

During 1920's Warner Bros. Invests money into sound tech

Don Juan released 1926 – orchestral accompaniment and sound effects on disc. W/vaudeville shorts with singing and talking

Jazz Singer- 1927- Part talkie/w music

At this point (After MPCC) no fierce competition-
Sound of Film becomes (Movietone-Fox) standard not SOUND ON DISC (Vitafone-WB)

1929- Wings first film to win best picture.

COLOR IN FILM

One of the first examples-hand tinting Annabells Butterfly Dance

(Red and Green) first produced. - TOLL OF THE SEA, STAGE STRUCK, THE BLACK PIRATE (1925, 26)

FIRST FILM in 3 color technicolor was Disney's FLOWER AND TREES (1932) in Silly Symphonies.

FIRST EVER COLOR FILM- GOOFY GOAT ANTICs by Ted Eschbaugh (1931)

Three Little Pigs (1933)
FIRST full color, live action short LA CUCHRACHA (1934)

First Full length 3 color BECKY SHARP (1935)

1939- The Wizard of Oz , Gone with the Wind
Hattie McDaniel first african american to win academy award

MGM dominance in 30's- Star system.

Warner Brothers Gangster films.--Little Caesar 1930, The Public Enemy 193, Scarface 1931

Universal 1930 All is Quiet on the Western Front- banned controversial, wins oscar best pic.
Universal Horror pics... Tod Browning Dracula 1931, Frankenstein 1931, Friends The Mummy 1932
Freaks 1932

All studios suffer during depression except MGM

Attendance drops...lowest is 60-75 million a week.

Charlie Chaplin... City Lights 1931, Modern Times 36 last great silent film.

1930's Screwball Comedies.- battle of sex, quickwitted, imaganitive. madcap farces...
Howard Hawks.- Twentieth Century 1934, Bringing up Baby 1938, His Girl Friday, 1940
others. It Happened one Night - Capra 1934, My Man Godfrey La Cava 1936.

Hays Production Code
Post Master General, Chairman of RNC MPPDA founded 1922
SRC Studio Relations Committee make MPPC 1930

"Pre code"- years.

All film submitted for seal of approval denied seal, not exhibited, fine 25,000\$

RED DUST 1932 causes controversy.

CODE starts 1930 enforced 1934 challenged in mid 50's abolished 1968

1939 GREATEST YEAR

10 films nominated for best PIC not 5

OF MICE AND MEN-Hal Roach

STAGECOACH- Ford

WURTHEN HEIGHTS

GONE WITH THE WIND

WIZARD OF OZ

GOODBYE MR. CHIPS (Robert Donat)

MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON

NINOTCHKA- Garbo laughs

DARK VICTORY

LOVE AFFAIR

YOUNG MR. LINCOLN- Henry Fonda

HUNCH BACK OF NOTRE DAME

born in 1939- Coppola, Friedkin, Bogdanovich.

The Golden Age of Hollywood: From 1930 to 1948

The 1930s decade (and most of the 1940s as well) has been nostalgically labeled "**The Golden Age of Hollywood**" (although most of the output of the decade was black-and-white). The 30s was also the decade of the sound and color revolutions and the advance of the 'talkies', and the further development of film genres (gangster films, musicals, newspaper-reporting films, historical biopics, social-realism films, lighthearted screwball comedies, westerns and horror to name a few). It was the era in which the silent period ended, with many silent film stars not making the transition to sound (e.g., Vilmy Banky, John Gilbert, and Norma Talmadge).

By 1933, the economic effects of the Depression were being strongly felt, especially in decreased movie theatre attendance.

By 1930 most theaters are wired for Sound.

Set back for Hollywood film style- static films like stage plays Camera can't move/microphone hidden.

Blimps (barney)-muffle camera noise.

Multiple cameras all in booths.

Barrymore and the boomed mic.

Return to style/camera movement

Studios with distinctive style-

MGM prestige-actors, technicians, special effects

WB- cheap genre pics/gangster, musicals,

Universal- Horror, cheap

"The Divine Garbo" and "The Swedish sphinx," spoke her first immortal, husky, Swedish-accented words in director Clarence Brown's MGM film **Anna Christie (1930)**. (As a floozy, she spoke: "Gimme a whiskey, ginger ale on the side. And don't be stingy, baby") - it was Garbo's first talkie (advertised as "GARBO TALKS!")

B-actor John Wayne made his debut in his *first* major role in a western directed by Raoul Walsh, **The Big Trail (1930)** - one of the first films shot in *Grandeur*, Fox's experimental wide-screen 70mm format. Both the film and the new process flopped; it would be nine more years before his star-making appearance in **Stagecoach (1939)**

RKO won its *sole* Best Picture Academy Award for the western **Cimarron (1931)**

in 1930, the **Motion Picture Production Code**, administered by Joseph I. Breen (and former Postmaster General Will Hays) set film guidelines regarding sex, violence, religion, and crime (not yet strictly enforced until the **Production Code Administration (1934)**)

Applause (1929) (and later with **Love Me Tonight (1932)**), one of the first great American musicals starring Roaring 20s torch singer Helen Morgan in her first film role. **Applause** also introduced a revolutionary sound technique: a double-channel soundtrack with overlapping dialogue.

in the first filming of the Ben Hecht-MacArthur play, Lewis Milestone's **The Front Page (1931)**, a mobile camera was combined with inventive, rapid-fire dialogue and quick-editing.

Two-Color and Three-Color (Full-Color) Technicolor Development:

One of the first 'color' films was Thomas Edison's hand-tinted short **Annabell's Butterfly Dance**. Two-color (red and green) feature films were the first color films produced, including the first two-color feature film **The Toll of the Sea**, and then better-known films such as **Stage Struck (1925)** and **The Black Pirate (1926)**. It would take the development of a new three-color camera, in 1932, to usher in true full-color Technicolor.

The *first* film (a short) in three-color Technicolor was Walt Disney's animated talkie **Flowers and Trees (1932)** in the *Silly Symphony* series. [However, others claim that the *first*-ever color cartoon was Ted Eschbaugh's bizarre **Goofy Goat Antics (1931)**.] In the next year, Disney also released the colorful animation - **The Three Little Pigs (1933)**. In 1934, the *first* full-color, live-action short was released - **La Cucaracha (1934)**.

Hollywood's *first* full-length feature film photographed entirely in three-strip Technicolor was Rouben Mamoulian's **Becky Sharp (1935)** - an adaptation of English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray's Napoleonic-era novel *Vanity Fair*. The first musical in full-color Technicolor was **Dancing Pirate (1936)**. And the first outdoor drama filmed in full-color was **The Trail of the Lonesome Pine (1936)**.

In the late 30s, two beloved films, **The Wizard of Oz (1939)** and **Gone with the Wind (1939)**, were expensively produced with Technicolor - what would the Wizard of Oz (with ruby slippers and a yellow brick road) be without color? And the trend would continue into the next decade in classic MGM musicals such as **Meet Me in St. Louis (1944)** and **Easter Parade (1948)**. Special-effects processes were advanced by the late 1930s, making it possible for many more films to be shot on sets rather than on-location (e.g., **The Hurricane (1937)** and **Captains Courageous (1937)**.) In 1937, the Disney-produced **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)** was the *first* feature-length animated film - a milestone. The colorful Grimm fairy tale was premiered by Walt Disney Studios - becoming fast known for pioneering sophisticated animation.

The Domination of the Studio System:

The American film industry was dominated by five major corporate-style studios in the 1930s (and into the 40s). Some of them had originally rebelled against the MPPA (Motion Picture Patents Company) - see their development in the previous sections. The Hollywood studios with their escapist "dream factories" and their "Front Office" studio head, production chief, producers, and other assistants, were totally in control and at full strength. They exerted their influence over choice of films, budgets, the selection of personnel and scripts, actors, writers, and directors, editing, scoring, and publicity:

- **Twentieth Century Fox** (formed in 1935 from the merger of Twentieth Century Pictures, founded by Joseph Schenk, and the Fox Film Corporation)
- **MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)** (led by Louis B. Mayer)
- **Paramount**
- **Warner Bros.**
- **RKO Radio**

Three other minor studios were close behind:

- **Columbia** (headed by Harry Cohn from 1932)
- **Universal**
- **United Artists**

Republic Pictures (founded in 1935) and Monogram were relegated to B-picture status, and Disney was a specialized studio for animation. [The stylized logos of some of the studios have remained similar over many decades: Warners (shield), Universal (globe), and Fox (searchlights).]

Most of the late 20's and 30's studio chiefs relied on their production heads for story decisions: 'boy wonder' Irving Thalberg (first at Universal, then MGM), David O. Selznick (RKO, MGM), and Darryl Zanuck (Fox). Until his death in 1936, gentleman production executive/tycoon Irving Thalberg was responsible for high-powered, prestigious, Best Picture-winning films that served as star vehicles, e.g., **Grand Hotel (1932)**, **Mutiny on the Bounty (1935)**, and **The Great Ziegfeld (1936)**. However, iron-fisted, stubborn Thalberg was known for clashes with extravagant silent film actor-director Erich von Stroheim over his films, such as **Foolish Wives (1922)** and **Merry-Go-Round (1923)**.

The beginning of the decline of the major studio system in the late 30s was signaled by various aggressive producers who split off and became independent. For example, David Selznick resigned from MGM in 1935 and established his own independent company - **Selznick International Pictures**. As an independent producer, David O. Selznick served as a "one-man" film industry with tremendous authority and power over the selection of stars and decisions of directors.

Gone with the Wind- film was memorable in that Hattie McDaniel became the *first* African-American to win an Academy Award (as Best Supporting Actress).

MGM's Studio Dominance in the 30s:

The 'star system' flourished with each studio having its own valuable 'properties', and Irving Thalberg was responsible for promoting MGM's stars like no other. The 30s was the age of lavish glamour and sex appeal, and MGM became the biggest, most predominant and most star-studded studio of all, making it "The Home of the Stars." It promised "more stars than there are in heaven,"

Other Major Studios:

20th Century Fox was known for its musicals (especially in the 40s with Betty Grable), and prestige biographies (such as **Young Mr. Lincoln (1939)**). Fox Studios also capitalized on its association with Shirley Temple after the mid-30s - singlehandedly, she made over \$20 million for Fox in the late 30s.

RKO was the locale for the first films of Orson Welles (**Citizen Kane (1941)** and **The Magnificent Ambersons (1942)**), the sophisticated dance films of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, comedies, and its seminal monster film **King Kong (1933)**.

Universal prospered with noted director Tod Browning, westerns, W.C. Fields and Abbott and Costello comedies, the Flash Gordon *serials*, and its archetypal, low budget horror films such as **Dracula (1931)**, **Frankenstein (1931)** and **The Wolf Man (1941)**.

Columbia's best director was Frank Capra, known for his folksy, fairy-tale "Capra-corn" pictures. He directed many of this era's best populist and homespun tales with grass-roots heroes, that did surprisingly well once they were screen in small-town theatres. His romantic comedies made at the height of the Depression included the unprecedented hit **It Happened One Night (1934)** about a struggling hack reporter and a rich heroine thrown together, and **Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936)**, about a millionaire who attempted to give away his newly-acquired inheritance.

Paramount Studios on the other hand, with a more European, continental sophistication and flavor, boasted husky-throated Marlene Dietrich and director Josef von Sternberg, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Carole Lombard, Fredric March, Claudette Colbert, and director Ernst Lubitsch with his 'sophisticated' comedies: **Trouble in Paradise (1932)**, **Angel (1937)**, and **Ninotchka (1939)**. They also featured comedies from Mae West, W.C. Fields, the Marx Brothers, Bob Hope, and Bing Crosby, musicals starring Maurice Chevalier, and films from Cecil B. DeMille.

Warner Bros. was male-dominated and fast-moving, and noted for gritty, cutting-edge, realistic films or biopics, war films, Westerns, and socially-conscious, documentary-style films. The studio also churned out *Golddiggers* musicals almost every year (beginning in 1929) in the decade, and in the 40s - *Bugs Bunny* and other cartoons. In the early 30s, Warners also inaugurated the crime-gangster film, with its **Little Caesar (1930)**, **The Public Enemy (1931)**, **Scarface (1932)**, and **The Roaring Twenties (1939)**. The studio thrived with director Michael Curtiz, and famous "tough guy" stars including: James Cagney, Paul Muni, Humphrey Bogart, and Edward G. Robinson. Its female stars were equally forbidding, and included Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck, Lauren Bacall, and Ida Lupino.

Gangster Films at Warners:

Warner Bros. developed its own style by producing gritty narratives, social problem pictures and a succession of tough, realistic gangster movies in the sound (and Depression) era, reflecting the era's shaken confidence in authority and the country's social traditions. The major stars of Warners to emerge in the 30s were: Muni, Flynn, Edward G. Robinson, Cagney, Bogart, and Davis (with Warners from 1931-1949).

Little Caesar (1930) - The Public Enemy (1931)

Billionaire Howard Hughes' and United Artists' hard-hitting gangster film **Scarface (1932)**, directed by

Universal's Horror Films:

Escapist entertainment emerged at Universal, one of the minor film studios during the "Golden Age of Hollywood." Universal produced a Best Picture winner in the second Academy Awards ceremony - a serious anti-war polemic, **All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)** - the controversial, landmark film was denounced and banned in numerous European countries. It was a remarkable film that used 'advanced' sound dubbing techniques - incorporating sound effects, dialogue, and music on one soundtrack.

The studio had its greatest success with its cycle of classic horror films. Tod Browning's **Dracula (1931)** **Frankenstein (1931)** Egyptian corpse in German Karl Freund's directorial debut film **The Mummy (1932)**.

To capitalize on Universal's success with their horror films in 1931, Browning's next film was MGM's shocking, bizarre and unsettling **Freaks (1932)** –

The Effects of the Depression on the Film Industry:

The Great Depression hit hard. Nearly all of the Hollywood studios (except MGM) suffered financially during the early 30s, and studios had to reorganize, request government assistance, cut budgets and employees, and close theatres when profits plummeted. Attendance at theatres was drastically affected, although during even the darkest days of the Depression, movie attendance was still between 60-75 million per week. Special incentives and giveaways (such as 2-for-1 features, dish nights, and other contests and attractions) helped to maintain a patronizing audience

Charlie Chaplin:

Comedian-director Charlie Chaplin survived the arrival of sound by deliberately remaining silent in his two comedy films in the 30s. [He did not perform in a film with a speaking role until the 1940s.] One of his finest films as The Tramp, **City Lights (1931)** featured a soundtrack and sound effects, but its dialogue was provided by title cards. Chaplin, again as the pantomiming Little Tramp with co-star Paulette Goddard, satirized the dehumanizing industrial society in his still-silent production of **Modern Times (1936)** - considered the last great silent film. It had synchronized sounds (various noises) and included a nonsense song that Chaplin actually sang with gibberish. The masterful film symbolized how technology, mass production, and machinery could literally suck victims into its gears. Other silent film comedians, such as Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd did not survive into the 30s.

Screwball Comedy: (See the comedy film genre)

Sophisticated comedy also reached its peak during the 1930s, due in part to the burgeoning restrictions of the Hays Production Code. The battle of the sexes could be humorous, teasing, imaginative, and affectionate without depictions of passionate sex, kissing, and couples in bed together. In fact, some of the cleverest lines of dialogue (with verbal wit and camouflaged double-entendre) could be found in screwball comedies.

The best screwball comedies (madcap farces), with their typical frenetic pace, physical slapstick humor, and quick one-liners, included four films from Howard Hawks:

- **Twentieth Century (1934)**, adapted by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur from their Broadway play hit, with stars John Barrymore and Carole Lombard
- the very funny battle-of-the-sexes **Bringing Up Baby (1938)**
- **His Girl Friday (1940)**, with Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell, another comedic remake of **The Front Page (1931)**
- **I Was a Male War Bride (1949)**, with Cary Grant in hapless pursuit of an Army Lieutenant (Ann Sheridan)

The best performers in the screwball comedy genre were: Katharine Hepburn, Carole Lombard, Irene Dunne, Melvyn Douglas, and Cary Grant.

Other examples of great screwball films include Ernst Lubitsch's **Design for Living (1933)**, Gregory La Cava's **My Man Godfrey (1936)**, Richard Boleslawski's **Theodora Goes Wild (1936)** (Irene Dunne's first starring comedy), William Wellman's **Nothing Sacred (1937)**, Leo McCarey's **The Awful Truth (1937)** with Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, and George Cukor's **Holiday (1938)**.

The Hays Production Code: The Hays Office

Backed by the Catholic church and their Catholic Legion of Decency (founded in 1934 by a council of Catholic American Bishops), and the Wall Street financiers who supported the studios, former Postmaster General Will Hays headed up Hollywood's self-regulatory **Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA)** that was founded in 1922. It created the **Studio Relations Committee (SRC)** in 1927 (under the command of stringent Catholic Joseph Breen), issued a definitive **Motion Picture Production Code** in March, 1930, and created the **Production Code Administration (PCA)** (also headed by Breen) in 1934. The "**Pre-Code**" years refers to the five years *before* the Code took effect, between 1930 and mid 1934. When the code became official, Hollywood would operate under the constraint of a rigid set of mandates.

Regulations of the code included censorship of language, references to sex, violence, and morality. The conservative and repressive code required, among other things, no promiscuity, no venereal disease, no excessive violence or brutality, twin beds for married couples, no ridicule of ministers of religion, the prohibition of various words ("sex", "hell", and "damn"), and no clear depictions of rape, seduction, adultery or passionate, illicit sex. There was to be no "excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embracing, suggestive postures and gestures." Sinful activity (such as criminality or sex outside marriage) could often exist in a film IF it was punished or if it ended in misery.

All films would be submitted for a "seal of approval" - and if a film was unacceptable and denied a seal, it was not to be exhibited in theaters, and the studio would be fined \$25,000. Many films were either suppressed, or severely mutilated or censored to fit the seal's requirements, but until 1934, restrictions on content were mostly evaded and ignored. In the early days of the Depression in the early 1930s, the desperate Hollywood studios used the open sexuality of platinum blonde Jean Harlow and the outrageous bawdiness of Mae West to increase their profits. The Hays Office and church leaders would soon interpret their screen behaviors as obscene and lacking in morals.

The steamy **Red Dust (1932)** caused controversy for its heated-up love triangle between adulterous Mary Astor, Clark Gable, and prostitute Jean Harlow (and for her nude bathing scene in a rain-barrel). Beginning in mid-year 1934 (until challenges in the mid-1950s and the abolition of the code in 1968), films felt the cold effects of strict enforcement, vigilance and censorship of the (Hays) Production Code of the MPPDA.

Film studios submitted their films for review before release in order to be awarded an MPPDA seal of approval - if they met strict standards of decency. Without a seal, films were threatened with negative publicity and potential box-office failure. The era of separate beds and squeaky-clean morality was just beginning with the enforcement of the Code after mid-1934, and would remain for over 30 years.

The Code Challenges Gangster Films:

Especially after Warners' early cycle of gritty crime and gangster films, including **Little Caesar (1930)**, **Public Enemy (1931)**, and **Scarface (1932)**, this distinctive genre of films was required to be cleaned up, to display social consciousness, to combat the depiction of the criminal as a folk hero, and to include platitudes that crime-does-not-pay. They were also supposed to show no details of how crimes were committed, and criminals were not allowed to be seen killing lawmen (including bank guards or detectives). The "classical" gangster film was forced to evolve into other genre variations including: "gangster-as-cop" films (typified by **G-Men (1935)**), and "Cain-and-Abel" sagas (such as **Manhattan Melodrama (1934)** and **Angels With Dirty Faces (1938)** in which swaggering gangster Rocky Sullivan (James Cagney), who was the 'bad guy' product of his environment, was executed in the final chilling scene for his crimes).

The Greatest Year for Films Ever: 1939

The most distinguished, pinnacle year in the movies has to be 1939, with many of the greatest, most diverse and superlative movies ever produced in one year. There were ten films nominated for Best Picture that year (not five) for Academy Awards, and four of them were independent productions - (1) Hal Roach's **Of Mice and Men (1939)**, (2) Walter Wanger's **Stagecoach (1939)** - director John Ford's only Western during the 1930s - a frontier classic that revitalized the A-budget Western, emphasized characterizations, and catapulted the career of John Wayne out of routine, small-scale roles, (3) Sam Goldwyn's and William Wyler's tale of ill-fated lovers in **Wuthering Heights (1939)** [the Yorkshire moors were realistically re-created on land 50 miles from Hollywood], and the eventual winner (4) David O. Selznick's and MGM's **Gone With the Wind (1939)** with Victor Fleming credited as director among others. The Best Picture winner sold more tickets than any other picture - and Hattie McDaniel's Best Supporting Actress Oscar win (for her role as Mammy) made her the *first* African-American Oscar winner. It was also the *first* color film to win the 'Best Picture' award.

The other six nominated films in 1939 were MGM's big-budget **The Wizard of Oz (1939)** (credited as directed by Victor Fleming) with emerging star Judy Garland in the colorful magical Munchkinland and land of Oz, MGM's **Goodbye, Mr. Chips (1939)** starring Robert Donat and Greer Garson, Columbia's and Frank Capra's **Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)**, MGM's **Ninotchka (1939)** - Garbo's first starring comedy in which she "laughs," WB's **Dark Victory (1939)**, and RKO's **Love Affair (1939)**. Two other lesser-known Westerns, besides Ford's, also contributed to the rebirth of the Western in the 30s: **Dodge City (1939)**, an Errol Flynn Western-style swashbuckler, and Cecil B. DeMille's epic, **Union Pacific (1939)**.

1939 boasted other great classic films of enduring quality: **The Roaring Twenties (1939)**, **Destry Rides Again (1939)** - Marlene Dietrich's come-back film, **Only Angels Have Wings (1939)**, **Young Mr. Lincoln (1939)**, **Beau Geste (1939)**, the all-female **The Women (1939)**, a re-make of **The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1939)** with Charles Laughton, and **The Old Maid (1939)** with Bette Davis.

As a footnote to the decade, three of the best directors in the decade of the 1970s were born in the year 1939: Francis Ford Coppola, William Friedkin, and Peter Bogdanovich.

1930;s- Color Film Stock comes in to wide use.
1920- 2 color technical sequences-crude

BECKY SHARP- First feature to use TECHNICOLOR
Technicolor needed bright lights/specific for emphasizing certain colors.

By 1930 late- trend towards deep focus.
Famous by Citizen Kane.

All film submitted for seal of approval denied seal, not exhibited, fine 25,000\$

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