Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons Study Guide

Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons by Leonard Maltin

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Leonard Maltin's "Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons" is a work of non-fiction. The book is comprised of 13 chapters as well as a glossary and filmographies listed by studio.

The book begins with "The Silent Era," covering the birth of the cartoon short. The Silent Era ended in the 1920s when sound was first introduced in the film industry.

Chapters 2-12 contain history on the major players in the animation industry. Maltin covers how the industry grew and evolved, the major players involved, and the inventions and innovations that were enabled animation to evolve to its current level.

Maltin pays homage to the early influences in the industry, such as Winsor McCay and John Bray.

The chapters focus on individual studios, their contributions, techniques and people that made each of them great.

After the Silent Era, Maltin focuses on Walt Disney, by far one of the most innovative, creative and successful animators in history. Maltin covers Disney's early years up through the next several decades in which Disney would move to California, open his legendary studio and create some of the finest animation the world had ever seen or ever will see. Readers need not be told of Disney's successes with characters such as Mickey Mouse but the book covers the invention of every one.

Max Fleischer is the next animator to be discussed. Fleischer operated a studio with his brother Dave, a consummate comic. Fleischer's studio was relatively short-lived although some good work came out of it, including Betty Boop. Fleischer was a revolutionary inventor in the industry, holding 15 patents that included the Rotoscope and the Rotograph.

Paul Terry and Terrytoons is a chapter devoted to the creator of Aesop's Fables, a series that would run weekly for eight years. The series was said to inspire some of Walt Disney's early work.

Walter Lantz, creator of Woody Woodpecker, is also featured. Lantz had also created Andy Panda and realized much success in the animation industry.

One animator of note, Ub Iwerks, is discussed. Iwerks was a longtime protégé of Walt Disney until he had the offer of his own studio. After several years of success, Iwerks eventually returned to Disney's side.

Maltin focuses on the major studios and the roles they played in creating some of the most memorable characters in cartoon history. These include Paramount, Screen Gems, Universal, MGM, United Productions of America (UPA), United Artists, and Famous Studios.

Also included is an extensive filmography for each chapter and a glossary of terms.

Maltin ends the book with "The Rest of the Story," which follows animation into the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 1, The Silent Era

Chapter 1, The Silent Era Summary and Analysis

Chapter One, The Silent Era, begins in the early 20th century has animation began to take a stronghold in the film industry. Maltin refers to Winsor McCay, a legendary animator and entrepreneur. During a testimonial dinner, McCay commented that "Animation should be an art, that is how I conceived it. But...what you fellows have done with it is make it into a trade...not an art, a trade... bad luck."

Maltin argues that while animation had in fact become a trade. It did not mean the loss of the artistic side. The silent era and black-and-white was very limiting to animation, and the art had little choice but to wait for film advancements to catch up to it.

Maltin refers to the first several black-and-white cartoons, including what is considered to be the first animated cartoon, "Humorous Phases of Funny Faces." The early shorts used the zoetrope and measurement that produced a quicker version of the "flip-book," which was a series of cartoons in sequential order designed to trick the eye into seeing movement. The reason it took so long for animation to gain popularity was that there was a tremendous amount of work that had to go into each piece. In the early days in animated piece would require 16 frames per second or 1,000 drawings to produce one minute of animation.

Walton credits to men with overcoming the obstacles in producing animated films. One was Emile Cohl, a Frenchman, and Winsor McCay, an American. Although the book is titled, "A History of American Animated Cartoons," Maltin asserts that the efforts made by Cohl cannot be ignored. Cohl's work in animation preceded McCay's although it is unclear whether McCay was aware of Cohl. McKay began as a newspaper cartoonist who was inspired by his son's flip-book. Mccay's first feature, "Little Nemo," appeared in 1911. There was no plot for storyline, simply, a group of hand colored 35mm frames that exclaimed, "Watch us move!"

Animation really took a strong foothold in 1914, when McCay's newest film Gertie the Dinosaur premiered. According to McCay, "While these films made a big hit, the theatre patrons suspected some trick with wires. Not until I drew Gertie the Dinosaur did the audience understand that I was making the drawings move."

While other animated features came before Gertie, it is often considered to be the first true animated cartoon. Strangely enough, I can he did not want to be a part of the film industry. McKay preferred to continue to draw newspaper comic strips, leisurely independent film projects, and vaudeville appearances.

Maltin makes references to several animators that followed in McCay's footsteps, attempting to advance the art.

One important innovator was John Randolph Bray, a newspaper cartoonist that became fascinated by animation. In 1914, Bray applied for a patent on a new piece of technology that made use of multiple copies of background settings printed on translucent paper.

Maltin refers to celluloid, also known as a "cel," as being the told that have the greatest impact on the animation industry.

Chapter 2, Walt Disney

Chapter 2, Walt Disney Summary and Analysis

Chapter Two, Walt Disney, focuses on the beginnings, history and technical advances of Walt Disney and the studio that would make animation history.

Disney's early career in film was rocky. After a short stint as an adman at the Pesmen-Rubin Art Studio, Disney and his coworker, Ub Iwerks, formed "Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists." The company formed in 1920, was also to be short-lived. Disney and Iwerks went to work at the Kansas City Film Ad Company, where the men learned about cut out animation. Eventually, Disney was able to start his own company and created a highly successful series of animated features, known as "Newman's Laugh-O-Grams," which made Disney, extremely popular in the Kansas City area. Unfortunately, Disney was a terrible money manager and the company eventually went bankrupt. That point Disney decided to head to Hollywood.

Once in Hollywood, Walt formed a new company, with his brother Roy. Although the company went through many ups and downs, Disney prevailed. The first significant piece of animation created by the studios was Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. This was followed shortly by Mickey Mouse.

A sharp blow came Disney's way when he lost the rights to Oswald. The rights were taken over by Charles Mintz, husband to Margaret Winkler, Disney's distributor. As a result of Mintz's rapid growth in the industry, nearly all of Disney's animators left for the east coast to work for Mintz. Only a handful of employees, including Ub Iwerks stayed on to support Disney and the studio.

Disney continued to thrive despite the ever increasing cost of making animated shorts that could live up to Disney's high standards. Other studios continually marveled at Disney's genius and many often wondered how certain technical movements came about. Eventually, Walt Disney Studios became the place where all the top animators wanted to be.

The outstanding work on full length feature films was one of the things that kept Disney on top. One of the most notable pieces was "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Maltin reveals the incredible amount of work that went in to the movie and the blood, sweat and tears given by all of Disney's staff. The movie was an instant success. One animator recalls creating the seven dwarfs and how difficult it was to make each character similar yet with a distinct personality. The voices, movements and tempo needed to be different for each one. For example, Dopey was always the last in line, the slowest to respond. The movements were made exponentially difficult due to the fact that there were seven characters to deal with instead of the usual one or two. There is a one minute scene in which the dwarfs are marching home from the mines while singing

"Heigh Ho." Due to the intricacies of keeping each dwarf in step, that one minute sequence took six months to animate.

Disney's work exploded until World War II broke out. Suddenly, Disney's foreign markets were cut off and money to complete works in progress was in short supply. In addition to the hardships created by the war, many of Disney's workers decided that it was time to unionize and a strike ensued. Nearly 500 workers picketed the studio. The action somewhat baffled Disney. The studio was top of the line and no expense was spared on making films. Disney was a workaholic to the point of obsession and thought that his workers should share the enthusiasm and vision. Animators and other employees often worked overtime and weekends in order to get the work finished, however, there was no such thing as overtime pay.

Disney continued to create legendary works, including "Sleeping Beauty," "Pinocchio," Peter Pan," and countless others. Despite any problems Disney had at the studio, the work never seemed to suffer. Critics were often skeptical about the direction Disney took the studio from time to time but Disney's vision always won out in the end. One only needed to be reminded of one of Disney's most unusual and most dynamic successes in "Fantasia."

Disney was also known for adding live animation to real life movies and vice versa. "Mary Poppins" is a good example of this.

In the 1960s Disney began to move away from the animation and toward his theme parks. Disney was still passionate about the animation side of the business but required new challenges. The last film Disney worked on was "The Jungle Book," which was released a year after his death.

Chapter 3, Max Fleischer

Chapter 3, Max Fleischer Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3, "Max Fleischer," recounts the career of famed animator Max Fleischer, creator of Betty Boop.

Maltin touts Fleischer as being an innovator in creating unique cartoons. "In the silent era they sparkled with innovative ideas and technical wizardry, and during the 1930s their distinctive brand of humor put them in a class by themselves."

Maltin also refers to Fleischer as being an unsung hero in the industry, despite his notable contributions. Part of that can be attributed to the fact that Fleischer was not a good businessman. The art meant more than money and therefore, Fleischer missed out on a lot of great opportunities, particularly in merchandising. Walt Disney relied a great deal on merchandising to fund his projects but Fleischer remarked, "I'm in the business of making cartoons, I'm not in the merchandising business."

Fleischer was also known for having a modest outlook. Mechanical innovations were of more interest than artistic ones and this held Fleischer back during a time when most other studios were in a frenzy to compete with Disney. In Fleischer's heyday, he had some of the best American animators working for him until they realized that in order to grow and reach new heights; they would have to go west to work for Disney.

Fleischer started out living in Austria until his parents emigrated from Austria to the United States, eventually settling in Manhattan and finally, Brooklyn, New York.

Fleischer was one of six children. At one time or another, Fleischer's four brothers would work at Fleischer Studios.

Like his older brother, Joe, Max Fleischer had a great interest in mechanics. This job led him to expand on his commercial art career to land a job as art director at "Popular Science Monthly." The job at the magazine was what fueled Fleischer's need to explore technical innovations in the area of animation. It was also this interest which led Fleischer to patent several technical and mechanical devices for use in art, such as the rotoscope. Maltin explains the idea behind Fleischer's invention:

"The idea of the machine was elementary although its construction was not: A camera projects a piece of live action film, one frame at a time, onto a light-table, enabling an artist to trace the rear-projected image onto a piece of paper. The artist then turns a crank to proceed to the next frame and make his next drawing. Simply put, the rotoscope enabled an artist to trace live action movements onto animation paper and achieve completely realistic results."

One of Fleischer's first features was "Koko the Clown," which featured Fleischer's brother Dave as a live model. Dave was also responsible for developing the cartoon's scenario.

Unfortunately, Fleischer had a hard time convincing producers of the genius of the rotoscope. Later, Fleischer would only use the machine for cartoons that required the precise movements of a live subject.

During a meeting with Adolph Zukor, the head of Paramount, Fleischer met John Bray. Bray was immediately interested in Fleischer's work and hired him to produce one "Inkwell" cartoon per month. Just then, World War I broke out and Fleischer spent the majority of his time working on military training films for Bray. While Max was embroiled in training films, Dave learned quite a lot about film cutting a movement, a skill that would later benefit Max.

Critics of Fleischer often wondered at the man's lackadaisical attitude and why he didn't produce more work akin to the popular and innovative "Out of the Inkwell." Even Disney had copied from that piece, proving that Fleischer was also on top of the game.

Fleischer received many kudos from critics for Out of the Inkwell, a rare thing in those days when animation was not taken seriously as an art. Bray was a big believer in Fleischer's work and eventually offered him stocks in his company as well as a position as an officer. Fleischer outgrew Bray's world and in 1921, Fleischer and his brother Dave started their own company, Out of the Inkwell Films, Inc.

The Fleischers were good at creating new and easier ways of doing things. In lieu of hiring actors, Max often portrayed himself in films. At one point, the brothers figured out that photographs worked as still life shots, saving even more time and money. Although Fleischer's techniques were often crude, the product excelled, leaving critics to wonder how the man accomplished the work.

By 1923, Fleischer's studio employed only 19 people, which was very small at that time. Fleischer gave up animating to run the business, including finding outlets for distribution. Meanwhile, Dave took on the role of directing the Inkwell series.

Fleischer went onto invent the Rotograph, a machine that enabled the animators to combine live action and animation. "In this variation of the Rotoscope, a projector beams a strip of live-action film one frame at a time onto the underside of a translucent pane of glass. The animator then lays his clear cells of Koko on top of the glass, matching the cartoon to the live film, which is then photographed by a camera stationed above. The process enabled Koko to appear in a moving sequence instead of being limited to still photographs for his adventures in the real world."

Like the Rotoscope, the process involved in using the Rotograph was laborious and therefore, its use was limited.

Dave, who was born with artistic talent, was not one to overexert himself. Although Max ran the business, Dave allowed the staff of animators to draw the shorts while he supplied the gags.

Maltin gives great detail on many of the processes used in creating Fleischer's work as well as those who responsible for the animation and other processes.

Fleischer's success allowed him to venture into other areas of animation, including several experimental projects. One of Fleischer's favorites and a milestone in his career was the feature film that strove to explain Einstein's theory of relativity. The picture was almost devoid of actual animation yet became a critical success. The film, "Moving Picture World," took a great deal of research. Fleischer partnered with Professor Garrett P. Serviss, a highly credible and respected author with the New York American, and also gained assistance from several of Einstein's assistance. Part of the draw for Moving Picture World was Fleischer's ability to take the technical information presented by Einstein and turn it into dialogue that could be understood by the general public.

After Moving Picture World, Fleischer worked in conjunction with the American Museum of Natural History to create "Evolution," a film that combined live action with diagrams, photographs, and rudimentary animation.

One of Fleischer's most popular and longest lasting inventions was The Bouncing Ball. Max and Dave conceived the idea together, based on the pointer system. The Bouncing Ball would appear on screen as a singer or musician would play a song. The animated ball would bounce on top of the word being sung at the time. Fleischer did not create the sing-along film, however.

Four years prior to Disney's "Steamboat Willie," Fleischer produced an animated film titled, "My Old Kentucky Home" with Dr. Lee DeForest. The film was one of the first to present animation in conjunction with synchronized sound.

1924 was a busy year for Fleischer. Fleischer formed Red Seal Pictures, a distribution company. The studio produced a lot of live action films over the next couple of years, some of which were filmed at Fleischer's studio while others were photographed by independent producers. Fleischer is credited with creating the metamorphosis of celebrity caricatures, which were a big hit and still remain popular today.

Unfortunately, Red Seal only lasted two years and at the end, the Fleischers were broke. Alfred Weiss, a businessman, arranged for Fleischer's work to be produced through Paramount. Weiss turned out to be a con man but Fleischer's relationship with Paramount continued.

By 1929, Fleischer's introduction of sound into his cartoons gave him a firmer foothold in the industry. The silent era had all but exhausted what animators could do and the new "Talkartoons" were a welcome change. While Paramount referred to the films as "actual talking pictures," the truth is that the sound was added after the film was complete. It was certainly much easier for actors to sync with the animated characters than the other way around.

Fleischer's studio began to grow, incorporating a story department and the ability to incorporate new music.

Some of the animators became "a bit batty" with Dave Fleischer's desire for gags. There were many times when Fleischer's gags were not needed but the man had an insatiable sense of humor. The films that came out of Fleischer's studio often abounded with ethnic, crude and sexual humor, but the crowds seemed to love it. Paramount liked the fact that the cartoons were more sophisticated than some, offering more to the adults in the audience than the children. However, children also liked the films due to the strange looking characters.

Unlike some of the competition, Fleischer's cartoons relied more on music and gags rather than on characterization. While that may have meant that the characters were not as well rounded as some of the others on the big screen, it enabled Fleischer to use more characters without worrying about a great deal of character development.

During the Depression, Paramount made a deal with its advertisers that would allow the advertisers to "soft sell" their products to about 3 to 4 million people via an animated short. Fleischer took part in creating the shorts, which produced Lysol's "Jolt for General Germ;" Oldsmobile's "In My Merry Oldsmobile;" the India Tea Company's "Suited to a T;" and two pieces for Texaco - "Step On It" and "Tex."

By far, one of Fleischer's most memorable characters was Betty Boop. Introduced in 1930 as part of the sixth Talkartoon, Betty Boop was originally designed to be part human part dog. This seemed to make no sense to anyone but the animators and perhaps she was designed that way to play off of Bimbo, a humanized dog. Regardless, the public loved Betty Boop and eventually, she became a star in Fleischer's repertoire. Betty Boop had her own feature in 1931. Although the 1920s were over, Betty Boop's flapper style was a hit. By this time, Betty Boop's features had stabilized and gone were the dog references. According to Maltin, Betty Boop's anatomy made no sense, with an oversized head and no neck, but no one seemed to care. Various actresses were brought in to do the voice that would match the body based on various popular singers of the day.

In 1933-34, Paramount was in trouble. Although Betty Boop was extremely popular, Paramount needed more. It was at this time that Mae West arrived on the scene. While West's spicy antics burned up the box office, she was also responsible for creating a movement in which certain adults objected to the racy material being shown on the silver screen. Cartoons were not to be excluded from the criticism. As a result, Betty Boop underwent a drastic transformation, from sex pot to innocent bachelor girl with a wholesome entourage.

Betty Boop was also used to introduce Fleischer's newest character, Popeye the Sailor Man. While Fleischer knew that Popeye was a strong character that could easily stand on its own merits, using Betty Boop as a vehicle to introduce the spinach-eating sailor to audiences was genius. Fleischer immediately made a deal with King Features

Syndicate to buy the rights to Popeye, a move that would later cost Fleischer a great deal of money and creative control.

Popeye was introduced in "Popeye the Sailor," in which Betty Boop has a minor role as a hula dancer. Popeye's success led to the first official feature film starring the sailor, "I Yam What I Yam." It wasn't until 1934 that Popeye was turned into the character known and loved by millions.

As with most cartoons, Popeye had an entourage in his girlfriend Olyve Oil, J. Wellington Wimpy, nemesis Bluto, the Sea Hag, and adorable baby Swee Pea. Also thrown in were many of Popeye's soon-to-be-popular sayings such as "I Yam What I Yam," and other mispronounced words like "infinks" (infants) and "celebrake" (celebrate).

One of Fleischer's mounting problems was learning how to use his 15 patented inventions in making money. To Fleischer, the mechanics of making animated pictures far surpassed the importance of making money at the craft and therein lay many of the studio owner's problems. The fact that Fleischer was a poor businessman and, perhaps overly modest, allowed critics and colleagues to underestimate his genius, which rivaled that of Walt Disney. In fact, Fleischer developed a Turntable camera several years before Disney's multiplane camera but it did not receive an equal portion of notoriety.

Maltin continues to discuss Fleischer's individual films, problems and triumphs. In the end, Paramount decided to foreclose on Max and Dave Fleischer. The choice to close down the expensive studio was a shock to the Fleischers and rightfully so - Paramount had been pleased with the work. The contract with the Fleischers was severed, perhaps illegally. Max Fleischer attempted to sue Paramount but no resolution was ever reached.

Chapters 4-5

Chapters 4-5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4, "Paul Terry and Terrytoons," is a look at the work of Paul Terry, a man who was interested more in the product of film rather than the artistic love of the medium. Although Terry's studio was much smaller than that of rival Disney, Terry managed to turn out 26 films per year. While Disney was spending months, perhaps years, on a feature, the staff at Terrytoons was cranking out a film every two weeks. Beside the hard work that went into the cartoons, Terry believed in spending as little money as possible to produce films, hoping to increase the company's profits.

Terry came from a California family, most of which boasted some artistic talent. In fact, Terry was one of the first working animators in the country. Terry eventually moved into photography although he kept his hand in the art of cartoons. Everything changed when Terry saw Winsor McCay's "Gertie the Dinosaur." Terry knew then that he wanted to spend his career as a cartoonist. One of Terry's first pieces was "Little Herman," a spoof of Hermann, a popular magician at the time. Terry sold the film for $1.35 per foot. While waiting to make the deal, Terry showed the film to a group of kids that squealed with laughter. Terry knew that making kids laugh was what he wanted to do with his career.

Terry worked hard to make his mark in the film business and made contact with such luminaries as J.R. Bray, William Randolph Hearst, Winsor McCay, and Bud Fisher.

One of the first major undertakings for Terry was the production of "Aesop's Fables." Terry saw a perfect outlet for the fables in cartoons due to the human foibles involved in the tales. Terry managed to turn out one fable a month for eight years, a feat that was previously unheard of in the industry. The film would become immensely popular and many animators would strive to follow in Terry's footsteps.

When sound broke into the world of animation, Terry had a conflict with Amadee J. Van Beuren, the man who had taken over Fables Studios. Terry was happy adding simple soundtracks to silent features while Van Beuren wanted to venture forward with more sophisticated technology. It was not long before Terry was fired.

Terry approached Frank Moser to propose a partnership in a new studio. Moser agreed. Moser went looking for financial backing and met Joseph Coffman, a consultant with expertise in talking pictures. Coffman joined the partnership and Moser-Terry-Coffman was born. Coffman did not remain in the partnership for very long but Moser and Terry stayed with Audio Cinema, the distribution company where Moser had met Coffman.

The chief complaint about Terry's characters was that while they were pleasant they were in no way memorable. While other studios were creating new technologies and soon-to-be famous characters like Popeye and Mickey Mouse, Terry was content turning out the same type of shorts he had been producing for year.

Moser and Terry lost a major contract with Educational Services due to the low quality of the cartoons. Terry bought out Moser's share of the company and eventually got back into Educational Services' good graces. Moser disappeared from the world of animation.

Terry went through some trials with his employees and many left to work for more "organized" studios. As with Disney, unionization became a concern for Terry.

Terry finally bowed to the pressure from commercial sources that demanded color pictures. In 1938 Terry produced "String Bean Jack," a take on the classic "Jack and the Beanstalk." While the color on the film was good, the settings needed some work.

Maltin goes on to examine Terry's fight to catch up to some of his competitors in the field. This also includes comments on Terry's other pictures, including "Magic Pencil" and "School Daze."

Terrytoons' biggest star of the day turned out to be Mighty Mouse, a super rodent who would often be called upon to save the tortured and less fortunate. It took a while to develop Mighty Mouse's voice and characteristics but the cartoon rodent eventually found his place in animation history.

"Heckle and Jeckle," a feature on twin crows, was another cartoon produced by Terrytoons and well received by audiences. Terrytoons also went on to create favorites such as Deputy Dawg, Tom Terrific, and The Mighty Heroes.

Eventually, Terrytoons was too expensive to remain open and the plant in New Rochelle, New York closed. The company's work still remains popular on television although, in Maltin's view, the work was never very good. However, it was fortunate for Terry that some of the work produced in the 1960s and 1970s was inferior to Terry's work of the 1930s and 1940s, making it appear superior to all others.

Chapter 5, "Walter Lantz," chronicles the history of the creator of Woody Woodpecker and numerous other characters. Lantz is not typically considered to be a pioneer in the animation industry, rather a survivor and a part of the second wave to join the industry. Maltin is quick to give Lantz credit for operating a studio for 45 years, much longer than many of the man's competitors.

Lantz was born in 1900 in New York. Due to his mother's death during the birth of a younger brother, Lantz was moved into the role of breadwinner along with his invalid father. Lantz eventually went to art school and landed a job at William Randolph Hearst's "New York American." In 1916, Lantz got a job as a cameraman in Hearst's new animation studio and took every opportunity to learn the craft. Hearst closed the studio in 1918 and Lantz signed on with John R. Bray. During the draft of World War I, Lantz was too young to be drafted and easily stepped in to fill the shoes of the animators that had gone off to war.

Lantz' first creation was a character named Dinky Doodle, who often appeared with his dog and sidekick, Weakheart. Much like Fleischer, Lantz appeared in his own live action films but was never identified to the audience.

After Bray closed his studio, Lantz decided to move to California where he landed a job at Mack Sennett's studio. Lantz quickly became the fair-haired boy," always ready with an animated gag. Lantz' tenure at Sennett's studio was relatively short and he moved from one place to another before ending up at Universal.

Lantz became part of Disney's karmic universe when he went to Universal. Disney's Oswald the Luck Rabbit had been taken over by Charles Mintz, husband to Disney's distributor, Margaret Winkler. Disney was aghast at the betrayal and at the loss of many of his key animators. Universal paid Mintz to run Oswald, which was still created in the New York studio. The curtain came down on the Winkler studio when Universal announced that it was opening its own animation studio, headed by Walter Lantz. One cannot help but think that this turn of events gave some sense of vindication to Disney.

Maltin discusses Lantz's early years at Universal and the addition of sound to animated features. Lantz had many successes at Universal and made many valuable contacts. Eventually, Lantz went out on his own. As with many executives, Lantz stopped directing and went out in search of talent. Disney had hired many of the talented animators so finding artists that could stand on their own was not an easy task.

Lantz had been searching for a new character for years that would be based on an animal. Lantz tried many things and realized his first success with Andy Panda. Andy Panda was a great success although the story lines were predictable. Andy also served to introduce Lantz's newest character, Knock Knock. In 1940, Ben "Bugs" Hardaway joined Lantz's studio. Hardaway had spent years at Warner Brothers writing and directing pictures featuring the wildly popular characters Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. Lantz wanted a similar zany character and got one in the form of Woody Woodpecker.

The only problem with Woody Woodpecker was that the story lines did not fit the bird's character. The storylines and gags were funny but too subdued. That was about to change. In 1942, James Shamus Culhane took over as director and gave the audience the rollercoaster ride they had been waiting for, whether or not they knew it. Woody's first zany film was a take on "The Barber of Seville." The audience was already familiar with the piece and storyline so it was relatively easy for Culhane to make Woody's part as raucous as possible. Over the years, Woody went from being a grossly exaggerated and grotesque character to be a more streamlined attractive cartoon. The modern version of Woody Woodpecker came about in 1960, after almost 20 years on the screen.

Culhane also worked on shorts featuring Lantz's already established character, Andy Panda.

Dick Lundy came on the scene and tried to get Lantz' animators to add more artistic flair and personality into the characters. Lundy had spent years with Disney and also wanted to teach the animators to adopt new techniques and ways of doing things. Lundy commented that while some animators wanted to learn, others didn't care. Some were more interested in meeting their weekly footage quota despite the quality and personality of the work.

During World War II, Lantz accepted commercial film projects from the government much like all the other cartoon houses. Lantz created such a good piece with "Enemy Bacteria" with Milburn Stone and Mel Blanc that the piece was used in medical facilities long after the war had ended. After the war, Lantz continued to make commercial pieces to support the animation side of the business.

In 1947 Lantz had a quarrel with Universal, which had recently come under new management. Lantz switched over to United Artists for the 1948 season but the relationship did not last long. It is unclear why Lantz closed his studio for nearly a year but things seemed to be back to normal in 1950 as the studio reopened and Lantz and Universal patched up their differences.

Lantz, Woody and the other characters at Lantz's studio continued to evolve over the next couple of decades with new characters being introduced along the way. One of the more memorable characters was Chilly Willy.

In 1972, Walter Lantz closed the studio, citing that it took him ten years to recoup the cost of one cartoon. Lantz claims that he was the "last one to throw in the sponge" due to the excessive cost.

Lantz continued to appear occasionally with Woody but would never re-open his studio.

Chapter 6 - 7

Chapter 6 - 7 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 6, "Ub Iwerks," recounts the career of the legendary animator that helped Walt Disney start his studio. Maltin refers to Iwerks as "animation's forgotten man." Iwerks was Disney's right hand man for many years and was known as a world class animator. Iwerks was responsible for animating Steamboat Willie and Skeleton Dance almost single handedly. When Iwerks and Disney parted company in the 1930s, it became clear that while Iwerks had the talent, the animator "had none of Disney's creative spark and imagination."

Iwerks met Walt Disney in 1919 when both men worked as commercial artists. In 1922 when Walt decided to open his own studio, Iwerks was the first artist on the payroll. When the studio went under Iwerks went back to his old job and Disney headed for California. When Disney began to get work, he sent for Iwerks. Iwerks moved to California in 1924 and remained with Disney for six years. Iwerks was talented and lightning fast. The record set by Iwerks totaled 700 drawings in one day. Iwerks completed the Mickey Mouse feature "Plane Crazy" by himself in just under two weeks. Disney and Iwerks had their differences but the work they produced together is legendary. In 1930, Iwerks was offered funding to launch his own studio and accepted the challenge.

Iwerks first major character was Flip the Frog whose first film was in two-color Technicolor, two years before Disney would try his hand at colored pictures. Iwerks' producer required modifications and eventually the series sold to MGM.

Maltin reviews Iwerks' staff and early accomplishments. Some of the staff would become quite famous in their own right over the years, including Al Eugster, Shamus Culhane, and Chuck Jones.

Like Paul Terry, Iwerks was more concerned about meeting a monthly schedule rather than what could be done with the pictures. This is surprising considering Iwerks' own work with Disney. After the Flip series got off the ground, Iwerks stopped animating to focus on the duties involved with running a studio.

As Iwerks focused on operating the studio, master animator Grim Natwick headed the animation department. Iwerks was so reliant on Natwick that he offered the animator a partnership, which Natwick refused so that he could sign on with Disney.

Although the animation on Iwerks' cartoons was quite good, the story lines were not. Even superior animation cannot camouflage a thin plot.

Iwerks' made a big hit with his ComiColor Cartoons and 1935 and 1936 were big years for the former Disney protégé.

Although Iwerks continued to work steadily, he began to lose employees and even after Warner Brothers' producer Leon Schlesinger bailed out the company, Iwerks reunited with Disney. Neither man commented publicly on the reunion.

Chapter 7, "Van Beuren Studio," recounts the lesser known studio operated by Amadee J. Van Beuren. The studio was an "outgrowth" of Paul Terry's Aesop Fables Studio. Terry and Van Beuren worked together for a short time until the two men continually clashed on producing all of their films with sound. Van Beuren was for it, Terry was not. Most of Terry's staff remained with Van Beuren.

The major focus of the studio was on adding synchronized music to the films. Van Beuren kept up with Aesop's Fables for a while but eventually dropped the morals part of the stories in 1930.

While Van Beuren's team had some good ideas that were quite funny, the animators were not very good and often replicated already popular characters. Terry reclaimed Farmer Al Falfa as his own, which left a gap in Van Beuren's cast of characters. In 1931, Disney won a court injunction against Van Beuren for creating characters that resembled Mickey and Minnie to the point of discomfort.

Van Beuren prevailed. In 1933-1934, Van Beuren's studio was booming. The owner continued to hire on new talent to boost his staff although keeping talented animators on the East coast was a challenge. Most wanted to be in California.

By far, Van Beuren's greatest character was Felix the Cat. There were also characters named Tom and Jerry although the names were eventually changed to avoid confusion with MGM's more popular cat and mouse team.

Chapters 8-9

Chapters 8-9 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 8, "Columbia: Charles Mintz and Screen Gems," begins with the tale of Krazy Kat. Krazy Kat was a popular comic strip that had hurtled onto the big screen as early as 1916. Krazy Kat didn't last long as a popular film character but continued his success in the funny pages. Bill Nolan wanted to launch an independent series and chose Krazy Kat. The pictures would be distributed through Margaret Winkler. At the time, Winkler's husband was taking over the company and wanted to focus more on the "big time" rather than on independent and small features. As a result, Mintz linked up with Columbia Pictures, a new and hungry company poised for success. Mintz was best known at the end of the 1920s for reclaiming Oswald the Rabbit from Walt Disney, a move that prompted Disney to create Mickey Mouse. Disney had also been with Columbia but moved over to United Artists, leaving Mintz as Columbia's sole cartoon supplier.

Much like some of his rivals, Mintz was not interested in the artistic and production sides of the business, he only wanted to turn a profit. Mintz eventually moved to the West coast and hired away two of Max Fleischer's animators. The production end was left without leadership and the animators took turns fulfilling all the necessary roles. Fortunately, they were able to turn out Scrappy, a successful character for Mintz. The passion for Scrappy waned as Mintz focused on a foray into color cartoons. Mintz finally got access to the two-color Technicolor; Disney owned the rights to the three-color process.

Mintz often farmed out work to Iwerks who created good but not memorable work. Mintz' best cartoon came about in "The Little Match Girl."

Mintz began to suffer health problems as well as overwhelming debt to Columbia. In 1939, Columbia assumed Mintz's responsibilities. Mintz died in 1940 at age 44.

Screen Gems went through a lot of changes in the next eight years and eventually Scrappy and Krazy Kat were laid to rest.

Chapter 9, "Warner Brothers," recounts the history of one of the most successful companies in the animation field. Warner Brothers created more lasting and famous stars than any other competitor, even Disney. Warner Brothers is credited with Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny, Tweety, Wile E. Coyote, Daffy Duck, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam, PePe LePew, Forghorn Leghorn, The Roadrunner, Speedy Gonzales, and Elmer Fudd. In addition to the characters it created, Warner Brothers was also responsible for launching the careers of many, including Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng and Tex Avery, even though the animators had been around for quite some time.

Maltin recalls the history of Warner Brothers in relation to the other studios, which animators went from place to place and where they eventually landed. Some of the animators were ordered to copy, even plagiarize, Disney but no one could keep up with Disney's drive and genius.

The Merrie Melodies series was popular for Warner Brothers but remained rather nondescript. Porky Pig made his first appearance in "Gold Diggers of '49" but the character used in that film bears no resemblance to the modern day Porky. Eventually, Porky became the star of Looney Tunes. Looney Tunes would become Warner Brothers' greatest feat to date.

Warner Brothers went on to create some of the most memorable and best loved cartoons in the world.

Chapters 10-13

Chapters 10-13 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 10, "MGM," details the animated history of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, one of the famous and prolific movie studios in Hollywood. One of MGM's first releases was "Happy Harmonies," an obvious rip-off of Disney's "Silly Symphonies." The characters from MGM went more or less unnoticed until the arrival of Fred Quimby. Quimby, who had no experience in the field of animation, was in charge of the new department and set about to organize a staff. Among those hired were Friz Freleng, Bill Hanna, and Joe Barbera. The latter became a dynamic team that would eventually go out on their own.

The first major success for MGM was Tom and Jerry, which premiered in 1942. The cartoon would be the first shown on a Saturday morning show and would remain a favorite for decades to come.

Chapter 11, "Paramount/Famous Studios" discusses the studio's takeover of Max and Dave Fleischer's studio and the direction in which it chose to take its animated characters. Paramount joined up with Famous Studios. While the joint effort produced good shorts that were relatively successful, they never received critical acclaim awarded to other studios. The company turned out Little Lulu and Casper among its many offerings to the animation world.Chapter 12, "UPA," pays tribute to United Productions of American, the studio that launched Gerald McBoing Boing. UPA had a tough time making it in the industry at first but eventually prevailed. As with all of the studios of the day, UPA recruited animators from other studios.

UPA is credited with much advancement in animation. Its major characters also included Mister Magoo and Madeline.

Chapter 13, "The Rest of the Story," recounts the death of the short feature due to production costs and the inability to recoup the funds necessary to cover expenses. Maltin takes the industry from the 1940s up through the 1970s and introduces other animated characters including the Pink Panther and the innovative feature "Yellow Submarine."

Characters

Leonard Maltin

Leonard Maltin (1950 -) is a well-known American film critic, lecturer and author. Maltin was born in New York City, son of a singer and immigration judge. Maltin is married to Alice Tlusty, a producer and researcher. Maltin is probably most known for his television appearances and no-nonsense reviews. Maltin appears in the Guinness Book of World Records for having the shortest film, a review consisting of one word.

Maltin's writing career started at an early age when he wrote for classic images. At age 15 Maltin also edited his own fan magazine called "Film Fan Monthly." Maltin is a big fan of cartoons as well as old Hollywood. Maltin attended New York University, where he received a bachelor's degree in journalism. Since that time, Maltin has published articles in national publications such as TV Guide and variety.

Maltin has also published more than 10 books. By far the most famous is "Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide," a compilation of reviews and synopses that has been in print since 1969. The book spawned a companion volume titled "Leonard Maltin's Classic Movie Guide." Maltin's other books include "Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia, Our Gang: The Life and Times of the Little Rascals, The Whole Film Sourcebook," and "Behind the Camera, a study of the art of cinematography."

Despite Maltin's devotion to the art of film, the critic is not above poking fun at himself. Maltin has appeared in many movies and TV shows, from Simpsons to Mystery Science Theater 3000, and Gremlins 2. Maltin is also a fixture on Entertainment Tonight.

Walt Disney

Walt Disney (1901 - 1966) was one of the most influential forerunners in the world of animation. Disney is best known for his animated characters such as Mickey Mouse, a world-class film studio, and multibillion dollar theme parks.

In addition to Disney's work as an animator and producer, Disney was also a voice actor, director, screenwriter and philanthropist. Disney has won 26 Oscars and seven Emmy awards.

Disney's early career in film was rocky. After a short stint as an adman at the Pesmen-Rubin Art Studio, Disney and his coworker, Ub Iwerks, formed "Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists." The company formed in 1920, was also to be short-lived. Disney and Iwerks went to work at the Kansas City Film Ad Company, where the men learned about cut out animation. Eventually, Disney was able to start his own company and created a highly successful series of animated features, known as "Newman's Laugh-O-Grams," which made Disney extremely popular in the Kansas City area. Unfortunately,

Disney was a terrible money manager and the company eventually went bankrupt. That point Disney decided to head to Hollywood.

Once in Hollywood, Walt formed a new company, with his brother Roy. Although the company went through many ups and downs, Disney prevailed. The first significant piece of animation created by the studios was Oswald the Rabbit. This was followed shortly by Mickey Mouse. The rest is history.

Walt Disney died in 1966 of lung cancer.

Chuck Jones

Chuck Jones was an animator, animation artist, director and producer. Jones is best known for his work at Warner Bros. and solo work on such pieces as Merry Melodies, Looney Tunes, and Tom and Jerry. Jones was responsible for many of the animated pieces featuring Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. Jones is also responsible for the animation on "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."

Max Fleischer

Max Fleischer was an entrepreneurial animator, director and producer at the forefront of the animation movement. Fleischer is best known for his work on Betty Boop, Superman, and Popeye.

Walter Lantz

Walter Lantz was a well respected animator and owner of Walter Lantz Studios. Lantz is best known for being the creator of Woody Woodpecker.

Paul Terry

Paul Terry was the founder of Terrytoons, an animator, producer and director. Terry was responsible for producing 1,300 cartoons over a 40-year period, making him one of the most prolific directors in animation history.

Warner Bros.

Warner Bros. is a major motion picture film studio in Hollywood. Warner Bros. played in large part in animated shorts, including the development of Merry Melodies and Looney Tunes.

Ub Iwerks

Ub Iwerks was a coworker and close friend of Walt Disney. In addition to being a respected animator, Iwerks was loyal to the Disney Company and greatly assisted Walt Disney in building his empire.

Charles Mintz

Charles Mintz married Disney colleague Margaret Winkler and eventually took control of the company that had helped to launch Disney. Mintz eventually hired away all of Disney's animators except Iwerks.

MGM

MGM is a major motion picture studio in Hollywood. In addition to thousands of feature films MGM was also involved in producing animated shorts.

Objects/Places

Walt Disney Studios

Walt Disney Studios was one of the most influential forerunners in the world of animation. Disney is best known for his animated characters such as Mickey Mouse, a world-class film studio, and multi-billion dollar theme parks.

Walt Disney Studios was the brainchild of Walt Disney. Disney's brother, Roy, operated as a partner in the company. Disney was loyal to his staff and often recruited colleagues from previous ventures. Among those was UB Iwerks, a noted animator and loyal counterpart. Iwerks remained with Disney into the 1930s.

Disney was known for producing state of the art, ingenious animated works. While some studios were producing shorts as fast as they could simply to receive the money, Disney insisted on nothing but the highest quality work from his studio. As a result, the studio became a forerunner in the blossoming industry and raised the bar for all that dared to follow.

Although Disney had many successes, the first that many remember is the first "talkie" cartoon, "Steamboat Willie." "Steamboat Willie" would soon come to represent all that was new and wonderful about animation. The cartoon introduced Mickey Mouse, the character that would quickly become internationally famous and the centerpiece of Walt Disney Studios.

Disney continued to break new ground, creating full length animated features and still paves the way for the latest in animated products.

Hollywood

Hollywood, California started out as Hollywoodland, a haven for the up and coming movie industry. Hollywood's first studios, Paramount and Universal Studios were the two first major film studios to open in 1912. The companies were heavily invested in making silent films and creating a mystique through the medium of film. The industry was new and exciting - and everyone wanted a piece of the pie. Cartoons made their way into the business through short features that would appear in front of feature films or alongside newsreels. As the interest in cartoon shorts grew, the animation industry began to form and blossom.

The initial shorts made in Hollywood mirrored the early features. They were shot in black and white, were often relatively crude and were completely silent. There were some that offered accompaniment but there was no soundtrack and no synchronized music.

The industry changed when Walt Disney and like minded animators relocated to California. Although there were many studios on the east coast, predominantly in New York, Hollywood seemed to be the place where the magic happened.

As the film industry grew in Hollywood, so did the animation industry. Major studios were eager to get in on the act. By far the largest studio in the 1920s and 1930s was Walt Disney's studio where many animators started and/or finished their careers.

Kansas City

Kansas City was home to Walt Disney and the site of the animator's first major success.

Walter Lantz Studios

Walter Lantz Studios was the company founded and operated by Walter Lantz, world renowned animator, director and producer.

New York

New York - Home to Margaret Winkler Productions and several famous animation studios.

Warner Brothers

Warner Brothers - Major motion picture studio in California known for the most famous characters in animation history. These include Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Wile E. Coyote, and The Roadrunner.

UB Iwerks Studio

UB Iwerks Studio - Operated by Disney protégé and master animator Ub Iwerks. The studio remained open less than a decade.

Chuck Jones Studios

Chuck Jones Studios was the company founded and operated by Chuck Jones, world renowned animator, director and producer.

MGM

MGM - Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is a major film studio in Hollywood. The company is best known in the animation field for launching the careers of Fred Quimby, Friz Freleng, Bill Hanna, and Joe Barbera.

Margaret J. Winkler Productions

Margaret J. Winkler Productions - This was a prominent distributor in New York in the 1920s and 1930s. Winkler was known to take a chance on independent companies such as the one operated by Walt Disney. Winkler's husband, Charles Mintz, went on to reclaim a major Disney character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit.

Themes

Animation

The crux of Leonard Maltin's "Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons" is the art of animation. Maltin begins with the first animated shorts produced worldwide. Although the book revolves around American contributions to the art, Maltin pays homage to the creators of the genre.

The history of animation is often attributed to a "flipbook," a series of images that create moving pictures. The flipbook was often a child's toy. Each page would contain one picture, each changing movement slightly. When the pages were flipped quickly, the image appeared to move. Early animators decided that if the flipbook could work so effectively, then pictures presented quickly one after the other would also work.

Without a doubt, Walt Disney was one of the premier experts in animation. What Disney didn't know, he would learn or create. The innovation from Walt Disney Studios is legendary.

Early animated pieces were black and white and often very crudely drawn. The technology for refinement had not managed to catch up to the minds of the creators. Additionally, many of the animators wanted to produce the shorts as quickly as possible, both to maintain the interest of the audience and also to receive payment.

Maltin takes the reader forward into full color animation as well as the first "talkies." Animators continually sought to outdo each other and as a result, the progress in the art was rapid.

Many famous animators, producers, and directors are covered in the book including Walt Disney, UB Iwerks, Paul Terry, Walter Lantz, and Chuck Jones.

Innovation

Innovation is a recurring theme in Leonard Maltin's "Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons." The initial offerings in animation were crudely drawn, in black and white, and the presentation was jerky and awkward. It was the innovation and inspired works of many early animators that elevated the art to its present form.

Maltin focuses a great deal on the people involved in forming the modern day type of animation. The concept begins with a "flipbook," a series of images that create moving pictures. The flipbook was often a child's toy. Each page would contain one picture, each changing movement slightly. When the pages were flipped quickly, the image appeared to move. Early animators decided that if the flipbook could work so effectively, then pictures presented quickly one after the other would also work.

In the early part of the 20th century, it was common to run animated shorts before feature films. It was the desire of animators worldwide to sharpen the images and smooth out the process in which they were produced.

Maltin takes the reader through a fascinating look at the mechanical developments in the art as well as the innovative genius of animators, producers, and directors. The individual studios fed off one another, each wanting to outdo the others with smoother transitions, more colorful and interesting backgrounds, and eventually, sound.

Competition

The animation industry was really beginning to blossom in the 1920s and 1930s, especially after sound and color were introduced into the mix. Cartoon shorts were popular before that time but it was the feature-length pictures that seemed to take the animation field into a new era.

In the early days, many independent studios were formed and while they produced their own works, the studios required a distributor. Oftentimes the expense outweighed the profit, which caused many studios to close or sell out to competitors or larger entities. As the animation industry exploded, it became clear that finding the right animators was not going to be an easy task. Competition among the studios was fierce. Many tried to copy Walt Disney's techniques and vision while others set out to create their own worlds. Few were as successful.

In order to find animators that were ambitious as well as talented, it became necessary to hire workers away from other studios. This practice went on amongst all the studios throughout the entire history of the industry as written in the book.

Many animators started out with one company, learned what they could and moved on to greener pastures. While some faded into relative obscurity, some rose to the top of the field and created some of the most memorable cartoons on the market.

Style

Perspective

Leonard Maltin is a well-known American film critic, lecturer and author. Maltin was born in New York City, son of a singer and immigration judge. Maltin is married to Alice Tlusty, a producer and researcher. Maltin is probably most known for his television appearances and no-nonsense reviews. Maltin appears in the Guinness Book of World Records for having the shortest film, a review consisting of one word.

Maltin has proven himself to be an authority on movies as well as animated features. As a result, Maltin often represents the final word in the mind of the viewing public.

Maltin's writing career started at an early age when he wrote for classic images. At age 15 Maltin also edited his own fan magazine called "Film Fan Monthly." Maltin is a big fan of cartoons as well as old Hollywood. Maltin attended New York University, where he received a bachelor's degree in journalism. Since that time, Maltin has published articles in national publications such as TV Guide and variety.

Maltin has also published more than 10 books. By far the most famous is "Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide," a compilation of reviews and synopses that has been in print since 1969. The book spawned a companion volume titled "Leonard Maltin's Classic Movie Guide." Maltin's other books include "Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia, Our Gang: The Life and Times of the Little Rascals, The Whole Film Sourcebook," and "Behind the Camera, a study of the art of cinematography."

Tone

The tone in Leonard Maltin's "Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons," is typically objective. The information in the book presents a wealth of information, written to provide the history of film while remaining entertaining for the reader. One cannot help but share Maltin's enthusiasm for the animation industry from its meager beginnings throughout the 1970s.

It is clear that Maltin has many opinions on this topic. Most of those opinions are interjected in "The Silent Era" and "The Rest of the Story." The beginning of the industry is fascinating to Maltin and the author presents enough information about the players of the day to be interesting but not boring or purely academic.

The information is thoroughly researched and presented as to give a complete picture of the industry, its players, characters, and progress. On a partisan note, it is clear that Maltin prefers the cartoons of the 1930s-1950s and laments the disintegration of the art in the 1960s and 1970s although there are some worthy pieces to be admired.

All of the major players involved in the animation industry are covered as well as the transition from one company to the next. Maltin also follows the paths of the animators that would eventually become famous and how those choices affected the animators and the industry as a whole.

Structure

Leonard Maltin's "Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons" is a work of non-fiction. The book is comprised of 470 pages, 342 of which are in chapter form. The remaining pages are split into a glossary and filmographies listed by studio.

The book consists of 13 chapters. The shortest chapter is 10 pages in length; the longest chapter is 54 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is 26 pages.

The book begins with "The Silent Era" and follows the industry in chronological order, as much as the subject will allow. The chapters are broken down by studios and the accompanying filmographies section corresponds with those chapters, listing each film, date, character, creator and director, where applicable.

The book is completed with chapter 13, "The Rest of the Story," in which Maltin follows the innovations that occurred into the 1960s and 1970s as well as characters that were made popular at that time.

As the book was published in 1980, Maltin can only guess what the animation industry would hold. There is some hope for a resurgence in the industry on Maltin's part.

Quotes

"Animation should be an art, that is how I conceived it. But...what you fellows have done with it is make it into a trade...not an art, a trade... bad luck."
WInsor McCay, Page 1

"While these films made a big hit, the theatre patrons suspected some trick with wires. Not until I drew Gertie the Dinosaur did the audience understand that I was making the drawings move."
Winsor McCay, Page 4

"Bray was the first successful cartoonist to become an even more successful producer."
Page 18

"No group of animators ever knew their characters as well as Disney's did, but this was not without its drawbacks and problems."
Page 49

"The culmination of all this technical and talent development was the production of Disney's first feature-length film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."
Page 53

"When all was said and done, was this tremendous effort worthwhile? Some critics thought so, while others charged Disney with musical blasphemy."
Page 63

"Max Fleischer's cartoons were unique. In the silent era they sparkled with innovative ideas and technical wizardry, and during the 1930s their distinctive brand of humor put them in a class by themselves."
Page 79

"Fleischer films of the early 1930s abounded with ethnic jokes, sexual humor, visual and verbal gags that were aimed at the adults in the audience, and not at children."
Page 94

"Disney is the Tiffany's in this business, and I am the Woolworth's."
Paul Terry, Page 121

"Iwerks was a prodigious animator but he had none of Disney's creative spark and imagination."
Page 185

"Warner Brothers launched more important cartoon characters than any other studio."
Page 219

"The best way to identify United Productions of America is to say: 'They're the people who made Gerald McBoing Boing.'"
From a 1952 review written by Gilbert Seldes
Page 317

Topics for Discussion

How might the world of animation been different if Walt Disney had never gone to Hollywood?

Is there a big difference between Goofy and Pluto?

Do you think "Skeleton Dance" was revolutionary or just silly and frivolous?

Walter Lantz's creation of Woody Woodpecker was seen as brilliant. Why do you think this is true or false?

Compare the animated shorts in the silent era to those among the first "talkies."

How did the departure of Ub Iwerks affect Disney?

Why was MGM interested in producing animated features?