RTVF 370
World Cinema

The Coming of Sound &
The Studio Years (1930-1945)
The Golden Age of Hollywood
Domination of World Film Market
The Reign of the Factory System
Vertical integration & block booking

The Arrival of Sound
An entirely new way of doing things
Two Basic Technical Problems for Sound Movies

1. Keeping the picture & sound in sync
2. Amplifying the sound for large theater

Competing Sound Systems

**Vitaphone process** - disk locked to projector (Western Electric)

**Phonofilm** (sound on film) - developed by Lee De Forest

De Forest’s audio tube provided the amplification for sound systems

Warner Bros. Adopts Sound

Struggling company attempting to survive (or Wall Street investment ?)

Adopted the **Vitaphone** system

**Don Juan** (1926) -- music replaces orchestra
20th Century Fox

Theodore Case (De Forest’s assistant comes up with own sound on film system

-- **Movietone**

Used 1st in the highly successful “Fox Movietone Newsreels”

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The First “Sound” Films

**The Jazz Singer** (WB - 1927) - tried to use sound to tell a story

**The Singing Fool** (WB-1928)

**The Lights of New York** (WB-1928) -- “100% All talking”

By 1929 the silent film basically dead--everyone converting to sound

The sound-on-film process wins out

Patents pooled -- Western Elec. & RCA

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Problems with Arrival of Sound

1. Artistic
2. Technical
3. Commercial
1. Artistic Problems

Emphasis on talk -- loss of visuals

Canned theater

Loss of universal art (the silent film)

2. Technical Problems

1. Locked down the camera
2. Immobilized the actors
3. Required larger crews
4. Much higher costs = play it safe

3. Commercial Problems

1. Upgrading theaters
2. Royalties on sound systems
3. Backlog of silent films
4. Contracts with silent stars
5. Damage to world distrib. system
6. Censorship -- Hays Office/Breen Code (Legion of)
THE MAJOR STUDIOS
(1930-1945)

1. MGM  
2. Paramount  
3. Warner Bros.  
4. 20th C. Fox  
5. RKO  
6. Universal  
7. Columbia Artists  
8. United Artists

76% of films
86% of income

The Minor Studios

1. Republic  
2. Monogram  
3. Disney  
4. Sam Goldwyn Productions
(Rest of films & income)

Film Cycles

1. Gangster films  
2. Westerns  
3. Musicals  
4. Historical and Adventure Films  
5. Horror Films  
6. Comedies
Pluses of the Factory System

Ability to turn out lots of product
Cost savings of factory system
Predictable results
Incredible technical expertise

Minuses of Factory System

Formulaic plotting
Imitation of other films
Standardized style - conformist
Individuality discouraged
Mass Production = both good & bad

Director in the Studio Era

Basically a hired gun
Director’s style subservient to the star system & the studio
Market dominates all - not a system designed for individual expression
Successful Studio Directors

John Ford
Howard Hawks
Frank Capra
Busby Berkeley
Michael Curtiz

Orson Welles

1. Citizen Kane (1941) made at age 26

2. Magnificent Ambersons (1942)

The Stranger; Lady from Shanghai; Macbeth; Othello; Touch of Evil

Everyone Must See

CITIZEN KANE
(1941)

Orson Welles
This is NOT Extra Credit
Your video store will have this!
Hollywood in Transition (1952-62)

1946 peak box office year in first 52 years of film history

By 1953 attendance had fallen 53%

Cost of equipment, labor, etc. rising tremendously

Problems for Hollywood

Paramount vs. U.S. (1948)
1. Leads to break-up of studios
2. End of block booking

Arrival of Television
1949 -- 1 million TV sets
1952 -- 10 million TV sets
1960 -- 50 million TV sets

RESULTS:

1. Falling attendance
2. Less box office income
3. Fewer films produced
Ellis Says 1952 is Key Year

Network TV blankets the nation

Supreme Court decision loosens control on film content

Break-up of studio system -- divestiture

Hollywood’s Response:

Studios begin unloading stars and properties

Total conversion to color

Introduction of new technologies that distinguish movies from TV

New Technologies

1. 3-D
2. Cinerama (3 projectors- ultra widescreen )
3. Improved sound--in this time period--stereo---and then a rudimentary surround system
Sound in the Theater Today

Most 35mm prints have at least 4 channels of stereo surround sound
Many 70 mm prints have 6 channels of stereo surround sound
Sound can be recorded on mag stripe alongside pix -- dangerous
Optical tracks so lousy the Dolby noise reduction is almost required

Surround Sound

Screen
Left
Sub-
Center
Right
Woofer
Left surround
surround
Right

Magnetic stripes laminated down sides of film (like regular audio tape)
NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Widescreen processes:
  - Vista Vision
  - Todd-A-O
  - Cinemascope
  - Panavision
The new widescreen processes

Changed the size and shape
of frame. This is known as
the

**ASPECT RATIO**

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Aspect Ratios

European widescreen: 5 units wide
3 units wide
Ratio: 1.66:1

Aspect Ratios

Cinemascope: 7.05 units wide
3 units wide
Ratio: 2.35:1

Aspect Ratios

Todd-A0 (70 mm.): 6.63 units wide
3 units wide
Ratio: 2.2:1
Age of the Independent Producer

1. Studio and independent producer trade roles

2. The producer now:
   Selects property (or secures writer)
   Hires the director, actors, crew
   Uses the studio to distribute to theaters

Pluses of these Changes:

1. End of “Factory” system
2. Less emphasis on “Star” vehicles
3. Ends “Tyranny” of Harry Cohn’s ass (the all-powerful mogul who dictates all)

Minuses of these Changes:

1. More conformist -- “take no risks”
2. Financial problems now fall on the creative team
**Impact on Filmmaking**

1. More Big Epics to draw audience
2. Cheapy Teen films
3. Emphasis on pre-sold stories
4. Slightly more risqué subjects
5. Return to N.Y. for more consciously artistic films

**Internationalization**

1. New emphasis on profits abroad
2. Production & Distribution abroad
3. More “adult” content
4. Exotic locations
5. International stars, mixed crews