

## FILMSOUND TIMELINE

**1420** -- First drawing of a Magic Lantern, from the *Liber Instrumentorum* by Giovanni de Fontana (Italy)

**1888** -- Thomas Alva Edison meets with Edward Muybridge and purchases 90 of his plates to begin experimenting with moving pictures. His intention was to couple live action with the sound produced by his phonograph.

**Late 1880s** -- Edison commissions William Kennedy Laurie Dickson to build a film camera. Dickson develops the Kinetograph which coupled recorded images with phonographic sound. The final result in 1892, the peep show penny arcades which were first installed in 1894.

**1890s-1920s** -- There are numerous experiments synchronizing motion pictures and phonographs, in Europe and the United States, in this period. These systems are not commercially viable until the premiere of the Vitaphone system in the mid-1920s. There are also a variety of techniques using live actors, musicians, singers, and sound effects specialists to accompany film showings at some theatres. Most film showings probably featured some continuous musical accompaniment, by a pianist, organist, or a small band or orchestra.

**1894** -- "Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze" (aka "Fred Ott's Sneeze") is the earliest surviving copyright Edison film. A soundtrack was recorded separately.

**1895** -- The Lumière brothers give their first public presentation, in Paris, of their Cinematographe. About 10 short films were shown, the first of which was "Workers leaving the factory in Lyon". It is believed that the films were provided with live musical accompaniment on the piano. This event is often considered to be the beginnings of the modern cinema.

**1895** -- Edison's Kinetophone is introduced. It allowed single viewers to watch a film while simultaneously hearing a soundtrack recording. The synchronization was imperfect, and the machine did not find a market. A short Edison film from 1894 or 1895 shows two men dancing while another plays the violin into a phonograph horn (this is known as the "Dickson Experimental Sound Film"). The soundtrack, featuring music from the light opera "The Chimes of Normandy" by Jean Robert Planquette, was discovered on a broken wax cylinder in the 1990s and restored.

**1904** -- Frenchman Eugene Lauste records sound onto a piece of photographic film

**1907** -- Dr. Lee De Forest patents the audion tube, an invention crucial to the subsequent history of music, radio, film, and television. It allowed a small electric signal to be amplified and played over loudspeakers

**1909** -- Edison company sends out its "Kinetogram" newsletter featuring musical suggestions for 7 of its films

**1913** -- The first of the Sam Fox Moving Picture Music volumes is published, with musical cues for various moods and national-ethnic settings composed by J. S. Zamecnik

**1907 -- 1913** various film and sound inventions included the Vivaphone, Synchronoscope, the Chronophone, the Cameraphone and the Cinephone. Edison produced the Kinetophone in 1913 -- a "Rube Goldberg" device of belts and pulleys and received boos for his efforts at Keith's Union Square theatre in New York City.

**19teens** -- Western Electric develops along with Lee DeForest (1906 Audion) a method of recording and reproducing sound electronically on disc. Western Electric Bought the rights to the use of the Audio for amplifying the phonographic sound.

**1921** -- DeForest improves the method of recording sound on film and patents a new invention he calls the phonofilm.

**1923** -- Experimental electrical recordings developed at Bell Labs

**1924** -- The first showing, at Yale University, of a film with a synchronized, electrically recorded sound-on-disc soundtrack, on a system developed by Western Electric

**1925** -- Warner Brothers is the only film studio that decides to invest in Western Electric's sound-on-disc system

**1925** -- Erno Rapee publishes his "Encyclopedia of Music for Motion Pictures," a compendium of musical cue suggestions, organized by mood (agitated, passion), setting (pastoral) and ethnic-national types (Chinese music, Middle Eastern music). The musical cues are excerpts from 18th and 19th century European composers and other composers of classical and light classical music.

**1925, September** -- Warner Bros. contracts with the AT&T method of sound with film and releases its first sound with film pictures in 1926 using a system dubbed the Vitaphone. *Don Juan*, released in 1926 was the first film to include music on an amplified sound-track.

**1926** -- The film *Don Juan*, Warner Brothers' first feature film to use the Western Electric system, is premiered in New York City. The film is still "silent" in that it has no dialogue, but its continuous musical score is presented via Western Electric's "Vitaphone" sound-on-disc system

**1927, October** -- *The Jazz Singer* featuring Al Jolson is released by Warner Bros. Not an immediate hit in New York, but it gained long-lasting fame when it moved into America's heartland. It was rebooked in 1928 in New York and grossed \$100,000 a week.

**1927, May** -- Fox Film Corporation works with a new AT&T development -- sound on film. Fox uses this system to produce newsreels which would play prior to feature films at theatres. The first big publicity coup was the flight of Charles Lindbergh across the Atlantic. Also memorable was the capturing of the explosion of the Hindenburg. These newsreel shorts became known as the Movietone News.

**1927** -- The smashing success of Warner Brothers' second Vitaphone effort, *The Jazz Singer* - a mixture of silent film and musical, also featuring two scenes with spoken dialogue - spells the doom of the "silent era."

**1928** -- Walt Disney's *Steamboat Willie* introduced Mickey Mouse, and was also the first film (in this case an animated cartoon) with a fully-synchronized soundtrack including music, dialogue, and sound effects (it used a sound-on-film recording system).

**1928, May** -- the major film companies (Paramount, Loews/MGM, First National and United Artists) sign with AT&T to produce pictures with sound on film despite the introduction of a competing format developed by RCA.

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**September 1928** -- Warner Bros. releases *The Singing Fool* -- again starring Al Jolson. Tickets for the first night were \$11.00. "Sonny Boy" and "There's a Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder" from the film became the first million selling record of the "talkie" era. *The Singing Fool* cost \$200,000 to produce but drew an unprecedented \$5,000,000.

**1929** -- *The Broadway Melody*, MGM's first "all talking, all singing, all dancing" film is released, and wins the Oscar for Outstanding Picture (1928-29). It used a sound-on-film process, and also introduced the technique of dubbing in separately recorded sound onto film.

**End of 1920s** -- only a few theatres in America's largest cities continued to maintain a house orchestra and organist.