History of Animation

1900’s to 1950’s

Enchanted drawing (1900)

- J. Stuart Blackton
  - Some consider him the father of American Animation

Fantasmagorie (1908)

- Emilie Cohl draw this animated short in France, but started a second studio in Fort Lee, NJ in 1912 after the huge success the short had in France.
- Started to spread his knowledge and style throughout America.

Gertie the Dinosaur (1914)

- Comedian Winsor McCay even got to interact with Gertie as the bit became a part of his act
- Did several stand-up comedy animations

Felix the Cat (1919)

- 1st animated movie star to be merchandised
- His animated shorts were called “Feline Follies”

Alice’s Wonderland (1923)

- Laugh-O-Gram studios in Chicago made this live action film that combine animation and a live action film.
- Studio closed down later that year due to bankruptcy, and the owner of the studio moved to California and opened another studio, Walt Disney Studios

Steamboat Willie (1st release- July 29th, 1928 & 2nd release-Nov. 18, 1928)

- Disney’s second animated short with Mickey but is 83rd overall
- 1st well known animated short with synchronized sound
  - Sound was added for the second release, with the first release being silent

Finding his Voice (1929)

- Fleischer Brother’s production, out of New York City, a group that went on to create characters such as Ko-Ko the Clown, Betty Boop, Pop-eye and Superman, to name a few.
- 1st Animated short with vocal words matching the mouth
- Fleischer Brothers were also the first to do 3D landscape (multiple cels to give the appears of depth)
- One of the companies downfalls were that they were very edgy of the 1920’s and 30’s, with overcrowding, sexually suggestive content and frequently nightmarish scenes
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Flower & Tree (1932)

- 1st Technicolor animated short
- 1st animated short to win an academy award

Animated shorts became popular after the introduction of sound, that “talkies” were being produced at an alarming rate by several different places. The biggest fight for popularity came from the Fleischer Brothers, Disney Brothers and the Warner Brothers.

Warner Brothers

- Wanted the spotlight so bad that they would steal animators from Disney to increase the production of the shorts.
- The Warner’s would call their shorts either Merry Melodies, which would be primarily music based, or Looney Tunes (sometimes misspelled to say Toons)
  - Characters included Bosko the monkey (1930), Porky Pig (1935), Daffy Duck (1937) and Bugs Bunny (1940)
    - Bugs was originally introduced in 1938 as “Bugs” the Bunny cause he kept bugging Porky on his rabbit hunt, but Warner brothers deny that that is the first appearance of bugs.
    - Also is believed to be the nickname of the first created of the rabbit
- The Warner brothers were also big in helping keep spirit high when the US was involved in the war, by helping to sell bond and to make fun of the enemy in World War II.

Snow White (1937)

- Starts production in the Spring of 1934, though his company is still producing shorts
- Cost $1.5 Million to produce, mortgaging his house and company to finance the movie (the period called Disney’s folly during this period)
  - Because of the money that was put into the film, Roy Disney wanted out of the company.
- 58 Animators worked on the movie with most working 16 hours days
- Opened on December 21st, 1937 and grossed for the next 52 weeks $8.5 million, which would be about $130 million now

Fantasia (1940)

- Disney’s 3rd feature length film (Pinocchio was released 8 months earlier)
- Cost $2 million to make, which at the time was 4 times the cost of a full length live action movie
- To this day, is Mickey’s only appearance in a full length feature movie
- 1st Movie to be release in a multichannel stereo sound
  - Because of this feature, called Fantasound, the movie was only shown in 14 theaters nationwide on the opening weekend
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- To this day, is one of only two animated movies on AFI’s Top 100 movies of all time, Fantasia is #58 and Snow White is #49.

The Forming of the SCG & STRIKE

- 1933 the Screen Actors Guild is formed
  - 1938 the Screen Cartoonist Guild is formed
    - Mainly to protest the unfair hours and pay of animator’s
- The SCG started to push and gain contracts for all production companies
  - Most accepted the push, however some did fight for a while
    - 1939 - The Fleischer Brother’s fought the SCG.
      - Cartoonist that sided with the SCG were fired, those who didn’t stayed with the company and eventually moved the studio to Miami because of tax breaks. This moved cause the company to lose a lot of money forcing the production company close up and retired (1942)
    - 1941 - Warner Brothers attempted to “Lockout” their animators, but gave in about 5 days later.
      - Some of the Warner Brothers animated left anyway, creating new production companies
        - MGM Studios formed (1941)
          - Created Droopy
          - The two head animators were William Hanna and Joseph Barbera
            - Who created Tom & Jerry (1940)
        - Walter Lantz Studio
          - Woody Woodpecker is created (1940)
    - 1941 - Disney was the last to be hit up by the SCG, because they were the highest paid of all cartoonists
      - Some issues came up from the production of Snow White, when it was common practice to work 16 hours a day for 6 days.
      - Disney instead of cooperating with the SCG, started firing animators…primarily those animators that were members of the SCG, including his head animator.
      - This caused the animator’s at Disney to stop work on the 3rd feature length film (Dumbo) and go on strike.
      - During the 5th week of the strike, Walt Disney was told to take a trip to Costa Rica and to leave his best friend in charge of the company. Which Walt Disney did and two days later, the temporary president of Disney Productions, President FDR ended the strike.
After the STRIKE

- Disney went back to making feature lengthy movies with little interruption
  - From 1940 to 1949, Disney produced 11 full length movies
    - Movies such as Dumbo and Bambi
    - Disney went back to his roots, but producing two live action animations, including The three caballeros and Song of the South,
  - had issues in 1946, with the release of the Song of the South, over the stereotypical representation of blacks in the south and slavery