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| **The Seven Ages of Film** |
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**A Closer Look**

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**History**

Mechanisms for producing moving images had been demonstrated from the (ie: *zeotropes, praxinoscopes, kineoscopes*). These relied on the “” to provide an illusion of movement if the images were moved at sufficient speed past the viewer.

The development of the motion picture projector and allowed the development of film. Early motion pictures were showing an event or action with no editing or other cinematic techniques.

Early films were a visual art until the late 19th century when they developed into a with a series of scenes linked together to tell a story. Scenes were broken up into multiple shots of varying sizes and angles. Camera was used to add to the story development. Music was used to create mood using a pianist / organist using either sheet music or a score as they accompanied the screen action.

The first audience to experience a moving film did so in . The film, by the Lumiere brothers was called “Workers leaving the Lumiere Factory (1895)”. Their film “Train Entering the Gare de Ciotat (1895)” caused people to faint with fear as the train loomed from the screen into the theatre auditorium. These films did not carry a story or narrative - they merely showed a moving image on the screen.

Realising the potential of a good story (1861-1938) utilised film to create fantastic stories that took his characters and audiences to the moon and beyond.

**The Changing Process of Cinema**

The changes in the process of film making involved several factors:

* Current events & achievements. ()
* The creativity of the film-makers who influenced the crafts-people involved in the films.
* The developments that could be exploited.
* The capacity of a sufficient audience to appreciate the results.

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**The Changing Process of Cinema**

The division between *film* and *movie* creates two views of quality and purpose.

MOVIES: This is a product. Movies are considered popular entertainment with a mass circulation of copies, where the audience is largely passive. Movies are the product of an industry dominated by the producer () in which there is no individual film-maker but a team under the producer’s control (). The is hired to create the movie from the script. The final version is, however, the responsibility of the Producer and Editor. The director of a movie is known as: *metteur en scene* = an interpreter of a score / script.

**Progressions - The Silent Film**

Film makers experimented with the use of the camera to develop new techniques that would enhance their ability to tell a story. In 1913, Giovanni Pastrone (Cabiria) moved his camera and slightly above the level of the foreground thus changing the perspective of the audience from what they previously had in the Lumiere films. In 1923, directing Last Laugh for F.W.Murnau proposed a forward movement of the camera at dramatic moments as if to thrust the audience into the action.

The man who exploited this change was (1875-1948) whose film “The Birth of a Nation” (1914) created an explosive examination of the development of the American nation from the Civil War. Films until then were narrative and anecdotal. This film followed several threads of narrative - the friendly families in the North & South, political events in Washington, warfare with friends in opposite camps, exploitation of the South, white & black, carpet baggers from the North and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan.

Griffith’s success was also his undoing. His films – Intolerance, The Mother & The Law, and The Fall of Babylon put him into debt. As a result, Financiers ceased to regard the film-makers as the king-pins of production and decided to build up the in their place - to put control in the hands of the producer, aided by his team of organisers and writers (The Hollywood System). This favoured the movie over the film and reduced the risk for the banks. It also meant that the actor was out of place in the movie world as his / her versatility would make them unrecognisable and therefore valueless commercially. But they also introduced the of the film - long shot / mid shot/ close-up and their variations. These terms allowed the editor to construct a movie or film to produce identified reactions from the audience.

F.W.Marnau (1888-1931) influenced the film making process with the introduction of the design tool - the . This is a script visualised by drawings of every basic change of camera angles in the film. Marnau was influenced by the swing to the right in Germany after WW I where business took advantage of the high inflation rate to mass produce films at cheap rates.

The storyboard design focus introduced techniques like “” that, for example, involved showing the passage of time by tracking towards a candle flame then dissolving into a lighted gas jet or electric bulb from which they would track away to the next sequence of the story. This technique was replaced by *nouvelle vague* that introduced to show or allow the passage of time and space. This was known as “*kultur-film*” in Germany.

World War I signaled the advance of the movie in the USA. This was because Europe was fighting a four year long war, costing 10 million dead. The following 10 years of prosperity in the USA allowed the industry to gain dominance.

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**The Advent of Sound**

Sound and film were slow to accommodate each other. Sound technology was clumsy and difficult to link to the of the film. Sound made it difficult to film in the open air, to film without interfering with lighting, without interfering with the way the actors spoke and with the number of cameras able to be used. Sound forced film to adapt and develop new narrative .

**Historical Events and the Sound Film**

The depression (1929-35) encouraged the development of the conventions of the gangster movie (the urban western) and comedies that saw ordinary folk standing up against corrupt big business. World War II encouraged the development of the film and again helped the USA gain dominance of the movie making business. The impact of the is seen in Citizen Kane (Orson Welles 1941).

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**History**

The increased costs of movie / film making had created the with its complex financing and control systems designed to ensure that the mix of expensive technology, cast of actors and associated technicians, and financiers would return a profit. The period 1920-50 was the for the Studios. Films were produced rapidly and regularly, often following a formula: Western, slapstick comedy, Film Noir, musical, cartoon, biopic… depending on the studio.

**The Studios Controlled the :**

Gibbons & Stothard - MGM

Cecil B deMille - Paramount

Newman & King - Twentieth Century Fox

**The Studios Controlled the :**

Bogart & Bacall - Warner Bros

Garland – MGM

**The Studio: A Factory for Film Production**

Technicians, directors and actors were all on and expected to work as required by contract. For example, between 1930 and 1939, the big directors like Curtiz made 44 films (Warner Bros), Leroy made 36 films and John Ford made 26.

*The Studio System* meant that directors had little control over the final product as final editing was done by post-production unit with Studio often making final decisions.

**RESULT - Studios had Recognisable Styles:**

* MGM - glossy production values + middle brow content.
* Paramount = European
* Universal = Horror
* Republic = Western

This meant that films across all studios had intellectual conformity that reflected public concerns and shared myths as the films were designed to fit into the rather than reflect the concerns of the . During World War II, studios became propaganda machines for the War Effort. Films were patriotic and focused on the concerns of those on the home-front as they worried about those on the .

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WWII delayed the but after the war, the threat of TV re-emerged. From 1946 to 1951, studios began selling off their chains. Not doing so meant that they failed to capitalise on the possibilities of the TV as a medium for film. The result was a period of and consolidations as the Studios lost their power.

* Desilu took over RKO for TV production.
* Revue took over Republic.
* Warner Bros sold their back catalogue to Seven Arts who sold it to United Artists. Seven Arts took over the back catalogue of Fox, and then in 1967 bought out Warner Bros Studio.
* Decca Records bought out Universal.
* MCA bought Paramount’s back catalogue then Decca, then Universal.
* Gulf & Western bought Paramount Studios in 1968.
* Transamerica took over United Artists.

**RESULT: Conglomerates dominated the US Film industry by the end of the .**

**This Caused:**

* A control of the media with the Media Conglomerates able to exploit Film, TV, Books, CD, record, DVD publication for mass profit.
* Individual contracting systems for “talent” rather than salaried staff favoured by the Studios. Actors, Directors, Technicians were for single movies.
* The advent of the “” disaster genre as the Conglomerates look to mass saturation marketing and maximised profit.
* Smaller Production houses move into specialised niche audience orientated films (Woody Allan)

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The death of the Studio System had international effects allowing the re-emergence of competition from Europe - particularly Sweden, France and Britain. The collapse of the Studio System also encouraged the circuit, giving a screen to films made outside of the USA conglomerates. The **New Wave** allowed the budding European Film industry a time to recover from the US domination that had emerged as a result of WWII. However the resurgence of the US film industry post 1980 meant that European filmmakers moved into TV production - particularly in the .

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The growth of the from 1950 to 1970 allowed for the emergence of a Mass-Media industry.

**REMEMBER:**

* A horizontal control of the media with the Media Conglomerates were able to exploit Film, TV, Books, CD, record, DVD publication for .
* Individual contracting systems for “” rather than salaried staff favoured by the Studios. Actors, Directors, Technicians contracted for single movies.
* The advent of the “Blockbuster” disaster genre as the Conglomerates look to mass saturation marketing and maximised profit.
* Smaller Production houses move into specialised audience orientated films e.g Woody Allan
* This has changed the face of the Film Industry - particularly in terms of production and .

The Modern Film industry has cross from other countries film industries: e.g. India, & Australasia.

* Examples of films: Bride & Prejudice: Bollywood interpretation of classic English text Pride & Prejudice. A similar cross fertilisation happened with Vanity Fair.
* utilised effects from Asian film: Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon.
* Utu, a NZ film, was effectively a Western transposed into a NZ setting.