

THE STUDIO SYSTEM TIMELINE

The Rise of the System

1908

French Pathe controlled international market

1908

December, Thomas Edison founds the MPPC (Motion Picture Patents Company or **Edison Trust** or **The Trust**)

Response to control of market by Pathe.

Trust of major American film companies (Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph, American Pathe, etc. Eastman Kodak and distributor George Kliene)

It focused on the controlling and licensing of patents. Rentals and Scheduling of films to distributors, price per foot, etc.

1910-1918

Foreign production companies and Independent producers begin to “road show” films skirting around the rules of the MPPC. (i.e. William Fox)

1912

Adolph Zukor established **Famous Players Film Company**—advertising "Famous Players in Famous Plays"—as the American distribution company for the French film production “Les Amours de la reine Élisabeth” starring Sarah Bernhardt (famous stage actress) (The beginning of the “STAR SYSTEM”)

The most successful and eventually the most powerful of the independent producers is Adolph Zukor.

Famous Players becomes Famous Players-Lasky with co-producer Jesse L. Lasky. Founds Paramount Studios as distributor for Famous Player films.

Paramount is the fifth oldest surviving film studio in the world after the French studios Gaumont Film Company (1895) and Pathé (1896), followed by the Nordisk Film company (1906), and Universal Studios (1912).

Appeals to Wall Street and Washington for financial and political backing during the late 20's and early 30's.

Established vertical integration of business: control of PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION and EXHIBITION.

1913

The move of production to the west coast.

Companies moving their operations to Hollywood, whose distance from Edison's home base of New Jersey made it more difficult for the MPPC to enforce its patents.

Southern California – good year-round weather and varied countryside; its topography, semi-arid climate and widespread irrigation gave its landscapes the ability to offer motion picture shooting scenes set in deserts, jungles and great mountains.

Hollywood had one additional advantage: if a non-licensed studio was sued, it was only a hundred miles to "run for the border" and get out of the US to Mexico, where the trust's patents were not in effect and thus equipment could not be seized.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which is headquartered in San Francisco, California, and covers the area, was averse to enforcing patent claims

Flying A Studios in Santa Barbara!

1914

Panama Canal Opens

World War I begins (assassination of Duke Ferdinand of Austria)

Filming of Birth of a Nation

Rise of American industrial capitalism

Increasing American Production Value in films.

1915

Federal court decision in *United States v. Motion Picture Patents Co.* on October 1, 1915. MPPC's acts went "far beyond what was necessary to protect the use of patents or the monopoly which went with them" and was therefore an illegal restraint of trade under the *Sherman Antitrust Act*.

1918

MPPC terminated

1919

United Artists is founded by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith

1920s

American films companies begin establishing production hubs/companies for production and distribution.

German UFA is a challenge to this.

1927

UFA goes bankrupt *Nibelungen* and *Metropolis* in 1924-1926 (bailed out by US)

1920-30s

Narrative, Continuity and Star system gets emulated by other foreign cinemas (the one exception being the Russians)

1927

The Jazz Singer (First talking) from Warner Brothers.

Beginning of the sound era.

1930

With financial power and control of technical processes "Hollywood" goes on to dominate foreign markets with sound film. Especially with the advent of "dubbing" or re-recording dialogue in other languages.

Rouben Mamoulian's *Applause*

1929

Wall Street crash. Beginning of “The Great Depression” .

1930-1931

Hollywood seems depression proof.

Domination by the Big 5: RKO, MGM, FOX, PARAMOUNT and WARNER BROS.

The Minors: UA, UNIVERSAL and COLUMBIA don't have large theater chains (i.e. no vertical integration)

1930s – Late 1930s

Government and Wallstreet bailouts of the Majors and the Minors.

1930-1968

The Motion Picture Production Code or Hays Code. The set of industry moral guidelines that was applied to most United States motion pictures. From 1934 to 1954, the code was closely identified with Joseph Breen, the administrator appointed by Hays to enforce the code in Hollywood.

1939

Studios experience major financial and critical comeback.

Gone with the Wine, Wizard of Oz, Mr. Smith Goes to Washinton, Stage Coach, Young Mr. Lincoln, Gunga Din

1941

US enters World War II, US dominates film production and distribution due to devastation in Europe.

1948

Landmark Legal case. United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc., 334 US 131 (1948) (also known as the Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948, the Paramount Case, the Paramount Decision)