on. Exhibitors quickly learned that features could command higher admission prices and longer runs. As for film production, producers found that the higher expenditure for features was readily recouped by high volume sales to distributors, who in turn were eager to share in the higher admission returns from the theatres. The whole industry soon reorganized itself around the economics of the multiple-reel or feature film, and the effects of this restructuring did much to give motion pictures their characteristic modern form.

Emergence of Hollywood - 7

- The Feature Film revolutionized the movie industry
 - Allowed motion pictures to appeal to the middle class
 - Format was similar to that of the legitimate theater
 - Format allowed for adaptation of middle-class appealing novels and plays
 - Inspired exhibitors to replace storefronts with new movie palaces

Appeal of Feature Films - Feature films made motion pictures respectable for the [middle class](#) by providing a format that was analogous to that of the legitimate theatre and was suitable for the adaptation of middle-class novels and plays. This new audience had more demanding standards than the older working-class one, and producers readily increased their budgets to provide high technical quality and elaborate productions.

Movie Palaces - The new viewers also had a more refined sense of comfort, which exhibitors quickly accommodated by replacing their storefronts with large, elegantly appointed new theatres in the major urban centres (one of the first was Mitchell L. Marks's 3,300-seat Strand, which opened in the Broadway district of Manhattan in 1914). Known as "dream palaces" because of the fantastic luxuriance of their interiors, these houses had to show features rather than a program of shorts to attract large audiences at premium prices. By 1916 there were more than 21,000 movie palaces in the United States. Their advent marked the end of the nickelodeon era and foretold the rise of the Hollywood studio system, which dominated urban exhibition from the 1920s to the '50s.

Emergence of Hollywood - 8

- The Feature Film also:
 - Led producers to create and publicize stars in order to promote their films
- Result:
 - By the late 1910s, feature-length films had become a popular form of entertainment
 - In many cities, weekly movie attendance exceeded the population of the city

Star System - Borrowed from the theatre industry, this system involves the creation and management of publicity about key performers, or stars, to stimulate demand for their films. Trust company producers used this kind of publicity, but they never exploited the technique as forcefully or as imaginatively as the independents did, when in 1910 Carl Laemmle of Independent Motion Pictures (IMP) promoted Florence Lawrence into national stardom through a series of media stunts in St. Louis, Missouri.

Attendance – In 1910, Indianapolis had a population of 233,650 and a 1914 weekly movie attendance of 320,000. In 1915, Toledo had a population of 187,840 and a weekly movie attendance of 316,000.

Emergence of Hollywood - 9

- Movie Theaters
 - In 1923, there were 15,000 silent movie theaters in the U.S. with an average seating capacity of 507 and a weekly attendance of 50 million
 - About 1,000 of these were “motion picture palaces”
 - Large, elegantly-decorated places which seated 1,500 or more people
 - Often they were the first buildings to have air conditioning
 - Often had expansive lobbies, thick carpeting, paintings, and statues
 - Many had large Wurlitzer organs for musical accompaniment

Anyone who has been to Radio City Music Hall to see the Rockettes has seen what the “motion picture palaces” were really like. When television hit the scene, most of these “motion picture palaces” closed, but a few, thanks to the efforts of film buffs and film archivists, have been lovingly restored.

Why Hollywood Won Out

- Why Movie Makers Went to Hollywood
 - Large demand for films required that film production be put on a year-round schedule
 - Slow film speeds required that most shooting take place outdoors in available light
 - Hollywood had an average 320 days of sun a year, a temperate climate, and a wide range of topography within a 60-mile radius
 - It was far removed from MPPC headquarters in New York City

Slow Film Speeds - Because most action films were still shot outdoors in available light, such schedules could not be maintained in the vicinity of New York City or Chicago, where the industry had originally located itself in order to take advantage of trained theatrical labor pools.

Why Hollywood - As early as 1907, production companies had begun to dispatch production units to warmer climates during winter. It was soon clear that what producers required was a new industrial center—one with warm weather, a temperate climate, a variety of scenery, and other qualities (such as access to acting talent) essential to film-making. By 1915 approximately 15,000 workers were employed by the motion-picture industry in Hollywood, and more than 60 percent of American production was centered there

Why Hollywood Won Out - 2

- Why Hollywood Became the Center of World Feature Film Production
 - Large domestic audience and consequently larger profits to finance productions with lavish sets and expensive stars
 - Development of the Star system
 - Studio control over distribution networks
 - Heterogeneity of the American population
 - Dependency of American films on commercial success

Factors Favoring Hollywood - The existence of a large domestic audience in the U.S. enabled American studios to recover the cost of production and make a substantial profit on a movie before they ever turned to an international market. They, then, could charge lower rental fees overseas and undersell their European rivals. In addition, the devices of block booking, the imposition of tariffs on imported foreign films, the use of the star system to create ‘brand names,’ and studio control over distribution networks both protected the home market against European films and created a continued demand for Hollywood films. In addition, Hollywood simply made better movies with more luxurious sets and magnetic stars.

Heterogeneity - “the heterogeneity of the American population -- its ethnic, racial, class, and regional diversity -- forced the media to experiment with messages, images, and story lines that had a broad multicultural appeal, an appeal that turned out to be equally potent for multi-ethnic audiences abroad. ... In sum, the domestic market was a laboratory for and a microcosm of the world market.” Europeans, operating in much smaller markets with homogeneous populations, had much less incentive to communicate with a multicultural audience and were thus ill-equipped to compete in the international arena.

Need for commercial success – In the words Richard Pells in his *Not Like Us*, “In the United States, moviemakers and television producers had

Movies – A Note About European Film

- Before WWI, France and Italy dominated European film production and had made major innovations in film
 - The storytelling film (Méliès)
 - The chase film, which inspired Mack Sennett's keystone comedies (Ferdinand Zecca)
 - The serial (Louis Feuillade)
 - The historical spectacular with a cast of thousands (Louis Maggi)

Sennett - Sennett's Keystone comedies focused on a visual humor of pie-throwing, auto chases, cliff-hanging, things blowing up, and last-minute rescues. His films launched the careers of Charlie Chaplin, Harry Langdon, Fatty Arbuckle, Mabel Normand, Ben Turpin, Gloria Swanson, Carole Lombard, Wallace Beery, Marie Dressler, W.C. Fields, George Stevens, and Frank Capra.

Serials – Louis Feuillade created the serial, starting with *Fantômas* (1913–14), *Les Vampires* (1915–16), and *Judex* (1916). *The Adventures of Buck Rogers*, *The Adventures of Pearl White*, and *The Durango Kid* were noted and popular American movie serials.

Costume spectacles - Louis Maggi's nine-reel *Quo Vadis?* ("Whither Are You Going?" 1912), with its huge three-dimensional sets recreating [ancient Rome](#) and 5,000 extras, established the standard for the superspectacle and briefly conquered the world market for Italian motion pictures. Its successor, the Italia company's 12-reel *Cabiria* (1914), was an even more extravagant historical film of the Second Punic War. The Italian superspectacle stimulated public demand for features and influenced such important directors as Cecil B. DeMille, Ernst Lubitsch, and especially D.W. Griffith.

Why Hollywood Won Out - 3

- World War I
 - Shut down European film production
 - By the end of the war, the U.S. dominated the international film market
 - In 1919, 90% of all films screened in Europe were American (except in Germany)
 - Stimulated Allied demand for American films
 - In some cases, Allied governments financed the making of anti-German films, such as D.W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World* (1918)

Shut down European production - During the war, however, European film production virtually ceased, in part because the same chemicals used in the production of celluloid were necessary for the manufacture of gunpowder. The American cinema, meanwhile, experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity and growth. By the end of the war, it exercised nearly total control of the international market: when the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919, 90 percent of all films screened in Europe, Africa, and Asia were American, and the figure for [South America](#) was (and remained through the 1950s) close to 100 percent. The main exception was Germany, which had been cut off from American films from 1914 until the end of the war.

Movies – The Result

- Effects of WWI and the emergence of Hollywood
 - By the mid-1920s, approximately 95% of the films shown in Great Britain, 85% in the Netherlands, 70% in France, 65% in Italy, and 60% in Germany were American films
 - The beginning of the “Americanization” of first European and then World popular culture

Through movies people became familiar with American products, lifestyles, patterns of behavior, and values. The opulence of the average Hollywood film made Europeans want to drive American cars, eat American foods, smoke American cigarettes, and wear American clothes. Even worse, according to some intellectuals, Europeans were losing respect for their native cultures and traditions.”

Talking Pictures - 1

- The idea of uniting motion pictures and sound actually began with Edison
 - Edison's associate, Dickson, synchronized Edison's kinetoscope with his phonograph & marketed the device as the Kinetophone
 - By the 1910s, producers regularly commissioned orchestral scores to accompany prestigious productions

Pictures and Sound - The idea of combining motion pictures and sound had been around since the invention of the cinema itself: Edison had commissioned the Kinetograph to provide visual images for his phonograph, and Dickson had actually synchronized the two machines in a device briefly marketed in the 1890s as the Kinetophone. By the time the feature had become the dominant film form in the West, producers regularly commissioned orchestral scores to accompany prestigious productions, and virtually all films were accompanied by cue sheets suggesting appropriate musical selections for performance during exhibition.

Talking Pictures - 2

- Lee De Forest in 1919 invented an optical sound-on-film system which he tried unsuccessfully to market to Hollywood
- Western Electric in 1925 invented a sound-on-disc system but was likewise rebuffed by Hollywood except for Warner Bros
 - Warner Bros bought the system and the rights to sublease it
 - Initially Warner Bros used it to produce films with musical accompaniment, starting with *Don Juan* in 1926

Sound Amplification - This became possible only after Lee De Forest's invention of the audion tube – a 3-element vacuum tube - in 1907 that amplified sound and drove it through the speakers

De Forest - In 1919 De Forest developed an optical sound-on-film process patented as [Phonofilm](#), and between 1923 and 1927 he made more than 1,000 synchronized sound shorts for release to specially wired theatres. The public was widely interested in these films, but the major Hollywood producers, to whom De Forest vainly tried to sell his system, were not: they viewed “talking pictures” as an expensive novelty with little potential return.

Western Electric - In 1925, Western Electric, , the manufacturing subsidiary of American Telephone & Telegraph Company, had perfected a sophisticated sound-on-disc system called [Vitaphone](#), which their representatives attempted to market to Hollywood. Like De Forest, they were rebuffed by the major studios, but [Warner Brothers](#), then a minor studio in the midst of aggressive expansion, bought both the system and the right to sublease it to other producers

Talking Pictures - 3

- In 1927, Warner Bros released *The Jazz Singer* which included dialog as well as music. Its phenomenal success ensured the film industry's conversion to sound.
 - Rather than use Warner Bros sound system, however, the other studios decided to use a sound-on-film system
 - This enabled images and film to be recorded simultaneously on the same film medium, insuring automatic synchronization
 - Competition between Western Electric's Movietone and General Electric's Photophone competing sound-on-film systems led RCA to form RKO Pictures

Sound-on-Film - Despite Warner Brothers' obvious success with [sound films](#), film industry leaders were not eager to lease sound equipment from a direct competitor. They banded together to adopt a Western Electric sound-on-film system known as Movietone, that was marketed by Western Electric's newly created marketing subsidiary, Electrical Research Products, Incorporated (ERPI).

RKO Pictures - ERPI's monopoly did not please the [Radio Corporation of America](#) (RCA), which had tried to market a sound-on-film system that had been developed in the laboratories of its [parent company](#), General Electric, and had been patented in 1925 as RCA Photophone. In October 1928, RCA therefore acquired the Keith-Albee-Orpheum vaudeville circuit and merged it with Joseph P. Kennedy's Film Booking Offices of America (FBO) to form [RKO Radio Pictures](#) for the express purpose of producing sound films using the Photophone system (which ultimately became the industry standard).

Talking Pictures - 4

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences - 1
 - Increased Hollywood's share of world cinematic revenue
 - Led to the demise of many "Silent Era" film stars
 - Made Bank of America a major financial institution since they, unlike other banks, were willing to finance Hollywood productions
 - Led to the creation of distinct genres to facilitate marketing

Increased Hollywood's share of world cinema revenue -

Counterintuitively, the onset of the sound era increased Hollywood's share of world cinematic revenue. At the time of the transition, equipping the theaters with sound and making movies with sound were costly. To recoup these costs, theaters sought out high-quality, high-expenditure productions for large audiences. This shift in emphasis favored Hollywood moviemakers over their foreign competitors. Also, The talkies, by introducing issues of translation, boosted the dominant world language of English and thus benefited Hollywood. Given the growing importance of English as a world language, and the focal importance of the United States, European countries would sooner import films from Hollywood than from each other. A multiplicity of different cultures or languages often favors the relative position of the dominant one, which becomes established as a common standard of communication

Silent Film stars - Many silent film stars who had excellent acting and pantomime skills but thick foreign accents or voices maladapted to early sound equipment never made the transition to talking movies

Bank of America - A.P. Giannini and his Bank of America was the first banker to recognize the motion picture business as a legitimate industry. By the end of the 1930s, the Bank of America had pumped about \$130,000,000 in loans into Hollywood. The Bank of America handled 70 per cent of film-making loans in the United States, advancing up to 80 or 90 per cent of the cost of making productions. As Giannini showed that it was possible to make a lot of money by financing a maverick industry,

Talking Pictures - 5

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences – 2
 - Led most theaters to drop the interspersing of vaudeville acts and live music with motion pictures
 - Resulted in the fading of vaudeville
 - Led to the dominance of the studio system
 - Studios that seized the opportunity to make talkies – Warner Bros, Fox, M-G-M, & Paramount - soon gained dominance
 - Altered the behavior of moviegoers
 - The talking audience for silent pictures became the silent audience for talking pictures

End of vaudeville - With the instant popularity of talking pictures, most theaters found they could drop the practice of interspersing vaudeville acts and live music with silent motion pictures. The grand picture palace, which had the upper hand as long as theaters presented a combination of film and live entertainment, lost its economic advantage as full programs of sound motion pictures became available. A few vaudeville acts, such as the Three Stooges and the Marx Brothers, were able to transfer their style of entertainment to film, but for the most part vaudeville faded.

Studios - Studios quick to seize the opportunity to make "talkies"—Warner Bros., Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and Paramount—soon gained dominance in a movie industry

Behavior of Moviegoers - The rapid switch from silent to sound motion pictures altered the behavior of moviegoers, the historian Robert Sklar points out. It was considered quite acceptable for silent movie audiences to react out loud to what they saw on the screen. An ongoing series of comments could create a bond among members of an audience sitting in the dark, furthering a sense of community among those in a neighborhood or small-town theater or even creating one temporarily in an urban picture palace. Talking by

Talking Pictures - 6

- Talking Pictures' interesting consequences – 3
 - Sound gave filmmakers new ways to attract and excite audiences
 - Allowed films to become more fast paced and complex
 - Boosted ticket sales
 - In 1930, weekly movie attendance equaled 75% of the total American population
 - Boosted the popularity of war movies, horror movies, westerns, and films that depended on clever, fast-paced, and witty dialog

Movies – The Studios

- The studio system originated in France with Charles Pathé
 - Involved actors under exclusive contract
 - Vertical integration – screenwriting, production, promotion, distribution & exhibition under one roof
 - Use of the profits of one film to fund the production of another

Charles Pathe - Charles Pathe adopted the regimented techniques of mass production to the business of film making. Thus, Pathe was able to guarantee a consistent supply of films. Pathe introduced the idea of employing a company of actors, anticipating the Hollywood studio system of putting leading actors and actresses under exclusive contracts. He also introduced the concept of vertical integration -- bringing the development, production, promotion, distribution, and screening of films together under one company roof. Pathe's vertical structure allowed him to minimize risks by using the profits generated by the distribution of his films to fund the production of new ones, thus spreading the risk across a number of films. Pathe saw that in a market where the public was consistently clamoring for new films, power would inevitably accrue to anyone who could supply a consistently high output of quality product. Pathe's success stemmed from two separate insights:

1. A recognition that the movie business had to be organized like other late-19th century mass production industries; and
2. An understanding (which eluded Edison and others) that the biggest profits lay not in manufacturing cameras, film projectors, or film stock, but in the production and distribution of movies

Movies – The Studios

- The American Studio System reflected the ideas of Charles Pathé and Thomas Harper Ince.
 - Ince at his studio in Inceville CA:
 - Functioned as the central authority over multiple production units, each headed by a director
 - Had each director shoot an assigned film according to a detailed continuity script, a detailed budget, and a tight schedule
 - Supervised the final cut

The growing industry was organized according to the studio system that, in many respects, the producer [Thomas Harper Ince](#) had developed between 1914 and 1918 at Inceville, his studio in the Santa Ynez Canyon near Hollywood. Ince functioned as the central authority over multiple production units, each headed by a director who was required to shoot an assigned film according to a detailed continuity script. Every project was carefully budgeted and tightly scheduled, and Ince himself supervised the final cut. This central producer system was the prototype for the studio system of the 1920s, and, with some modification, it prevailed as the dominant mode of Hollywood production for the next 40 years.

Movies – The Studios

- Emergence of the Hollywood Studios reflected:
 - The successes of Pathe and Ince and the adoption of their approach by American moviemakers
 - Oligopolistic success in a highly competitive industry
 - The need to finance ever increasing production costs and the conversion of theaters to sound
 - Required an ability to obtain bank loans and Wall Street investment bank financing

Movies – The Studios

- By the mid-1930s, Hollywood was dominated by 8 studios – the Big 5 and the Little 3
 - Big 5 – Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros, RKO, and M-G-M
 - Little 3 – Universal, Columbia, and United Artists
 - A few independents – Republic & Monogram
- This system dominated Hollywood until the early-1950s

Movies – Some Notes - 1

- Movies initially appealed to a lower class (immigrants & working class) audience
 - Explains why we eat popcorn at the movies but not at plays or the opera
- Movies began to appeal to a middle class and upper class audience when:
 - Producers began to make and show feature films
 - “Motion Picture Palaces” began to replace storefront exhibition places

Lower class audience - The social origins of motion pictures were a critical early influence on their path of development. Whereas newspapers and magazines had begun among the elite and evolved in a more popular direction, movies acquired a lowbrow image at an early point in their history and faced a challenge in achieving respectability. According to an 1911 study of New York City moviegoers, 72% of the audience came from the lower class, {25% from the middle class}, and only 3% from the leisure class. By comparison, the legitimate theater audience was only 2% working class, with 51% coming from the leisure class and 47% from the middle class. {Two factors that made the movies popular with immigrants were (1) they were cheap, and (2) as a purely visual entertainment medium before 'talkies,' they could be easily understood and appreciated by immigrants whose fluency in English was limited

Popcorn at the movies - As in the theater before the middle class began enforcing its protocols of passivity, working class patrons made a display of their lack of breeding -- members of the audience would neck during performances, munch peanuts or eat fruit, talk, wander, shout at the screen. Even today, the fact that one eats popcorn at the movies and would not think of doing so at the ballet, opera, or symphony, is a demarcation between low and high culture.

Respectability – Movie studios were quick to seek to appeal to a middle class audience by upgrading the sites where movies were shown. The movie palaces brought together regular patrons of the legitimate theater who paid \$2.00 per ticket to see moving pictures in their first class

Movies – Some Notes - 2

- By the early 1920s, the movies had established the basic film genres that are still with us:
 - Crime story
 - Western
 - Historical costume drama
 - Domestic melodrama or romance
 - Comedy (often romantic)

Movies vs Plays

- Movies and plays were both narrative and storytelling media but they differed in that:
 - Plays are always live performances; movies are not
 - Movies and plays treat time differently
 - Plays can have very sparse scenery; Movies require elaborate sets
 - Movies permit close-ups while plays, for most members of the audience, do not

Live performance – The fact that plays are live leads audiences to focus on the live actors and their interactions and dialog. In movies, the actors are two-dimensional figures and not live human beings so that our focus is more on the whole picture and somewhat less on the actors.

Time - Film treated time differently than does the stage. Movies can use flashbacks, split screens, and slow- or speeded up-motion to depicts past events, simultaneous events, or actions that take place rapidly or slowly over time: Plays have to handle such events differently

Scenery & Sets – Plays can get away with very sparse scenery and sets because audience attention is focused on the interaction and dialog of the live players. Movies require elaborate scenery and sets (and often costumes) because the audience at the movie is focused on the whole screen.

Close-ups - Just as radio helped bring back inflection in speech, so film and TV recovered gesture and facial awareness -- a rich colorful language, conveying moods and emotions, happenings and characters, even thoughts, none of which could be properly packaged in words.”

What Hollywood Wrought - 1

- Movies had the following effects:
 - Constituted a lifestyle classroom on a whole host of topics – clothes, hairstyles, social attitudes, behavior, and much else
 - Provided a set of shared experiences for almost the whole population
 - Affected people's concepts of historical fact
 - Served as a purveyor of a whole host of consumer goods
 - Fostered discontent in the Third World

According to historian David Kyvig *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940*, Young people testified over and over, for a pioneering study of the influence of movies, that they learned a great deal about how to act from what they saw on the screen. One young woman reported that her observation that movie actresses closed their eyes while kissing led her to imitate them. A young man reported, "It was directly through the movies that I learned to kiss a girl on her ears, neck, and cheeks, as well as on the mouth." And the rapid pace of silent movie romances convinced other young people that romance occurred quickly; they reported that kissing and neck-ing were happening earlier than before in their relationship. "I know love pictures have made me more receptive to love-making," said one sixteen-year-old high school sophomore. "I always thought it rather silly until these pictures, where there is always so much love and everything turns out all right in the end, and I kiss and pet much more than I would otherwise."

What Hollywood Wrought - 2

- Movies had the following effects – 2
 - Along with the automobile, led to the Drive-in movie
 - Initially supplemented and then supplanted lecture hall and vaudeville theater audiences
 - Brought the “Star” system to full fruition
 - Led to fan magazines and fan clubs
 - Played a major role in popularizing the myth of the “Wild West”

Drive-in movie - Drive-ins appealed to two distinct groups -- teenagers seeking a place where they and their dates could make-out and married couples with preteen kids who wanted to see a movie without having to having to pay a babysitter. To accommodate both, drive-in theater managers would show a G-rated film or films for the kids, sometimes followed either by a more adult-oriented film for the adults after the kids had fallen asleep or by a Grade B horror flick designed to scare teenage girls into the arms of their male dates.

Supplemented and supplanted audiences – The movies converted lecture hall audiences into motion picture show fans, the same process was taking place in the nation’s vaudeville theaters. Screened projected films fit perfectly into the vaudeville program as opening and closing ‘dumb’ acts (along with animals, pantomimes, puppets, and magic lantern slides) that were silent and thus would not be disturbed by late arrivals or early departures.

Star system – While the star system had its origins in the 19th century with theater and sports stars whose performance tours were facilitated by the railroad and telegraph/telephone and whose images were displayed on posters and photographs, the star system reached its fruition with Hollywood. After some hesitation, the studios realized that promoting stars not only sold films to audiences, but also upgraded the image of the industry. With ‘stars’, the movie industry could separate itself further from its peep show past (there were no stars in the penny arcades) and connect itself with the legitimate theater (which gloried in its stars). Like the stars of live theater, movie stars were larger than life. Thus, it took only a few years for the MOPIC players to ascend from anonymity to omnipresence and their own kind of notoriety. A new institution, the fan magazine, was created to better acquaint

What Hollywood Wrought - 3

- Movies had the following effects – 3
 - Films made cultural production a major economic force
 - Films made commercial entertainment a center of American social life
 - As noted earlier, films constituted a major force in Americanizing world popular culture
 - As a backlash, it also led both intellectuals and traditionalists to react against aspects of American culture deemed incompatible with traditional values

Film a major economic force - According to Jeremy Rifkin of *The Age of Access*, “it was the advent of films that established cultural production as a truly significant force in the capitalist marketplace and elevated commercial entertainment to the center of American social life. With film, high and pop culture became ‘consumer culture,’ and cultural capitalism was born.”

Entertainment a social force - Movies were *the* preeminent form of popular culture in the 1930s. Almost everyone who could afford to (and millions who could not) went to the cinema frequently through-out the decade. During the depths of the Depression in the early thirties, an average of 60 million to 75 million movie tickets were purchased each week. Although part of this remarkable figure represented repeat customers, the number itself corresponds to more than 60 percent of the entire American population. In the 1970s, movie attendance was less than 10% of the population.

Americanization – Through movies, people became familiar with American products, lifestyles, patterns of behavior, and values. It made people throughout the world want to drive American cars, eat American foods, smoke American cigarettes, and wear American clothes.

What Hollywood Wrought - 4

- Movies had the following effects – 4
 - Popularized air conditioning
 - Seeing movies in comfort on hot summer day fueled a desire for air conditioning in the home and office
 - Gave us the animated feature cartoon
 - The marriage of the newspaper comic strip with the movie gave us the animated cartoon feature film

Air Conditioning - In 1922 Carrier engineers built a cooling system for Grauman's Metropolitan Theater in Los Angeles. This is generally considered to be the birthplace of theater air conditioning, although the real test came three years later at the Rivoli Theater in New York. THE AIR-CONDITIONED Rivoli Theater opened Memorial Day weekend, 1925. After the show Adolph Zukor came downstairs and approached Carrier, and said "Yes, the people are going to like it."

The box-office grosses at the Rivoli during the next three months proved Zukor correct: ticket sales were up \$100,000 over the previous summer -- more than the cost of installation itself. During the next five years Carrier air-conditioned over three hundred theaters around the country. Not only had he saved Hollywood from its summer doldrums but, by introducing comfort cooling to the masses, he created a demand for air conditioning that carried his own company through the Depression and paved the way for the air conditioned home.

Animation - Winsor McCay, the earliest animator, created *Little Nemo in Slumberland* in 1911, and then *Gertie the Trained Dinosaur* three years later. Gertie had charm and personality aplenty, a progenitor of Barney. The development of animation began to hit its stride in 1915-16, when Mutt and Jeff films achieved popularity. By the late teens most animated cartoons were adaptations of successful comic strips: "Bringing up Father," "The Katzenjammer Kids," and "Krazy Kat." "Felix the Cat," always outwitted by a mouse, made his first appearance in 1921. Created by Otto Messmer, Felix had a very distinctive personality which made him the greatest cartoon star of the silent era. Until 1928, all animated cartoons had been derived from New York-produced comic strips. But then came an unknown named Walt Disney from California with

What Hollywood Wrought - 5

- Movies had the following effects - 5
 - Helped turn the American people against Prohibition
 - The urban jazz-age flapper and her boyfriend conveyed the impression that drinking was widespread and that violating Prohibition laws was socially respectable
 - Diverted artistic talent from other endeavors to the movies
 - People who formerly composed symphonies now wrote movie scores; persons who in the past wrote novels now wrote screenplays

In a representative sample of 115 films from 1930, liquor was referred to in 78 percent and drinking depicted in 66 percent. Further analysis of 40 of those films reveals that while only 13 percent of male villains and 8 percent of female villains could be seen consuming alcohol, no less than 43 percent of heroes and 23 percent of heroines were shown doing so.

Movies and the Great Depression

- Effects of the Great Depression on Movies
 - Popularized escapist as distinct from topical films
 - Historical or literary-based films
 - Animated films – Walt Disney
 - Led to various innovations as theater owners sought to attract customers
 - Drive-in movies
 - Serials
 - Double Features
 - Bank Nights and Giveaways

Drive-in movies - In 1933 Richard M. Hollinshead set up a 16-mm projector in front of his garage in Riverton, New Jersey, and then settled down to watch a movie. Recognizing a nation addicted to the motorcar when he saw one, Hollinshead and Willis Smith opened the world's first drive-in movie in a forty-car parking lot in Camden on June 6, 1933. Because drive-ins offered bargain-basement prices and double or triple bills, the theaters tended to favor movies that were either second-run or second-rate. Drive-in movies proved especially popular with two very diverse groups – one was parents with small children who could go to a movie without having to pay a babysitter, letting the kids sleep in the backseat of the station wagon while the parents watched the movies; the other was teen-agers who found the “passion pit” a very appealing place for a date. Pundits often commented that there was a better show in the cars than on the screen.¹⁹ In the 1960s and 1970s the drive-in movie began to slip in popularity. Rising fuel costs and a season that lasted only six months contributed to the problem, but skyrocketing land values were the main factor. When drive-ins initially opened, they were mostly in the hinterlands. As subdivisions and shopping centers edged closer, it became more profitable to sell the land. Thus, by 1983, the more than 4,000 drive-ins of 1958 had dwindled to 2,935. What finally finished off the drive-in movie was the VCR.

Serials - To keep their patrons coming back, theaters re-turned to the silent-era practice of showing serials, short, intensely thrilling films that invariably left Flash Gordon or some other central character suspended in a perilous situation until the next episode a week later would produce an escape followed by entrapment in yet another predicament.

Double Features - Theater operators struggling to hold onto their

Movies and Television

- What Television Did to the Movies
 - While the Studios initially saw television as a mortal threat, independent movie producers saw TV as an opportunity
 - The independents began making films – mostly crime dramas, westerns, and comedies – for television
 - Among the most successful was Desilu Productions
 - The success of Disneyland with the theme park, TV programs, and movies mutually promoting each other led studios to see television as a potential ally

Threat - When ABC President Robert Kintner tried to persuade Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures to supply original programming, Cohn said, ‘You dumb son of a bitch, you won’t get any of my stars, you won’t get any of my people -- you can’t make films! People want the companionship of the theater, they want their movies the way they are -- not on TV.’

Opportunity – The independents realized that *filmed drama could earn for its producers more money than live programming ever could. Under a practice known as syndication, a producer would sell rerun rights to the network and to groups of local stations.*” From the late 1940s on, independent producers began setting up shop on lower Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood and started cranking out cut-rate price films (mostly crime dramas & westerns) for television. ***Tempted by the huge profits that could be made, many Hollywood producers made the switch to independent television production. Among them were two former RKO contract players -- Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz -- who formed Desilu Productions.*** By 1955, they were turning out hundreds of hours of programming every year, including *I Love Lucy*.

Movies and Television

- What Television Did to the Movies - 2
 - Movie studios began renting their archives of old productions to the networks
 - Feature films on television
 - Studios invest the archiving, preservation, and restoration of old feature films
 - Films made for television without exhibiting them in theaters beforehand

Movies and Television

- What Television Did to the Movies - 3
 - Television changed the economics of the movie business
 - Before television, box office revenues were the source of movie profits
 - After television, it is primarily video (initially VCR tape and now DVD) rentals and sales that are the source of profit, followed by box office revenue and sales of exhibition rights to free and pay television. In some cases, there is additional revenue from product tie-ins.

In 1993, U.S. figures place pay and free television at 19 per-cent of cinematic revenues, movie theaters at 27 percent, and home video at 49 percent. Disney popularized the use of tie-in products with his movies – movie character dolls and figurines, photographs of stars, games based on the movie and/or movie characters. In 2003, they accounted for only 18% of the take. Instead, home entertainment provided 82% of the revenues. Further, print and advertising costs eat away most if not all of the theatrical revenues, but the studios retain most of the money from home entertainment. All of this has transformed the way Hollywood operates. Theatrical releases now serve essentially as launching platforms for videos, DVDs, network TV, pay TV, games, and a host of other products

Movies and the VCR

- Initially, the movie studios saw the VCR as a threat
 - Universal and Disney sued Sony, claiming Sony contributed to copyright infringement
 - Case went to the Supreme Court which decided in favor of Sony in 1984
- Eventually, the studios found that selling pre-recorded videotapes to the public was profitable
 - In 1993, 49% of movie revenues came from videotape sales.

In 2006, per capita consumer spending on movies at the box office was \$38.30, while per capita spending on home video was \$114.62.

What the VCR Did to Movies - 1

- Changed the movie viewing experience
 - Seeing a movie on a VCR/TV was far different from seeing it in a theater
 - Large-screen vs Small-screen
 - Different aspect ratio and field-of-view
 - Dark theater vs Lighted room
 - Sharp high resolution vs Blurry low resolution
 - Public setting vs Privacy of the home

What the VCR Did to Movies - 2

- Changed people's TV-viewing habits
 - Time-shifting ended viewers' subjection to broadcasters' time schedules
- Turned people into videotape collectors as home VCR-recorded and purchased prerecorded tapes accumulated
- Enabled the homebound (i.e. the elderly, handicapped, and the parents of small children) to watch feature films

Time-shifting – Working housewives could now watch their favorite soap operas after work. People who wanted to watch two programs running head-to-head on different channels could watch one and record the other for later viewing.

What the VCR Did to Movies - 3

- Turned the movie theater audience into a scattered collection of individual viewers
 - People now saw movies as families or individuals rather than as members of an audience
- Drove out of business
 - Movie revival houses and high-brow art theaters
 - 16mm projector and film rental agencies that used to service schools, hospitals, and training sites
 - Nickelodeon pornographic movie establishments

Art Theaters - Before the VCR, if you wanted to watch a Hitchcock or Garbo or Bogart film, you had to go to one of the movie revival houses (often located in large urban centers and/or near college campuses) or wait to see it as a TV rerun movie on one of the cable channels. Now, you could rent or buy the pre-recorded videotape and watch it at your leisure.

Porn sites – One interesting facet of the pornography industry is that porn is both big business [witness the popularity of porn websites and video-on-demand porn movies (a staple of most hotels) and something that the consumers thereof are often very embarrassed about to have known, especially by their spouses, children, parents, or bosses. Consequently, most porn consumers want privacy. The idea of being able to see porn in the privacy of one's own home without the necessity of going to a porn site nickelodeon that was, more often than not, located in the seedier section of town was thus very appealing to pornography consumers. It was thus not surprising that the pornography industry was among the first suppliers of pre-recorded videotapes and a major source of video rental stores' early revenues.